

# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877

1861



**November 1861**  
**Union Army Moves into the South**

The Union army takes control of islands and coastal areas of South Carolina and Georgia, freeing enslaved African Americans and occupying plantations. Missionaries arrive to set up schools for slaves in Union territory.

1862

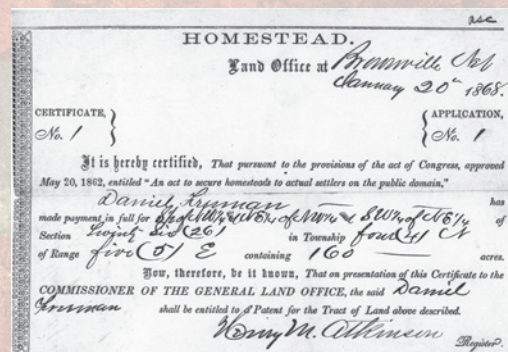
**Railroad Expansion**

Federal, state, and local governments begin distributing millions of acres of free land to railroads to encourage western expansion. By 1890, 180 million acres are given to railroad companies.



**May 1862**  
**Homestead Act**

Congress passes the Homestead Act providing land in the West to farmers.



1863



**January 1, 1863**  
**Emancipation Proclamation**

President Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that slaves in the Confederacy are “forever free” and making ex-slaves eligible to serve in the Union army.

**December 8, 1863**  
**Ten-Percent Plan**

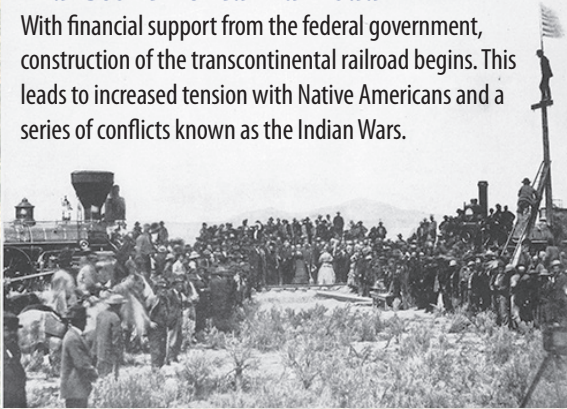
Lincoln announces his Ten-Percent Plan for Reconstruction: a Confederate state could be readmitted to the Union once 10% of its voters pledge loyalty to the United States.

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## 1864

### Transcontinental Railroad

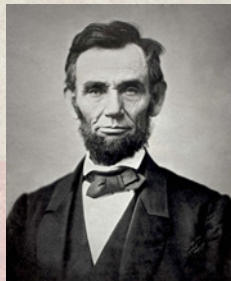
With financial support from the federal government, construction of the transcontinental railroad begins. This leads to increased tension with Native Americans and a series of conflicts known as the Indian Wars.



### July 1864

#### Wade-Davis Bill

In response to the Ten-Percent Plan, Radical Republicans pass the harsher Wade-Davis Bill. 50% of each state's voters would need to pledge loyalty for readmittance. Lincoln vetoes the bill.



### November 8, 1864

#### Lincoln Reelected

President Lincoln is reelected.

## 1865

### January 12, 1865

#### Savannah Colloquy

General Sherman and Edwin Stanton meet with Garrison Frazier and the black community in Savannah. Originally a discussion about displaced ex-slaves, records reveal talk of African Americans' hopes and aspirations.



### January 16, 1865

#### Special Field Order 15

Following the meeting in Savannah, Sherman issues Special Field Order 15. This sets aside over 400,000 acres of land to be divided into 40-acre parcels for freedpeople—the idea behind "40 acres and a Mule."



### January 31, 1865

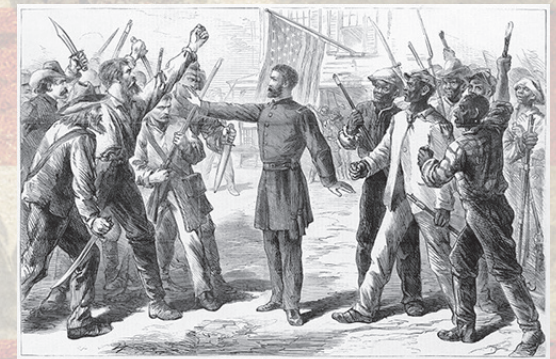
#### Thirteenth Amendment Approved

The Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery and involuntary servitude except as punishment for a crime, is approved by Congress. States ratify the amendment by December.

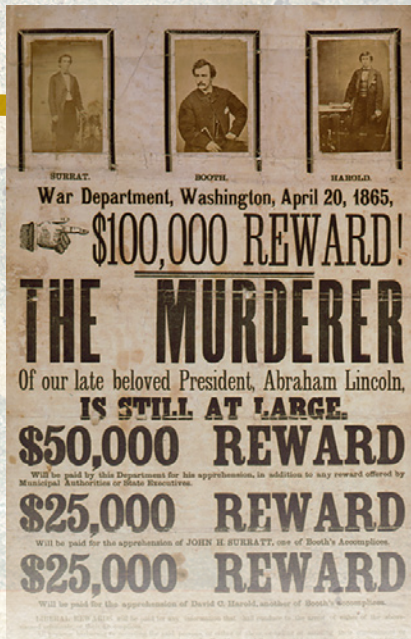
### March 1865

#### Freedmen's Bureau Established

Congress establishes the Freedmen's Bureau to aid refugees from the war, oversee confiscated and abandoned lands, assist freedpeople with their transition to freedom, and resolve disputes between freedpeople and white Southerners.



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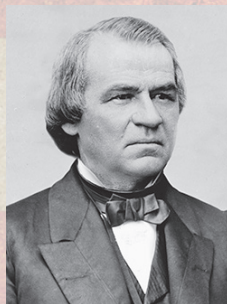


## April 1865 Lincoln Assassinated

Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrenders on April 9. President Lincoln's last speech, on April 11, discusses Reconstruction and mentions black suffrage (primarily for black soldiers) for the first time. President Lincoln is shot at Ford's Theater on April 14. He dies on April 15.

## May 1865 Johnson's Presidential Reconstruction

President Andrew Johnson reveals his Presidential Reconstruction plan, which offers amnesty and restoration of property to most former Confederates.



## Summer 1865 Special Field Order 15 Repealed

Land occupied by freedpeople, including land granted under Special Field Order 15, is confiscated and restored to its pre-war owners under President Reconstruction policies.

## Fall 1865 "Black Codes"

Former Confederates are elected to political positions in Southern states. States hesitate to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, refuse to give African Americans the right to vote, and enact "Black Codes" to reestablish strict control over freedpeople.



## "Colored Conventions"

African Americans organize "Colored Conventions" across the South to demand the right to vote and to protest the Black Codes.

## December 1865 New Session of Congress

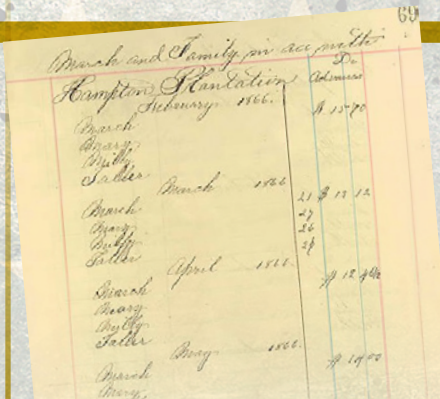
President Johnson declares Reconstruction complete. As a new session of Congress convenes, outraged Republicans refuse to seat ex-Confederate legislators elected to Congress by Southern states.

## Union Army Demobilized

The Union army is demobilized (from 1 million to 152,000 soldiers).

# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877

## 1866



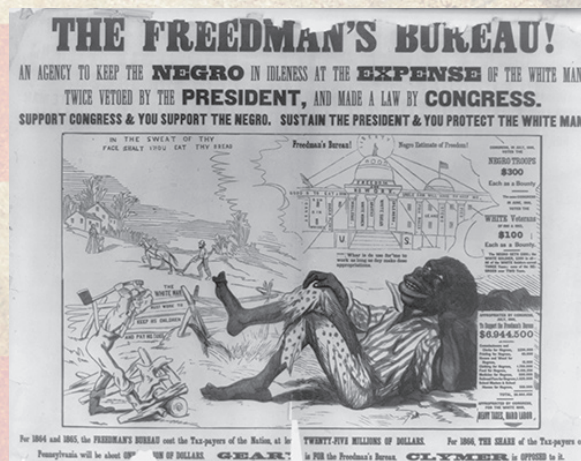
### Freed Persons Receive Wages

Some former slaves continue to work for their former owners but begin receiving pay.

### February 1866

#### Veto of Freedmen's Bureau Extension

President Andrew Johnson vetoes a Republican bill to extend the life of the Freedmen's Bureau.



### March 24, 1866

#### Favorable Judicial Decision in Alabama

In a court case in Alabama, a white man is convicted and fined for striking an African American woman. The judicial victory shows the potential for change in America.

### April 1866

#### Civil Rights Bill

For the first time, Congress overrides a Presidential veto in order to pass the Civil Rights Bill. The bill grants equal rights and suffrage to all male persons in the United States except Native Americans.

### May 1866

#### Racial Violence in Memphis

For three days, racial violence breaks out in Memphis, TN. As unfounded rumors of an African American riot spread throughout the city, several citizens join police and kill 49 people, including 46 African Americans.

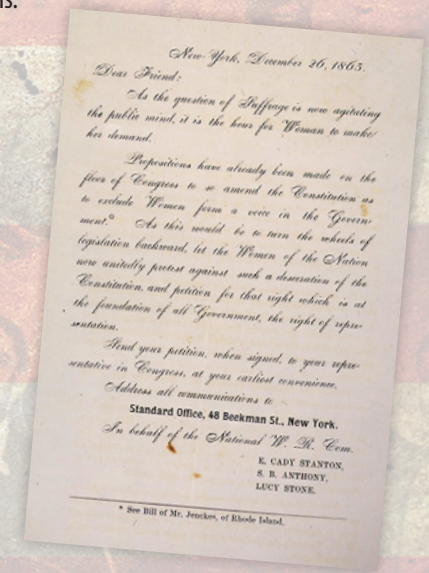


### Lucy Tibbs Provides Testimony

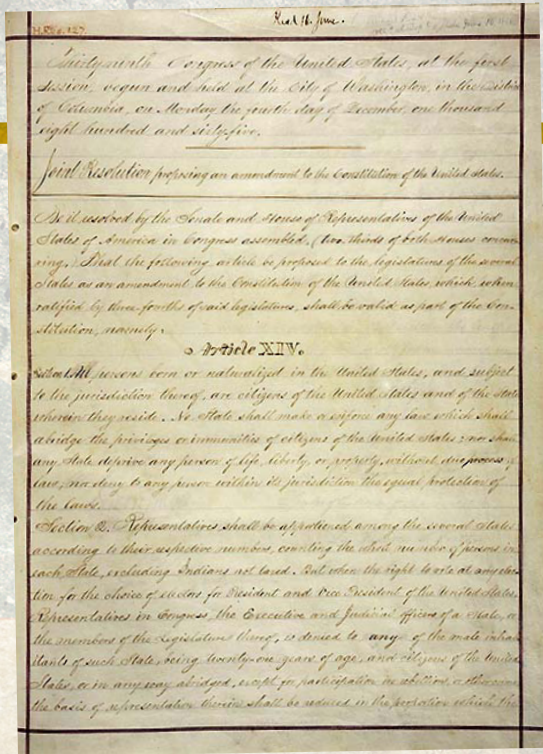
Lucy Tibbs provides key testimony to the U.S. House Select Committee on the 1866 Memphis Riots and Massacres. Her brave witness helps lead to radical reconstruction and the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment.

### Formation of American Equal Rights Association

Leading feminists and former abolitionists (including Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass) form the American Equal Rights Association to promote equal rights for both women and black Americans.



# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877



**June 13, 1866**

## **Fourteenth Amendment Approved**

Congress approves the Fourteenth Amendment, which gives citizenship to all people born or naturalized in the United States. Women are not included, outraging women's suffrage advocates. States ratify it within two years.

**July 1866**

## **Freedmen's Bureau Bill**

Congress again passes a bill to extend the life of the Freedmen's Bureau. When Johnson vetoes it, Congress votes to override the veto with two-thirds majorities in both houses.

**July 24, 1866**

## **Tennessee Readmitted to the Union**

Tennessee is the first Confederate state to be readmitted to the Union.

**July 30, 1866**

## **Rioting in New Orleans**

Rioting begins in New Orleans as a white mob assaults blacks and Radical Republicans going to a convention. A high number of casualties contributes to increased public support for Radical Republican positions



**August 1866**

## **National Labor Union**

60,000 people from a variety of small labor organizations meet in the first national congress of the National Labor Union. The convention launches a nationwide movement calling for government protections for workers.

**August 28, 1866**

## **Johnson's Speaking Tour**

President Johnson begins a ruinous speaking tour (the "Swing around the Circle") denouncing his Republican opponents and attacking freedpeople. Ulysses S. Grant and many other Johnson supporters turn against him.

# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877

## 1867

### Fall 1866 Republicans Win Majority in Both Houses

Campaigns for Congressional elections focus on the Fourteenth Amendment and civil rights. Republicans win greater than two-thirds majorities in both houses of Congress.

### Union Army Further Demobilized

The Union army continues to be demobilized, with only 38,000 soldiers remaining in the South.



### US Army Stationed in the West

Up to 57,000 troops are stationed in the West to protect railroad crews from Native American attacks aimed at preventing the incursion of White settlers.



### March 2, 1867 Radical Reconstruction

A new session of Congress enacts four statutes known as the Reconstruction Acts. States are required to adopt new constitutions, allow African Americans to vote and hold office, and ratify the Fourteenth Amendment before they will be readmitted to the Union.

### April 1867 Union Leagues Mobilize Delegates

Southern Union Leagues start assembling black and poor white voters and candidates for delegates to state constitutional conventions. These conventions rewrite state constitutions to comply with the requirements of Radical Reconstruction.

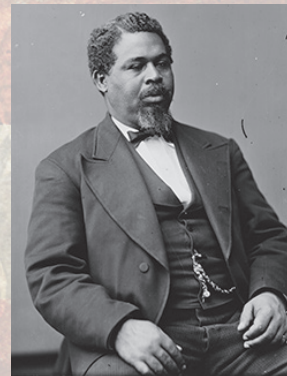
### Ku Klux Klan Founded

Tennessee becomes the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan, the most extensive example of homegrown terrorism in American History" according to historian Eric Foner.



### Robert Smalls Leads Successful Boycotts in Philadelphia

A law permitting integrated streetcars in Philadelphia is passed after several years of mass boycotts led by Robert Smalls. An influential figure throughout Reconstruction, Smalls escaped slavery, became a Civil War hero, and secured five terms as a South Carolina congressman despite voter suppression.



# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877

## 1868

**July 31, 1867**

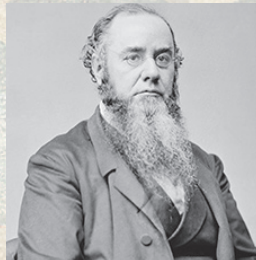
### Tenure of Office Act and Command of the Army Act

Congress passes Tenure of Office Act and Command of the Army Act to thwart President Johnson's plans to remove Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, a supporter of Radical Reconstruction.

**August 11, 1867**

### Removal of Edwin Stanton

President Johnson removes Stanton and places Ulysses S. Grant temporarily in charge of the War Department.



**October 1867**

### Treaty of Medicine Lodge

The US government signs this treaty with the Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Cheyenne, and Arapaho, taking 90 million acres of traditional lands and relocating the tribes to a 3 million acre plot in what is today Oklahoma. The federal government hoped to bring Native Americans as close as possible to an "American" way of life.



### Anna Julia Cooper Attends School

Nine year-old Anna Julia Cooper attends St. Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute in Raleigh, NC, an educational center for former slaves. Cooper petitions school officials to let her take classes only administered to boys. Among a number of accomplishments, Cooper was a teacher and principal, wrote a book, and helped establish several social justice organizations.

### Election of Radical Republicans and African Americans

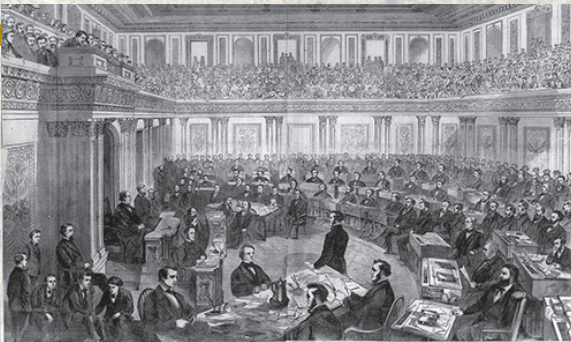
The Republican Party increases their majority in the US Senate, holding an unprecedented number of seats. Across the South, Radical Republicans including African-American men are elected to state and county governments. In South Carolina, African Americans make up a majority of the state legislature, a first for any state. Republican governments begin to transform parts of the South, including establishing the first public school system.

### Moderate Republican Stalwarts

With Radical Reconstruction enacted, moderate Republicans (Stalwarts) begin to gain more influence over the Radicals in the Republican Party.



# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877



## May 16, 1868 Johnson Impeached

Johnson is impeached by Congress (see Tenure of Office Act) for his removal of Edwin Stanton as Secretary of War, which violated the Tenure of Office Act. He is acquitted by one vote and subsequently does not receive the Democratic nomination for President.

## May 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie

US Government signs the Treaty of Fort Laramie with the Sioux, giving them the Black Hills Reservation in return for the safety of railroad crews.



## June 15, 1868 Adelbert Ames Appointed Governor of Mississippi

Adelbert Ames is appointed provisional governor of Mississippi, replacing Benjamin G. Humphreys, elected by white voters during President Johnson's Reconstruction plan. Ames helped Republicans regain control of Mississippi, contributed to its rejoining the union, took strides to protect the rights of African Americans, and appointed black officials to positions of power.



## June-July 1868 More Former Confederate States Readmitted to the Union

Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Alabama are readmitted to the Union.

## July 28, 1868 Fourteenth Amendment Ratified

After being bitterly contested, The Fourteenth Amendment is ratified by the required three-fourths of the states and officially becomes part of the US Constitution.

## September 1868 Black Legislators Barred in Georgia

White Republicans joined with the Democrats in expelling three black senators and twenty-five black representatives in the lower house from the General Assembly. The following year, President Grant intervenes to reinstate them.

## November 3, 1868 Grant Elected President

Ulysses S. Grant, Republican, is elected president with the campaign slogan "Let us have peace." The defeated Democratic Party and its candidate, Horatio Seymour, literally ran on a white supremacists platform with slogans of "In Favor of a White Man's Government" and "Opposed to Negro Suffrage and Negro Equality." Black southerners cast more than 700,000 votes for Grant.





# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877

## 1869



### Freedmen's Bureau Builds Schools

By this date, the Freedmen's Bureau builds and operates more than 3,000 schools with more than 150,000 students in the South. Previously, Southern States had no public school systems.

### February 26, 1869 Fifteenth Amendment

Congress passes the Fifteenth Amendment, giving African American men the right to vote. It isn't ratified until February 3, 1870, and doesn't begin to get fully realized until the modern civil rights movement. Through poll taxes, literacy tests, and other means, Southern states disenfranchise African Americans. The majority of African Americans aren't registered to vote until the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



### April 1869 Texas v. White

In *Texas v. White*, the Supreme Court upholds Radical Reconstruction and declares secession illegal in a 5-3 conclusion.



### May 1869 Equal Rights Association Divided

The Equal Rights Association, an organization that campaigned for both black suffrage and women's suffrage, is divided over whether or not to support the Fifteenth Amendment, which does not guarantee women the right to vote. Two new groups are formed: the National Woman Suffrage Association, which opposes the Fifteenth Amendment, and the American Woman Suffrage Association, which supports it.

### September 1869 Racial Violence in the South

Violence against blacks intensifies across the South. Georgia legislator Abram Colby is kidnapped and whipped by members of the Ku Klux Klan.



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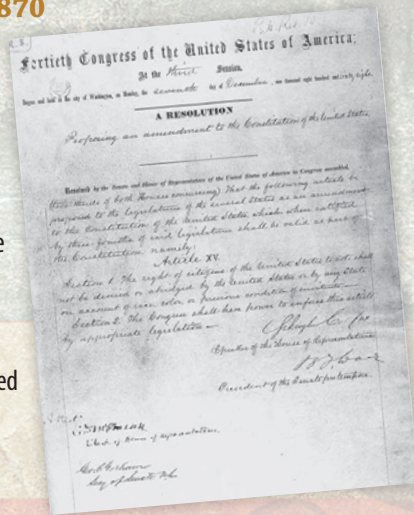
## 1870

**January 26, 1870**  
**Virginia Readmitted to the Union**  
Virginia is readmitted to the Union.

**February 3, 1870**  
**Fifteenth Amendment Ratified**

28 States ratify the Fifteenth Amendment which will officially become part of the US Constitution when Secretary of State Hamilton Fish certified the amendment on March 30, 1870.

**February 23, 1870**  
**Mississippi Readmitted to the Union**  
Mississippi is readmitted to the Union.



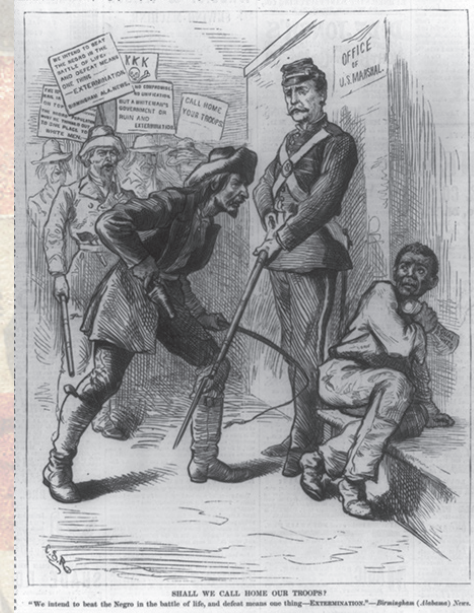
**February 28, 1870**  
**Hiram Revels Becomes First African American Senator**

Hiram Revels of Mississippi becomes the first African American to serve in the Senate. Other notable African American politicians during the period include former slave Blanche Kelso Bruce who became the second African American senator in 1874, and Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback, the first African American state governor in 1872.

**March 30, 1870**  
**Texas Readmitted to the Union**  
Texas is readmitted to the Union.



**May 31, 1870**  
**First Enforcement Act passed**  
Congress and President Grant respond to violence against African Americans in the South by enacting the Enforcement Act of 1870. The law makes it illegal to use violence, intimidation, or bribery to prevent someone from voting because of their race.



**July 15, 1870**  
**Georgia Readmitted to the Union**  
Georgia is the last state to be readmitted to the Union.

# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877

## 1871



### Indian Tribes No Longer Recognized as Sovereign Nations

The US government no longer recognizes American Indian tribes as sovereign nations. The government confiscates 60% of their land over the next 30 years.

### Democrats Retake Georgia

One year after Democrats regained majorities in Georgia's state legislature, Democrat James Smith is elected governor.

### Fisk Jubilee Singers Go on Tour

The Fisk Jubilee Singers go on tour, raising money for Fisk University and contributing to the growth of Spiritual music.

### February 1871

#### Second Enforcement Act Passed

Congress and President Grant enact the Enforcement Act of 1871, giving the federal government the power to oversee elections in Southern states.

### April 1871

#### Ku Klux Klan Act Passed

Congress and President Grant enact the Ku Klux Klan Act, which authorizes the president to suspend the writ of habeas corpus and use military force to suppress Ku Klux Klan violence. It gives the federal, rather than state, government the right to prosecute Klan members or other individuals for



depriving citizens of voting rights or equal protection of the law.

### July 1871

#### Tammany Hall Exposed

The New York Times and Harper's Weekly expose corruption and scandal in the New York Tammany Hall political machine run by Democrat William "Boss" Tweed.



### October 8-10, 1871

#### Great Chicago Fire

The Great Chicago Fire kills hundreds and destroys 3.3 square miles of the city. Rumors that the fire was started by immigrants and/or communists and revolting workers spread rapidly. None of the rumors are true.

### October 1871

#### Grant Fights Anti-black Violence

President Grant uses the powers granted to him by the Enforcement and Ku Klux Klan Acts to combat anti-black violence in the South. Klan members are put on trial through the following year, leading to the end of the organization for several decades.

# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877

## 1872

**May 1, 1872**

### **Liberal Republicans Nominate Greeley**

Liberal Republicans form in opposition to President Grant, who they blame for widespread government corruption and patronage. Declaring Reconstruction complete, they create a platform focused on reconciling the North and South and curbing government corruption. They nominate Horace Greeley, publisher of the New York Tribune for president. In July, Democrats also nominate Greeley.



**May 22, 1872**

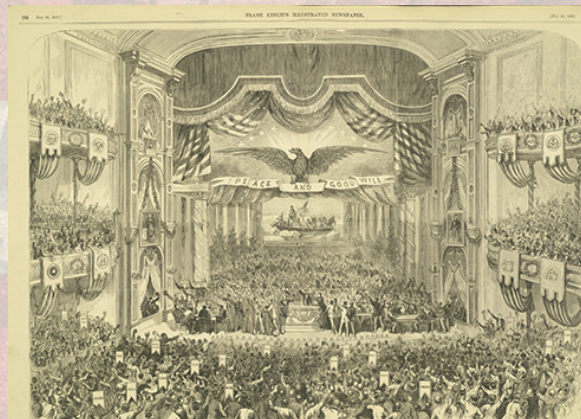
### **Grant Signs Amnesty Bill**

President Grant signs a new amnesty bill into law restoring the political rights of nearly all former Confederates who had lost the right to vote or hold office after the war. Only a few hundred former Confederates are excluded from political privileges.

**July 1872**

### **Democratic Convention**

Democrats hold their convention and join the Liberal Republicans in nominating Horace Greeley for President.



**September 5, 1872**

### **Corruption in the Grant Administration**

The New York Sun accuses Republican Vice President Schuyler Colfax, Vice Presidential nominee Henry Wilson, US Representative James Garfield, and several others of corruption in the Credit Mobilier scandal. News of the scandal increases public concern over corruption and power at all levels of government.



**November 1872**

### **Susan B. Anthony Arrested for Voting**

Susan B. Anthony votes in the 1872 presidential election and is arrested because of her gender. She is later tried, convicted, and fined \$100 for "the crime of having voted."

### **Grant Reelected**

Despite the scandals in his administration, President Grant is reelected over Horace Greeley.

# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877

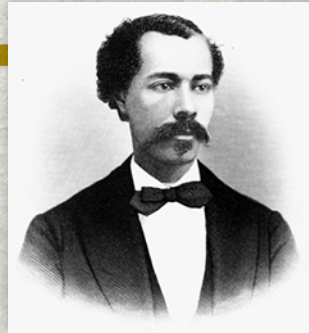
## 1873

### Democrats Take Control in Texas and Virginia

Republicans are defeated in elections in Virginia and Texas as Democrats take control of the governments of both states.

### New York Tribune Accuses Black Lawmakers of Corruption

The *New York Tribune* begins publishing articles accusing black lawmakers in South Carolina of corruption and incompetence. The charges are robustly refuted by black legislators in the state.



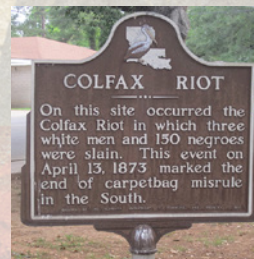
### March 1873 John Roy Lynch Becomes US Congressman

John Roy Lynch becomes one of seven African American members in the House of Representatives following a successful

campaign in his Mississippi district. Born a slave in 1847, Lynch was a strong advocate for civil rights during three terms in Congress. He was later the keynote speaker at the 1884 Republican Convention, admitted to the Mississippi Bar, and published a book about Reconstruction.

### April 1873 Colfax Massacre

Conflict occurs between The White League, a paramilitary group organized by the Democratic Party, and the nearly all-black state militia in Colfax, LA. One hundred militia members are murdered in cold blood in what is remembered as the Colfax Massacre.



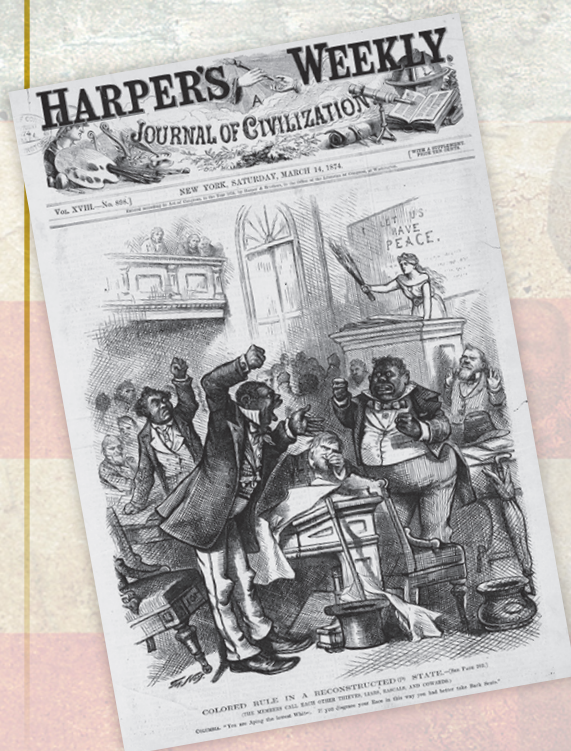
### April 1873 Slaughterhouse Case Gives Protection of Civil Rights to States

In a case involving the labor rights of white butchers, the Supreme Court rules that the protection of most civil rights is up to individual states and that the Fourteenth Amendment does not give the federal government the right to interfere. This has a profound effect on the rights of African Americans in the future, and enabled the enacting of Jim Crow Laws.



### September 18, 1873 The Panic of 1873 Begins

A Wall Street banking firm crashes, causing the stock exchange to fail, and eventually resulting in widespread unemployment. This becomes known as the Panic of 1873, and lasts for the next three years.



# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877

1874



## Public Opinion of Radical Reconstruction Shifts

Public opinion continues to shift against Radical Reconstruction as a result of (1) fading animosity between North and South as "war fever" dissipates, (2) concern over political corruption, (3) economic depression, and (4) racism of white Northerners and Southerners alike.

## Democrats Gain Control in Alabama and Arkansas

Alabama and Arkansas hold elections amidst violence and intimidation against freedpeople and Republican leaders. Republican state governments are defeated and Democrats resume control.

1875

## August 1874 The White League Murders Louisiana Republican Leaders

The White League assassinates 6 white Republican leaders and 5-20 freedpeople in a massacre in Coushatta, Louisiana.



## Democrats Regain Power in the House

Democrats regain control of the House of Representatives in a landslide election.

## THE TWO PLATFORMS.

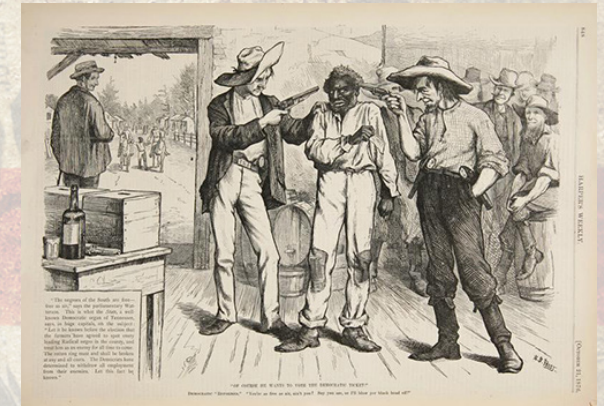


## Congress Passes the Page Act

In response to fears of Chinese immigrants infringing upon American jobs and economic security, Congress passes the Page Act. It limits immigration of groups considered to be "undesirable," particularly from China. Despite Chinese immigrants making up less than 2% of the immigrant population, Congress further restricts immigration from China with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.

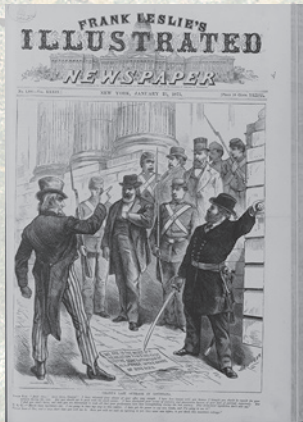
## The Mississippi Plan

Democrats start the "Mississippi Plan," using intimidation and violence to sway elections and reclaim power in the Mississippi state government.



# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861-1877

## 1876

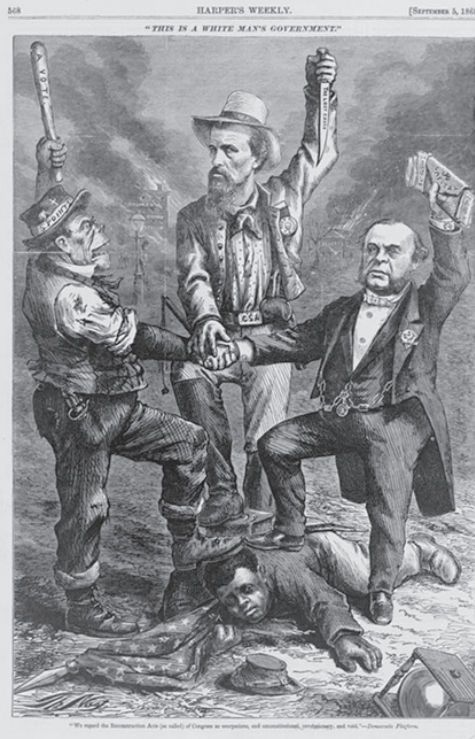


### March 1, 1875 Civil Rights Bill of 1875

The Civil Rights Bill of 1875 is passed by Congress and signed by President Grant as one of the last acts under Republican leadership. This bill prohibits segregation in public facilities. The Supreme Court strikes it down in 1883.

### May 1875 Whiskey Ring

Several government officials appointed by President Grant, as well as his personal secretary and other advisers, are indicted for participating in the Whiskey Ring bribery scandal.



### Democrats Use Violence to Regain Control

Using methods similar to the "Mississippi Plan," Democrats in South Carolina, North Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida take back control.

### March 1876 U.S. v. Cruikshank

In *U.S. v. Cruikshank*, the Supreme Court overturns the convictions of three perpetrators of the Colfax Massacre (see April 1873) and rules that the parts of the Enforcement and Ku Klux Klan Acts that enable the federal government, rather than states, to prosecute individuals for crimes are unconstitutional. According to the court, the federal government can only act against states, not individuals.



# RECONSTRUCTION ERA TIMELINE, 1861–1877

1877

## The Workingman's Party of California Releases Platform

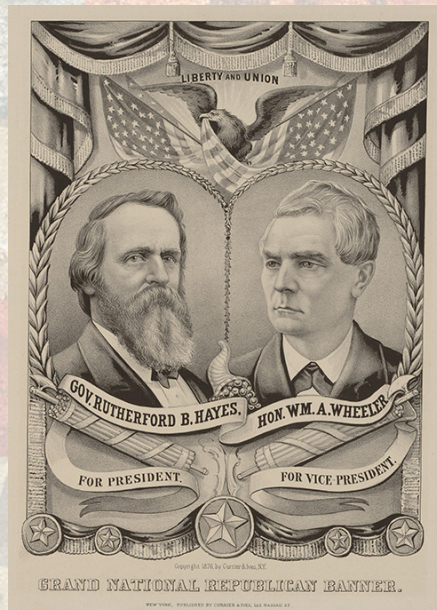
The Workingman's Party of California, a labor group, releases its platform. The document proposes increased taxation of wealthy individuals and the destruction of land monopolies in the face of the country's growing economic inequity. The platform also calls to rid the country of "cheap Chinese labor."

## March 4, 1877 Rutherford Hayes Elected President

After a close and disputed election in which both candidates, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes and Democrat Samuel Tilden, declared victory, Hayes is declared the victor. In order to ease tensions with Democrats, Hayes and the Republicans agree to abandon Reconstruction policies and remove the few remaining federal troops from the South.

## April 1877 Reconstruction Officially Ends

Reconstruction policies officially end, with the South enforcing and ingraining segregation. Black civil rights won't hold the nation's attention again until after World War II.





For more resources on the Reconstruction era and to get our unit *The Reconstruction Era and the Fragility of Democracy*, visit [www.facinghistory.org/reconstruction-era](http://www.facinghistory.org/reconstruction-era)

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