

Reconstruction in Georgia

- Early May 1865, Georgia's Confederate governor, Joseph E. Brown, surrendered to Union authorities and was paroled.
- He then tried to convene the Georgia General & was arrested and briefly imprisoned in the District of Columbia.
- Politically and economically destitute, Georgia faced the future with a white population, which had numbered more than 590,000 in 1860, depleted by some 40,000 Georgians who had been killed or permanently dispersed by the conflict.
- The state's black population, principally more than 460,000 newly freed slaves, confronted a new world with hope and uncertainty.

- Late June 1865 the Military Department of Georgia was established.
- For the state's whites and blacks, the U.S. Army provided a measure of stability, as well as much-needed food rations in some portions of the state.
- Mid-June 1865, Pres. Andrew Johnson appointed James Johnson as provisional Governor of Georgia.
- Johnson was a Unionist from Columbus who had "sat out" the war.
- Following Governor Johnson's directive (Pres. Johnson's Reconstruction plan), elections were held for delegates to a constitutional convention that met in late October 1865 in the capital at Milledgeville.

- Voters were restricted to white adult males who would take a loyalty oath—numbered only some 50,000 in a state in which 107,000 had cast votes in the prewar presidential election of 1860.
- Under the leadership of original anti-secessionist Herschel Johnson, the convention's delegates framed a state constitution that repealed the Ordinance of Secession, abolished slavery, and refused to recognize the Confederate debt.
- Otherwise, few changes were made to the Constitution of 1861.
- Major alterations included a prohibition of interracial marriage and a limit on the term of governorship to two two-year terms.

- Nov. 15, 1865, Georgians elected a new governor, congressmen, and state legislators.
- The balloting yielded a dismal turnout of only 38,000 voters.
- Voters disowned most Unionist candidates and elected to office many ex-Confederates, many of which originally opposed secession.
- Including the new Governor, old-line Whig Charles Jones Jenkins had sought and secured pardons at war's end, and had sworn allegiance to the United States.

- Early Dec. 1865 the Georgia General Assembly ratified the 13th Amend. to the U.S. Constitution, which ended slavery.
- The Union's war aims of unification and emancipation having been met, Pres. Johnson returned the government of Georgia to its elected officials on December 20, 1865.
- The legislature selected the state's two U.S. senators in January 1866, paving the way for Georgia's participation in national deliberations for the first time since 1861.
- Alexander Stephens and Herschel Johnson—created a political firestorm in Washington, D.C., however.
- Undeniably ex-Confederates (vice president and senator of the Confederacy, respectively), both were also popular, seasoned, and moderate statesmen.

- The North singled out Stephens as the most flagrant example of the defiance and recalcitrance of Georgia and the South.
- Neither he nor Johnson nor any of Georgia's House delegation were allowed to take their seats.

The End of Presidential Reconstruction

- Pres. Johnson's reconstruction program had begun during a lengthy congressional adjournment that extended from March to December 1865.
- When the 39th Congress convened at the end of the year, the Radical Republicans argued that Johnson had exceeded his power in restoring the former Confederate states.
- They felt that only Tenn. Was worthy of restoration.
- Determined to start Reconstruction anew, the Republican majority in Congress created a Joint Committee on Reconstruction that held hearings from January to June 1866 on conditions in the former Confederacy.

- The committee reported two major pieces of legislation.
- One—the proposed 14th Amend. to the U.S. Constitution—in its most concise form made the freed slaves citizens, office-holding disabilities and disfranchisement for many white southerners, along with incentives for states either to grant black voting rights or proportionally lose representation in Congress.
- The other bill, the First Reconstruction Act, called for placing the South under military occupation.

- Since this legislation appeared several months before the off-year elections, Pres. Johnson's supporters and opponents campaigned vigorously in late summer 1866.
- In August 1866, Georgia's white conservatives sent Alexander Stephens, Confederate general John B. Gordon , and other delegates to the National Union Convention in Philadelphia.
- The convention assailed the 14th Amen. and the Reconstruction Act and championed Johnson's policies, hoping to turn the Radicals out of Congress in 1866 and return Johnson to office in 1868.

- Southern Loyalists' Convention assembled in Philadelphia in Sept. 1866, with delegates including Georgia Radical George W. Ashburn.
- The convention supported the 14th Amend. and argued for further reconstruction of the South. Surprisingly, both conventions did agree on one issue: neither favored black suffrage.
- Pres. Johnson's own campaigning failed disastrously, allowing the Republicans to sweep the November elections, and the president's power was permanently broken.

Congressional Reconstruction, 1867-1868

- When the Georgia legislature met after the election in November 1866, it almost unanimously rejected the 14th Amend.
- The negative report of the joint legislative committee argued that if Georgia was not a state, its legislature had no role in ratifying amendments, and that if Georgia was a state the amendment had not been placed before it constitutionally.
- After its Christmas break, this assembly never reconvened, and in March 1867 the First Reconstruction Act passed Congress.
- Georgia, together with Alabama and Florida, became part of the Third Military District, supervised by General John Pope.

- As directed by Congress, Gen. Pope registered Georgia's eligible 95,214 white and 93,457 black voters.
- From Oct. 29 – Nov. 2, 1867, an election was held for delegates to another constitutional convention, which would meet from Dec. 1867 into March 1868.
- Gen. Pope directed the convention to meet at the Atlanta City Hall, which was convenient to his headquarters, since Milledgeville was considered less accessible, and its press was thoroughly anti-Republican.
- As the Atlanta convention met, a two-day Conservative Convention assembled in Macon to attack Radical policies and to decry black political participation.

- Jan. 1868 Gov. Charles J. Jenkins, protested Gen. Pope's \$40,000 draft on the state treasury to pay convention expenses as illegal and unconstitutional.
- Gen. George G. Meade replaced Pope & removed Gov. Jenkins.
- Replacing him with a military governor, Gen. Thomas H. Ruger.
- Simultaneous with Ruger's administration (Jan.-July 1868), the impeachment, trial, and near-conviction of Pres. Andrew Johnson took place in Washington.

- March 1868, the 169 convention delegates in Atlanta, including 37 blacks, had framed a new state constitution that fulfilled the demands of the First Reconstruction Act, including a provision for black voting.
- The constitution also called for the establishment of a free public school system, provided for debt relief, gave wives control of their property, increased the governor's term to four years, and moved the seat of state government from Milledgeville to Atlanta.

- A vote on ratification of the constitution and for state officers and U.S. congressmen was held in April, following the sensational murder of Ashburn after he returned home to Columbus.
- In the gubernatorial race, the Republican candidate, Rufus Bullock, defeated the Democratic candidate John B. Gordon with the new constitution approved.
- In the elections for the General Assembly, 84 Republicans (29 of them black) won a majority of the 172 House seats.
- The Republicans also held 27 seats, 3 occupied by black senators, to the Democrats' 17 in the state senate after the election.

Carpetchbaggers and Scalawags

- In 1868 the terms *carpetbagger* and *scalawag* became preeminent in Georgia politics.
- Coined by white conservatives, the terms were used to describe the two major groups of white Republicans allied with the far more numerous black Republicans.
- Carpetbaggers were northerners who came south after the war to seek their fortune through politics, under a system in which a one-year residence in any southern state brought voting and office-holding rights.
- Scalawags were southern-born white Republicans or, by a broader definition, any white Republicans who had lived in the South before the war.

- By these definitions, Georgia's Republican government was more scalawag than carpetbagger, particularly since it sent scalawags, rather than carpetbaggers, to Congress.
- Gov. Bullock, though a New York native, was not a carpetbagger, having moved to Augusta in 1859 and having served as a Confederate quartermaster officer.
- The murdered Ashburn had also been a scalawag. The state's arch-scalawag, former Democratic governor Joseph E. Brown, became a Republican in 1868 and exercised much power in his new party.
- Georgia's major carpetbagger, Union veteran John Emory Bryant of Maine, had come south as a Freedmen's Bureau official and newspaper publisher.

- The term Ku Klux Klan (KKK) also gained popularity in 1868 to describe what the Republicans considered to be the terrorist wing of the Democratic Party: night riders who acted to suppress Republicans of all races and origins.
- According to most historians, the Klan's debut in Georgia had been the Ashburn killing in Columbus, and its "Grand Dragon" was none other than Gordon.
- Black Republicans, particularly their leaders, served as the principal target of the Klan.

- The main targets were Henry McNeal Turner and Tunis Campbell.
- Turner was a Union chaplain during the war and a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.
- Working first among the freed slaves as a minister, then their political leader, promoting the Republican Party, as did many other AME preachers.
- Campbell, a New Jersey native, settled in McIntosh County after the war, organized an association of black landholders along the coast, and registered black voters.
- Both men served as delegates to the constitutional convention in 1867 and were elected to the Georgia legislature in July 1868.

- Also during July 1868, the newly elected General Assembly ratified the 14th Amend., Republican Gov. Bullock was inaugurated to a four-year term, and Georgia was readmitted to the Union.
- But during late July, the Democrats convened in Atlanta to ratify the nomination of the anti-Reconstruction candidacy of Horatio Seymour.
- Atlanta's Bush Arbor Rally, "the largest political mass meeting ever held in Georgia," prominent Georgia Democrats—including Robert Toombs and Howell Cobb—attacked Congressional Reconstruction in a series of passionate speeches.
- They reserved special contempt for newly converted Republican Joseph E. Brown, who served as a delegate to the Chicago convention that had nominated Union general Ulysses S. Grant for president.

- Although Turner, Campbell, and other black colleagues in the House and Senate had argued against purging obvious ex-Confederates from the General Assembly, they were removed from the body themselves in September 1868.
- A week later the Camilla Massacre of Sept. 19, 1868 took place.
- White Democrats shot Republicans (White & Black) as they marched into Camilla from Albany, 12 blacks were killed and several whites wounded.
- This was a confrontation preceding a black Republican rally and an election.
- This caused the White Democratic minority to control southwest GA.

- These developments led to the return to military rule, which happened after Georgia became one of only two ex-Confederate states to vote against Grant in the Presidential Election of 1868.
- March 1869 Gov. Bullock, seeking to prolong Reconstruction, "engineered" the defeat of the 15th Amend.
- Also, U.S. Congress once again barred Georgia's representatives from their seats.
- Military rule resumed throughout the state in Dec. 1869.

End of Congressional Reconstruction, 1869-1871

- June 1869 in *White v. Clements*, the Supreme Court of GA. ruled two-to-one that blacks did indeed have a constitutional right to hold office in Georgia.
- One of the two deciding justices was Chief Justice Joseph E. Brown, appointed by Bullock in July 1868.
- Jan. 1870, Gen. Alfred H. Terry, the third and final commanding general of the District of Georgia, conducted "Terry's Purge."
- He removed the General Assembly's ex-Confederates, replaced them with the Republican runners-up, then reinstated the expelled black legislators, thus creating a heavy Republican majority in the legislature.

- Feb. 1870 the newly constituted legislature ratified the 15th Amend. and chose new senators to send to Washington.
- July 1870, Georgia was again readmitted to the Union.
- Dec. 1870 an election was held for the next General Assembly, to convene in November 1871.
- The Democrats won commanding majorities in both houses.
- Gov. Bullock's chances of completing his term now depended on his once again having Georgia remanded to military rule., of which he failed.
- Oct. 1871 he fled the state to escape impeachment.

- In a special election held in Dec., Democrat and ex-Confederate Col. James Milton Smith was elected to complete Bullock's term.
- Consequently, as of January 1872 Georgia was fully under the control of the Redeemers, as the state's resurgent white conservative Democrats came to be known.

Aftermath of Georgia Reconstruction

- By 1877, when the final remnants of Reconstruction ended elsewhere in the South, many changes had taken place in Georgia.
- Joseph E. Brown, now a Democrat again and soon-to-be U.S. senator, was increasing the profits of his northwest Georgia coal mines by using the Convict Lease System.
- Brown's sometime ally and business partner, Bullock, had recently been tried and acquitted and had embarked on a new Atlanta career that would include the presidency of the Chamber of Commerce.

- Charges against Bullock and his administration, would lead the Democratic Redeemers to draft the GA. State Constitution of 1877 that restricted legislative and gubernatorial power and instituted severe financial penalties.
- The Democratic Party in Georgia would increase with time, making the state a reliable component of the Solid South.
- No Republican would again occupy the Governor's chair until 2003, when Sonny Purdue took office.

- Black Georgia voters, who were manipulated at first, were finally disfranchised, by the 1890s.
- The last black member of the General Assembly, W. H. Rogers, resigned in 1907 as the final representative of the Reconstruction-era coastal GA. political machine created by Campbell.
- Not until 1963, would another black politician, Leroy Johnson (Democrat), enter the GA. General Assembly.

- For most of the Georgians citizens, black and white, the primary legacy of Reconstruction would be Sharecropping.
- Property taxes, which had been paid most heavily by slave owners, now fell on land owners, and during Reconstruction tax rates increased as well.
- While the majority of Southern whites had owned land during the antebellum period, the majority had become landless sharecroppers by the early 1900s.
- Though landownership by black farmers had grown to 13 % by 1900, most remained sharecroppers.
- White and black Georgians awaited another transformation of the economy.

- That would not happen until World War II (1941-45) before any economic changes happened in Georgia or any part of the South.
