

Chapter 22 (14th)

The Ordeal of Reconstruction

1. The Problems of Peace
 1. Following the war, many questions lingered, such as...
 1. What about the freed blacks?
 2. How will the South be re-united with the North?
 3. Who will make these decisions?
 2. The South had been largely destroyed. It'd have to be rebuilt or reconstructed. How to do this was uncertain and many Southerners still stood staunchly against the North.
2. Freedmen Define Freedom
 1. Freed blacks, or "**freedmen**" were in a perplexing situation.
 1. They'd heard that they were free, but most still stayed on the plantation where they'd always lived.
 2. Some blacks fled northward, others sought freedom through the law.
 3. There was violence as well. Some blacks let their frustrations erupt by destroying white homes, land, etc. Sometimes, the white master even had the table turned on him and was whipped by his former slaves.
 2. All slaves were freed eventually, thanks to the U.S. Army's force.
 1. When emancipation had become a reality, most freedmen still stayed "at home".
 2. Many took flight however, seeking a better life somewhere, or seeking lost love ones who'd been separated at some point.
 3. With the blacks' social structure torn down, churches became a strong pillar of the black community. For example, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) quadrupled in size in 10 years after the Civil War.
 4. The prospect of black education was a hope, but not necessarily a reality. Discrimination and economic resources still held most black children out of school. That hope would not become a reality until much later.
3. The Freedman's Bureau
 1. The freed slaves were largely unskilled, uneducated, and untrained. Congress created the **Freedmen's Bureau** sought to remedy those shortfalls.
 1. The bureau was essentially an early form of welfare. It was to provide food, clothing, health care, and education.
 2. **Gen. O. O. Howard** headed the bureau (and later founded Howard University in D.C.).
 2. The Freedmen's Bureau's success was minimal at best. Its largest accomplishment came in the form of literacy—teaching many blacks to read.
 3. Unsurprisingly, Southerners disliked the bureau. **Pres. Andrew Johnson** unsuccessfully tried to kill it, but it expired in 1872 anyway.
4. Johnson: The Tailor President
 1. When Lincoln was assassinated, he was succeeded by Andrew Johnson.
 2. Johnson was a Tennessean from very humble origins.
 1. Although Tennessee seceded during the war, he was the only Southern Congressman to *not* join the South. This fact got him named to be Lincoln's Vice President in 1864.
 2. He was known as a fighter, dogmatic, and short a quick temper.
 3. Johnson was something of a man-without-a-home. The North never accepted him because he was a Southerner and the South distrusted him because he sided with the North.
5. Presidential Reconstruction
 1. Before his assassination, Lincoln had devised the presidential plan for reconstruction.
 1. It could be called the "10 Percent Plan" since a southern state would be readmitted to the U.S. after 10% of the voters took an oath of loyalty and respect emancipation.
 2. Like the Biblical parable of the father welcoming home his "prodigal son," the 10% plan was very forgiving. Lincoln was welcoming the return of the wayward Southern states.
 2. Other Republicans disagreed. The "**Radical Republicans**" thought this approach was too soft; they wanted to punish the South for the war.
 1. Radical Republicans feared the 10% plan would allow Southern whites to again rule over freed blacks.
 2. They proposed the **Wade-Davis Bill**. It required 50% of voters to take the allegiance oath and safeguards to protect the freed blacks.
 3. Lincoln pocket-vetoed the Wade-Davis Bill and killed it. The dispute revealed differences of opinion on the matter...
 1. Lincoln felt the Southern states had never truly seceded. He wanted them back as quickly as possible (re-unification had been his priority #1 from day one in office).

2. Radical Republicans felt the Southern states *had* seceded. Therefore, Congress could set the rules of re-admittance.
3. A wrench was thrown into the system when Lincoln was shot and Andrew Johnson took over. What would Johnson think about Reconstruction?
 1. President Andrew Johnson essentially just followed Lincoln's 10% Plan.
 2. He did add the following stipulations: (a) leading Confederates were to be disenfranchised, (b) secession ordinances were to be repealed, (c) Confederate debts would be repudiated, and (d) the states must ratify the 13th Amendment.
6. The Baleful Black Codes
 1. White Southerners had a problem: without slavery, how could they ensure stable labor force?
 1. The Southern solution was to pass "**Black Codes**" which were rules designed to tie the freed blacks to their white employers.
 2. They were contracts that said blacks were bound to work for whites for a certain time period. "Jumping" the contract (leaving before time was up) was punishable with fines.
 2. The codes were discriminatory in that blacks were banned from serving on juries, renting land, and could be punished for "idleness."
 3. Many Northerners wondered, "Isn't this essentially the same as slavery?" The life of an African-America *after* the Civil War was hardly any different than *before* the war.
7. Congressional Reconstruction
 1. In December 1865 many Southern Congressmen returned to Washington to reclaim their seats. Northern Republicans, not amused, were things to return to normal as if nothing had happened?
 2. While the Southern Congressmen had been gone, Northerners had passed several major bills including: the Morrill Tariff, the Pacific Railroad Act, and the Homestead Act. Now the Southerners were back.
 1. The South stood to actually *gain* power in Congress. With the slaves freed, the 3/5 Compromise was over. Slaves were now a complete five-fifths. This meant the Southern population went up thereby forcing Southern representation in Congress to go up (and thus the North's down).
 3. In early December 1865, Pres. Johnson stated the South had fulfilled all requirements to return to the U.S. and that the nation was re-united. Radical Republicans in Congress were not happy.
8. Johnson Clashes with Congress
 1. President Johnson was never accepted by the North or by Congress. Time-and-again he banged heads with Congress, vetoing Republican bills.
 1. Notably, he vetoed the **Civil Rights Bill** that would grant citizenship to blacks and undercut the Black Codes.
 2. Congress then planned to pass the Civil Rights Bill by making the **Fourteenth Amendment** to the Constitution. The Amendment was passed by Congress and sent to the states for their approval. Its proposals...
 1. Civil Rights and citizenship for the freedmen (but not the right to vote).
 2. To cut state Congressional representation if blacks were denied voting.
 3. Disqualified Confederate leaders from federal offices.
 4. Guaranteeing the federal debt and repudiating the state debt.
 3. The Fourteenth Amendment would be ratified in 1868. Radical Republicans weren't happy that the right to vote was not included. But, all Republicans were in agreement that Southern states shouldn't be allowed back into the U.S. without accepting the Amendment.
9. Swinging 'Round the Circle with Johnson
 1. By 1866, President Johnson and Congress were butting heads. At odds were Johnson's 10% Plan state which had passed strict Black Codes as well as the Freedmen's Bureau and Civil Rights Bill (he vetoed both).
 1. Congress was determined to go ahead with Reconstruction only with the ratification of the 14th Amendment.
 2. In the elections of that year, Johnson went on "'round the circle" speeches. He was heckled by observers and the president yelled back.
 1. Johnson's speech tour backfired and Congressional Reconstruction gained support at the president's expense.
10. Republican Principles and Programs
 1. The Republicans in Congress were now veto-proof to orchestrate Reconstruction how they wanted, without regard to the president. Still, moderate and radical Republicans disagreed.
 2. Radical Republicans were led by Sen. Charles Sumner (of the caning incident) and **Thaddeus Stevens** in the House. Stevens was a stern, crusty man with a passion for helping blacks.
 1. The Radicals wanted a slower Reconstruction where they could bring about major social and economic change to the South.
 2. Moderate Republicans just didn't want to go quite that far with Reconstruction. They were reluctant to get the federal government directly involved in people's lives.
 3. The plan they came up with involved both groups, perhaps leaning toward the Moderates.
 1. They did agree the enfranchisement of blacks was necessary, even if force was needed.

11. Reconstruction by Sword
 1. The **Reconstruction Act** was passed in March, 1867.
 1. It divided the South into 5 military districts. U.S. soldiers would be stationed in each to make sure things stayed under control.
 2. Congress laid out rules for states to be re-admitted. They said (a) the 14th Amendment must be accepted and (b) black suffrage must be guaranteed.
 2. Radical Republicans worried that even if black suffrage was granted, it could later be *removed*.
 1. To resolve this once and for all, the **15th Amendment** guaranteeing black suffrage was written and would be ratified in 1870.
 3. The Supreme Court case of *Ex parte Milligan* (1866) had already stated that military courts could not try civilians when civil courts were present.
 1. Nevertheless, military rule of the South was stark and hated by the South. When the soldiers finally did leave in 1877, power slid back to the white Southerners who found new tricks to achieve their old ways.
12. No Women Voters
 1. Women suffragists had put their campaigns on hold during the struggle for black rights (seeing women and blacks as equally disenfranchised). But when the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were adopted, women leaders were displeased.
 2. The 14th even made reference to "males" as citizens—a step back in many women's rights' eyes.
 1. **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** and **Susan B. Anthony** fought hard to stop the 14th Amendment on the basis of the word "males" entering the Constitution.
 2. **Frederick Douglass** agreed with the women, but felt it was "the Negro's hour."
 3. Additionally, in the 15th Amendment read that voting shouldn't be denied based on "race, color, or previous condition of servitude." The ladies wanted the word "sex" added in too.
 3. When finished, women gained nothing with the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments.
13. The Realities of Radical Reconstruction in the South
 1. Realizing strength in numbers, freed blacks began organizing mainly through the **Union League**.
 1. The League was essentially a web of clubs. In it, blacks were informed of their civic duties, built churches, pushed for Republican candidates in elections, sought to solve problems, and even recruited a black militia for defense.
 2. Despite the changing times, black women made no tangible gains. Their participation came by offering support at parades, rallies, church events, and conventions.
 3. With many white Southerners unable to vote (until taking the oath of allegiance to the U.S.) black Congressmen were elected.
 1. **Hiram Revels** became the first black U.S. senator and **Blanche K. Bruce** served in the Senate for Mississippi.
 4. White Southerners were fully disgruntled.
 1. Blacks were now not only free, but they were serving over the whites in Congress and in state legislatures.
 2. Also, **scalawags** lurked among the whites. They were whites who were sympathetic to the North. Southern whites accused the scalawags of betraying the South.
 3. **Carpetbaggers** also maddened Southerners. They were Northerners who came down South after the war with a "carpet bag" (suitcase) in their hand. Some came to honestly help the South, some came to do business, others came to swindle. All-in-all, Southerners frowned upon carpetbaggers as meddling Yankee.
 5. Despite achievements, graft and corruption ran rampant through the Southern governments.
14. The Ku Klux Klan
 1. Upset whites were driven underground. They started the "Invisible Empire of the South", better known as the "**Ku Klux Klan**" in Tennessee (1866).
 1. The KKK thrived on fear—horses were masked, men were masked, no one knew exactly who was in it.
 2. They burnt crosses, threatened blacks who didn't "know their place", and lynched then murdered blacks.
 2. Any fool or simpleton who could pull a sheet over his head could run around as a Klan spook.
 3. Despite its wrong-headedness and silliness, the Klan was rather effective. Blacks typically did "back-off" from their advances.
 4. Whites used other tricks as well. To disenfranchise blacks, whites started **literacy tests** to weed out illiterate blacks from voting.
 1. Later, when many illiterate whites were also weeded out, "**understanding clauses**" and "**grandfather clauses**" were put into place. In these, whites would conveniently understand something read to them while blacks would not. And anyone whose grandfather had been able to vote could also vote. This meant whites were grandfathered in, blacks not.
15. Johnson Walks the Impeachment Plank
 1. Radical Republicans in Congress-tired of Pres. Johnson's veto stamp-plotted to remove him.

2. The plan was to put the president in a lose-lose situation. Congress passed the **Tenure of Office Act** which said the president needed the Senate's okay to fire anyone who'd been previously appointed by him and approved by the Senate.
 1. The argument was that the Senate approved appointees into office, thus the Senate must approve them out.
 2. Congress' ulterior motive was to protect Edwin M. Stanton's job. He was a Radical Republican spy and in hot water with the president.
 3. If Johnson allowed Stanton to stay, Congress would be happy.
 4. If Johnson fired Stanton despite the new rule, they would put him up for impeachment for not following the letter-of-the-law.
3. Sure enough, early in 1868, Pres. Johnson fired Stanton and Congress impeached him—a formal accusation of wrong doing.
16. A Not-Guilty Verdict for Johnson
 1. At his Senate impeachment trial, Johnson stayed silent. His lawyers argued that Johnson was operating under the Constitution, not the Tenure of Office Act.
 2. To kick out a president, a 2/3 vote was needed. The Senate vote came short by 1 meaning Johnson stayed in office.
 1. Seven Republicans voted with their conscience and voted to *not* remove Johnson.
 3. The fear of creating instability & setting a dangerous example were factors of not-guilty verdict.
17. The Purchase of Alaska
 1. Russia was willing to sell Alaska in 1867. **William H. Seward**, the Secretary of State, was an expansionist. He bought Alaska for \$7.2 million.
 2. Seward's decision was not popular at the time. People called it "Seward's Folly," "Seward's Icebox," "Frigidia," and "Walrussia."
 3. Seward would later be redeemed when large deposits of gold and oil were discovered in Alaska.
18. The Heritage of Reconstruction
 1. To many in the South, Reconstruction was worse than the war. They felt beaten-down, shamed, and their entire world had been turned upside-down.
 1. The war and Reconstruction also bred generations of animosity. Southerners would long refer to the Civil War as the "War of Northern Aggression."
 2. The lot of Southern blacks, despite good intentions, was likely as bad, or even worse, than before the war. White Southerners had fought back through sneaky means and were largely successful at "keeping down" the freed slaves.
 1. True change would not come until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 60's, nearly 100 years later.