

Spring 2016 History & Heritage -- #6
(A Seasonal Catechism for the Study of Western and American Civilization)

Reconstruction in Southern Folklore --- (Johnson; NAS, pp. 245-250)

This heading calls attention to the early and standard view in the South of Republican Reconstruction as nightmare of ruin and robbery under black rule? While there was much mismanagement and corruption characteristic of carpetbag governments, their tenure was short and black lawmakers and officeholders by no means predominated. To be frank, Negro votes were routinely exploited to install whites in office, both carpetbaggers (transplanted Northerners) and scalawags (collaborating Southerners).

Violence Begets Violence --- (Johnson; *North Against South*, pp. 250-255)

This saying suggests that it was no surprise when riots and killings formed part of the Southern opposition to Reconstruction carpetbag regimes? After all, those regimes came to pass after four years of aggressive warfare against Dixie, setting the stage for Northern gains at Southern expense under cover of freeing and enfranchising slaves. Moreover, what violence occurred, no worse than that in the North in the same time frame, was typically blown out of proportion by pro-Republican press propaganda.

Reconstruction, the Southern Reality --- (Johnson; NAS, pp. 245-250)

This heading concedes that Republican Reconstruction of the South exacerbated the calamity of the war, leaving the land destitute for decades? Many were reduced to sharecropping serfs of Northern financiers, while Southerners who kept their lands were taxed heavily for purposes often unnecessary or foul. "Blacks like whites," writes Johnson, "had become colonials in the service of Northern capital, and they discovered how little legal freedom could mean when accompanied by economic bondage."

Behind the Counterrevolution --- (Johnson; *North Against South*, pp. 250-255)

This title speaks to the variety of motives (some self-interested, some principled) driving Southern opposition to congressional Reconstruction's carpetbag regimes? Above all was a pervasive desire to reinstate customary white supremacy in society but perhaps as important were recovery of home rule and insistence on honest government. Other motives included access to political offices and privileges being enjoyed by Northern interlopers along with their allies and gaining relief from oppressive taxes.

Retreat from Southern Reconstruction --- (Johnson; NAS, pp. 155-169)

This reaction to congressional/military rule over the South arose in the Grant era and was sealed by an 1877 compromise measure elevating R. Hayes to the White House? Dissatisfaction with Republicans was widespread given a severe depression, scandals swirling around Grant, and the poor performance of carpetbag governments in Dixie. Even N. businessmen, anxious to colonize the South with their capital and new settlers, concluded that Congress was hurting their cause by provoking hostility in the region.