

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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CORE – X : HISTORY OF USA 1776 TO 1974 A. D(18BHI52C)

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UNIT III

RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstruction (1865-1877), the turbulent era following the Civil War, was the effort to reintegrate Southern states from the Confederacy and 4 million newly-freed people into the United States. Under the administration of President Andrew Johnson in 1865 and 1866, new southern state legislatures passed restrictive “black codes” to control the labor and behavior of former enslaved people and other African Americans. Outrage in the North over these codes eroded support for the approach known as Presidential Reconstruction and led to the triumph of the more radical wing of the Republican Party. During Radical Reconstruction, which began with the passage of the Reconstruction Act of 1867, newly enfranchised Black people gained a voice in government for the first time in American history, winning election to southern state legislatures and even to the U.S. Congress. In less than a decade, however, reactionary forces—

including the [Ku Klux Klan](#)—would reverse the changes wrought by Radical Reconstruction in a violent backlash that restored white supremacy in the South.

Emancipation and Reconstruction

At the outset of the [Civil War](#), to the dismay of the more radical abolitionists in the North, President [Abraham Lincoln](#) did not make abolition of [slavery](#) a goal of the Union war effort. To do so, he feared, would drive the border slave states still loyal to the Union into the Confederacy and anger more conservative northerners. By the summer of 1862, however, enslaved people, themselves had pushed the issue, heading by the thousands to the Union lines as Lincoln's troops marched through the South. Their actions debunked one of the strongest myths underlying Southern devotion to the "peculiar institution"—that many enslaved people were truly content in bondage—and convinced Lincoln that emancipation had become a political and military necessity. In response to Lincoln's [Emancipation Proclamation](#), which freed more than 3 million enslaved people in the Confederate states by January 1, 1863, Black people enlisted in the Union Army in large numbers, reaching some 180,000 by war's end.

During Reconstruction, the Republican Party in the South represented a coalition of Black people (who made up the overwhelming majority of Republican voters in the region) along with "carpetbaggers" and "scalawags," as white Republicans from the North and South, respectively, were known.

Emancipation changed the stakes of the Civil War, ensuring that a Union victory would mean large-scale social revolution in the South. It was still very unclear, however, what form this revolution would take. Over the next several years, Lincoln considered ideas about how to welcome the devastated South back into the Union, but as the war drew to a close in early 1865,

he still had no clear plan. In a speech delivered on April 11, while referring to plans for Reconstruction in [Louisiana](#), Lincoln proposed that some Black people—including free Black people and those who had enlisted in the military—deserved the right to vote. He was assassinated three days later, however, and it would fall to his successor to put plans for Reconstruction in place.

Andrew Johnson and Presidential Reconstruction

At the end of May 1865, President [Andrew Johnson](#) announced his plans for Reconstruction, which reflected both his staunch Unionism and his firm belief in states' rights. In Johnson's view, the southern states had never given up their right to govern themselves, and the federal government had no right to determine voting requirements or other questions at the state level. Under Johnson's Presidential Reconstruction, all land that had been confiscated by the Union Army and distributed to the freed slaves by the army or the [Freedmen's Bureau](#) (established by Congress in 1865) reverted to its prewar owners. Apart from being required to uphold the abolition of slavery (in compliance with the [13th Amendment](#) to the [Constitution](#)), swear loyalty to the Union and pay off war debt, southern state governments were given free rein to rebuild themselves.

As a result of Johnson's leniency, many southern states in 1865 and 1866 successfully enacted a series of laws known as the "[black codes](#)," which were designed to restrict freed Black peoples' activity and ensure their availability as a labor force. These repressive codes enraged many in the North, including numerous members of Congress, which refused to seat congressmen and senators elected from the southern states.

In early 1866, Congress passed the Freedmen's Bureau and Civil Rights Bills and sent them to Johnson for his signature. The first bill extended the life of the bureau, originally established as a temporary organization charged with assisting refugees and freed slaves, while the second defined all persons born in the United States as national citizens who were to enjoy equality before the law. After Johnson vetoed the bills—causing a permanent rupture in his relationship with Congress that would culminate in his [impeachment](#) in 1868—the Civil Rights Act became the first major bill to become law over presidential veto.

Radical Reconstruction

After northern voters rejected Johnson's policies in the congressional elections in late 1866, Radical Republicans in Congress took firm hold of Reconstruction in the South. The following March, again over Johnson's veto, Congress passed the Reconstruction Act of 1867, which temporarily divided the South into five military districts and outlined how governments based on universal (male) suffrage were to be organized. The law also required southern states to ratify the [14th Amendment](#), which broadened the definition of citizenship, granting "equal protection" of the Constitution to former slaves, before they could rejoin the Union. In February 1869, Congress approved the [15th Amendment](#) (adopted in 1870), which guaranteed that a citizen's right to vote would not be denied "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

By 1870, all of the former Confederate states had been admitted to the Union, and the state constitutions during the years of Radical Reconstruction were the most progressive in the region's history. The participation of African Americans in southern public life after 1867 would be by far the most radical development of Reconstruction, which was essentially a large-scale experiment in interracial democracy unlike that of any other society following the abolition of

slavery. Southern Black people won election to southern state governments and [even to the U.S. Congress](#) during this period. Among the other achievements of Reconstruction were the South's first state-funded public school systems, more equitable taxation legislation, laws against racial discrimination in public transport and accommodations and ambitious economic development programs (including aid to railroads and other enterprises).

Reconstruction Comes to an End

After 1867, an increasing number of southern whites turned to violence in response to the revolutionary changes of Radical Reconstruction. The [Ku Klux Klan](#) and other white supremacist organizations targeted local Republican leaders, white and Black, and other African Americans who challenged white authority. Though federal legislation passed during the administration of President [Ulysses S. Grant](#) in 1871 took aim at the Klan and others who attempted to interfere with Black suffrage and other political rights, white supremacy gradually reasserted its hold on the South after the early 1870s as support for Reconstruction waned. Racism was still a potent force in both South and North, and Republicans became more conservative and less egalitarian as the decade continued. In 1874—after an economic depression plunged much of the South into poverty—the Democratic Party won control of the [House of Representatives](#) for the first time since the Civil War. When Democrats waged a campaign of violence to take control of [Mississippi](#) in 1875, Grant refused to send federal troops, marking the end of federal support for Reconstruction-era state governments in the South. By 1876, only [Florida](#), Louisiana and [South Carolina](#) were still in Republican hands. In the contested presidential election that year, Republican candidate [Rutherford B. Hayes](#) reached a compromise with Democrats in Congress: In exchange for certification of his election, he acknowledged Democratic control of the entire South. The [Compromise of 1876](#) marked the end of

Reconstruction as a distinct period, but the struggle to deal with the revolution ushered in by slavery's eradication would continue in the South and elsewhere long after that date. A century later, the legacy of Reconstruction would be revived during the [civil rights movement](#) of the 1960s, as African Americans fought for the political, economic and social equality that had long been denied them.

Slavery in America

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries people were kidnapped from the continent of Africa, forced into slavery in the American colonies and exploited to work as indentured servants and labor in the production of crops such as tobacco and cotton.

Secession crisis

The election of Lincoln provoked the legislature of [South Carolina](#) to call a state convention to consider secession. Before the war, South Carolina did more than any other Southern state to advance the notion that a state had the right to [nullify](#) federal laws, and even to secede from the United States. The convention summoned unanimously voted to secede on December 20, 1860, and adopted the "[Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union](#)". It argued for states' rights for slave owners in the South, but contained a complaint about states' rights in the North in the form of opposition to the [Fugitive Slave Act](#), claiming that Northern states were not fulfilling their federal obligations under the Constitution. The "cotton states" of [Mississippi](#), [Florida](#), [Alabama](#), Georgia, Louisiana, and [Texas](#) followed suit, seceding in January and February 1861.

The first published imprint of secession, a [broadside](#) issued by the [Charleston Mercury](#), December 20, 1860

Among the ordinances of secession passed by the individual states, those of three—Texas, Alabama, and Virginia—specifically mentioned the plight of the "slaveholding states" at the hands of Northern abolitionists. The rest make no mention of the slavery issue and are often brief announcements of the dissolution of ties by the legislatures.^[94] However, at least four states—South Carolina,^[95] Mississippi,^[96] Georgia,^[97] and Texas^[98]—also passed lengthy and detailed explanations of their causes for secession, all of which laid the blame squarely on the movement to abolish slavery and that movement's influence over the politics of the Northern states. The Southern states believed slaveholding was a constitutional right because of the [Fugitive Slave Clause](#) of the Constitution. These states agreed to form a new federal government, the [Confederate States of America](#), on February 4, 1861.^[99] They took control of federal forts and other properties within their boundaries with little resistance from outgoing President [James Buchanan](#), whose term ended on March 4, 1861. Buchanan said that the [Dred Scott decision](#) was proof that the South had no reason for secession, and that the Union "was intended to be perpetual", but that "The power by force of arms to compel a State to remain in the Union" was not among the "enumerated powers granted to Congress".^[100] One-quarter of the U.S. Army—the entire garrison in Texas—was surrendered in February 1861 to state forces by its commanding general, [David E. Twiggs](#), who then joined the Confederacy.^[101]

As Southerners resigned their seats in the Senate and the House, Republicans were able to pass projects that had been blocked by Southern senators before the war. These included the [Morrill Tariff](#), land grant colleges (the [Morrill Act](#)), a [Homestead Act](#), a transcontinental railroad (the [Pacific Railroad Acts](#)),^[102] the [National Bank Act](#), the authorization of [United States Notes](#) by the [Legal Tender Act of 1862](#), and the ending of [slavery in the District of Columbia](#). The [Revenue Act of 1861](#) introduced the [income tax](#) to help finance the war.

On December 18, 1860, the [Crittenden Compromise](#) was proposed to re-establish the [Missouri Compromise](#) line by constitutionally banning slavery in territories to the north of the line while guaranteeing it to the south. The adoption of this compromise likely would have prevented the secession of every Southern state apart from South Carolina, but Lincoln and the Republicans rejected it.^[103]^{*[better source needed]*} It was then proposed to hold a national referendum on the compromise. The Republicans again rejected the idea, although a majority of both Northerners and Southerners would likely have voted in favor of it.^[104]^{*[better source needed]*} A pre-war February [Peace Conference of 1861](#) met in Washington, proposing a solution similar to that of the Crittenden compromise; it was rejected by Congress. The Republicans proposed an [alternative compromise](#) to not interfere with slavery where it existed but the South regarded it as insufficient. Nonetheless, the remaining eight slave states rejected pleas to join the Confederacy following a two-to-one no-vote in Virginia's First Secessionist Convention on April 4, 1861.^[105]

On March 4, 1861, [Abraham Lincoln](#) was sworn in as president. In his [inaugural address](#), he argued that the Constitution was a *more perfect union* than the earlier [Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union](#), that it was a binding contract, and called any secession "legally void".^[106] He had no intent to invade Southern states, nor did he intend to end slavery where it existed, but said that he would use force to maintain possession of Federal property. The government would make no move to recover post offices, and if resisted, mail delivery would end at state lines. Where popular conditions did not allow peaceful enforcement of Federal law, U.S. marshals and judges would be withdrawn. No mention was made of bullion lost from U.S. mints in Louisiana, Georgia, and North Carolina. He stated that it would be U.S. policy to only collect import duties at its ports; there could be no serious injury to the South to justify the armed

revolution during his administration. His speech closed with a plea for restoration of the bonds of union, famously calling on "the mystic chords of memory" binding the two regions.^[106]

The South sent delegations to Washington and offered to pay for the federal properties^[which?] and enter into a peace treaty with the United States. Lincoln rejected any negotiations with Confederate agents because he claimed the Confederacy was not a legitimate government, and that making any treaty with it would be tantamount to recognition of it as a sovereign government.^[107] Secretary of State [William Seward](#), who at the time saw himself as the real governor or "prime minister" behind the throne of the inexperienced Lincoln, engaged in unauthorized and indirect negotiations that failed.^[107] President Lincoln was determined to hold all remaining Union-occupied forts in the Confederacy: [Fort Monroe](#) in Virginia, [Fort Pickens](#), [Fort Jefferson](#) and [Fort Taylor](#) in Florida, and [Fort Sumter](#) – located at the cockpit of secession in Charleston, South Carolina.

Battle of Fort Sumter

Fort Sumter is located in the middle of the harbor of [Charleston](#), South Carolina. Its garrison had recently moved there to avoid incidents with local militias in the streets of the city. Lincoln told its commander, [Maj. Anderson](#) to hold on until fired upon. Confederate president [Jefferson Davis](#) ordered the surrender of the fort. Anderson gave a conditional reply that the Confederate government rejected, and Davis ordered General [P. G. T. Beauregard](#) to attack the fort before a relief expedition could arrive. He bombarded Fort Sumter on April 12–13, forcing its capitulation.

The attack on Fort Sumter rallied the North to the defense of American nationalism. Historian [Allan Nevins](#) underscored the significance of the event:

"The thunderclap of Sumter produced a startling crystallization of Northern sentiment. ... Anger swept the land. From every side came news of mass meetings, speeches, resolutions, tenders of business support, the muster of companies and regiments, the determined action of governors and legislatures."^[108]

Union leaders incorrectly assumed that only a minority of Southerners were in favor of secession and that there were large numbers of southern Unionists that could be counted on. Had Northerners realized that most Southerners favored secession, they might have hesitated at attempting the enormous task of conquering a united South.

Lincoln called on all the states to send forces to recapture the fort and other federal properties. The scale of the rebellion appeared to be small, so he called for only [75,000 volunteers](#) for 90 days.^[110] The governor of Massachusetts had state regiments on trains headed south the next day. In western Missouri, local secessionists seized [Liberty Arsenal](#).^[111] On May 3, 1861, Lincoln called for an additional 42,000 volunteers for a period of three years.^[112]

Four states in the middle and upper South had repeatedly rejected Confederate overtures, but now [Virginia](#), [Tennessee](#), [Arkansas](#), and [North Carolina](#) refused to send forces against their neighbors, declared their secession, and joined the Confederacy. To reward Virginia, the Confederate capital was moved to [Richmond](#).^[113]

Attitude of the border states

[Maryland](#), [Delaware](#), [Missouri](#), and [Kentucky](#) were slave states that were opposed to both secession and coercing the South. [West Virginia](#) then joined them as an additional border state after it separated from [Virginia](#) and became a state of the [Union](#) in 1863.

Maryland's territory surrounded the United States' capital of [Washington, D.C.](#), and could cut it off from the North.^[114] It had numerous anti-Lincoln officials who tolerated anti-army [rioting in Baltimore](#) and the burning of bridges, both aimed at hindering the passage of troops to the South. Maryland's legislature voted overwhelmingly (53–13) to stay in the Union, but also rejected hostilities with its southern neighbors, voting to close Maryland's rail lines to prevent them from being used for war.^[115] Lincoln responded by establishing [martial law](#) and unilaterally suspending [habeas corpus](#) in Maryland, along with sending in militia units from the North.^[116] Lincoln rapidly took control of Maryland and the District of Columbia by seizing many prominent figures, including arresting 1/3 of the members of the [Maryland General Assembly](#) on the day it reconvened.^{[115][117]} All were held without trial, ignoring a ruling by the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court [Roger Taney](#), a Maryland native, that only Congress (and not the president) could suspend habeas corpus ([Ex parte Merryman](#)). Federal troops imprisoned a prominent Baltimore newspaper editor, [Frank Key Howard](#), Francis Scott Key's grandson, after he criticized Lincoln in an editorial for ignoring the Supreme Court Chief Justice's ruling.^[118]

In Missouri, an [elected convention](#) on secession voted decisively to remain within the Union. When pro-Confederate Governor [Claiborne F. Jackson](#) called out the state militia, it was attacked by federal forces under General [Nathaniel Lyon](#), who chased the governor and the rest of the State Guard to the southwestern corner of the state (*see also*: [Missouri secession](#)). In the resulting vacuum, the convention on secession reconvened and took power as the Unionist provisional government of Missouri.^[119]

Kentucky did not secede; for a time, it declared itself neutral. When Confederate forces entered the state in September 1861, neutrality ended and the state reaffirmed its Union status while

trying to maintain slavery. During a brief invasion by Confederate forces in 1861, Confederate sympathizers organized a secession convention, formed the shadow [Confederate Government of Kentucky](#), inaugurated a governor, and gained recognition from the Confederacy. Its jurisdiction extended only as far as Confederate battle lines in the Commonwealth and went into exile for good after October 1862.^[120]

After Virginia's secession, a [Unionist government](#) in [Wheeling](#) asked 48 counties to vote on an ordinance to create a new state on October 24, 1861. A voter turnout of 34 percent approved the statehood bill (96 percent approving).^[121] The inclusion of 24 secessionist counties^[122] in the state and the ensuing guerrilla war engaged about 40,000 Federal troops for much of the war.^{[123][124]} Congress admitted [West Virginia](#) to the Union on June 20, 1863. West Virginia provided about 20,000–22,000 soldiers to both the Confederacy and the Union.^[125]

A Unionist secession attempt occurred in [East Tennessee](#), but was suppressed by the Confederacy, which arrested over 3,000 men suspected of being loyal to the Union. They were held without trial.

BIG BUSINESS: STEEL AND OIL

The term “big business” is often used to characterize industrial expansion after the Civil War. During this period, the movement of the production of goods out of small shops and mills and into factories increased tremendously. In almost every industry, the number of factory workers grew, and by 1900, manufacturing plants with over 1,000 employees — something unheard of 30 years earlier — were commonplace. Big business also meant consolidation; entire industries were controlled by a handful of companies as competition led to new forms of business organization. The steel and oil industries are good examples of this trend.

Andrew Carnegie and the steel industry. With the introduction of such new technology as the Bessemer converter and the open hearth process, the amount of steel produced in the United States went from 77,000 tons in 1870 to over 10 million tons in 1900. The bulk of the production at the turn of the century was in the hands of a single company, Carnegie Steel, founded by Scottish immigrant and railroad entrepreneur Andrew Carnegie. While acquiring other steel companies that were unable to compete against his highly efficient operations, Carnegie also bought iron ore deposits as well as steamships and railroad cars, which were used to ship ore to his plants and goods to his customers. This concept of controlling the manufacture of a product from the raw material stage to the sale of the finished product is known as **vertical integration**. Carnegie sold his company to a group of investors led by J. Pierpont Morgan in 1901 for just under \$500 million. Out of that sale came the United States Steel Corporation, the largest company in the world at that time, controlling 200 subsidiaries and employing more than 168,000 people.

Carnegie was also a philosopher of the new industrial age. His article “Wealth,” which was first published in the *North American Review* in 1889 and was later included in his book *Gospel of Wealth* (1900), drew on the then-popular ideas of social Darwinism. He argued that although competition in business widened the gap between the rich and poor, it also insured the “survival of the fittest” and was essential to human progress. To Carnegie, the issue was not the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, but how those few used their wealth. Carnegie strongly believed that the purpose of philanthropy was to enable people to help themselves, and he used his immense fortune to support universities, libraries, hospitals, and similar projects throughout the country.

John D. Rockefeller and the oil industry. John D. Rockefeller created Standard Oil of Ohio in 1870, and the company quickly monopolized oil refining and transportation in the United States. Rockefeller received significant rebates from the railroads and made his own oil barrels, built pipelines and oil storage facilities, and bought tank cars to reduce expenses. These methods of vertical integration allowed Standard Oil to cut prices and drive competitors out of business. The company also led the way in **horizontal integration**, controlling businesses in the same industry. In 1882, Rockefeller formed the Standard Oil Trust, which controlled upward of 95 percent of the refining capacity in the United States. In a **trust**, stockholders give up their stock and the control of their respective companies to a board of trustees in return for trust certificates, which pay higher dividends.

Growth in the number of trusts led Congress to take action against them. The **Sherman Antitrust Act** of 1890 declared trusts or other business combinations operating “in restraint of trade” to be illegal and authorized the federal government to break them up. However, the legislation did not define what a trust was or what “restraint of trade” meant, and it was not vigorously enforced. Eighteen lawsuits were filed under the statute between 1890 and 1904, four of these against labor unions. Nevertheless, as a result of the antitrust legislation, the Ohio Supreme Court dissolved the Standard Oil Trust in 1892. Rockefeller reorganized his business in 1899 as Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. The new entity was a **holding company** (a corporation owning a controlling share of the stock in other firms), and this new type of combination continued to exercise a monopoly over the oil industry.

New forms of business organization were not unique to steel and oil, though. Gustavus Swift, for instance, established meat packing and provisioning as a vertical integration by purchasing cattle,

refrigerated railroad cars and warehouses, and a fleet of wagons to deliver beef to retail butchers. Similarly, other industries, such as sugar refining, followed Rockefeller's example and formed trusts. Nor was big business limited to heavy industry; the late nineteenth century also saw the rise of large-scale retailing. In Philadelphia in 1876, John Wanamaker opened the first department store, which was quickly imitated by Macy's in New York and Marshall Field in Chicago. The successful department store sold a wide variety of merchandise, kept prices low through buying in large volume direct from manufacturers, focused on quality and customer service, and advertised heavily.

Early federations

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen—now part of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters—was Founded May 8, 1863, at Detroit, Mich.^[21]

The National Labor Union (NLU), founded in 1866, was the second national labor federation in the United States. It was dissolved in 1872.

The regional Order of the Knights of St. Crispin was founded in the northeast in 1867 and claimed 50,000 members by 1870, by far the largest union in the country. A closely associated union of women, the [Daughters of St. Crispin](#), formed in 1870. In 1879 the Knights formally admitted women, who by 1886 comprised 10% of the union's membership,^[22] but it was poorly organized and soon declined. They fought encroachments of machinery and unskilled labor on autonomy of skilled shoe workers. One provision in the Crispin constitution explicitly sought to limit the entry of "green hands" into the trade, but this failed because the new machines could be operated by semi-skilled workers and produce more shoes than hand sewing.^[23]

Railroad brotherhoods^[edit]

With the rapid growth and consolidation of large railroad systems after 1870, union organizations sprang up, covering the entire nation. By 1901, 17 major railway brotherhoods were in operation; they generally worked amicably with management, which recognized their usefulness.^[25] Key unions included the [Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers](#) (BLE), Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Division (BMWED), the [Order of Railway Conductors](#), the [Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen](#), and the [Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen](#).^[26] Their main goal was building insurance and medical packages for their members, as well as negotiating work rules, such as those involving seniority and grievance procedures.^[27]

They were not members of the AFL, and fought off more radical rivals such as the [Knights of Labor](#) in the 1880s and the [American Railroad Union](#) in the 1890s. They consolidated their power in 1916, after threatening a national strike, by securing the [Adamson Act](#), a federal law that provided 10 hours pay for an eight-hour day. At the end of World War I they promoted nationalization of the railroads, and conducted a national strike in 1919. Both programs failed, and the brotherhoods were largely stagnant in the 1920s. They generally were independent politically, but supported the third party campaign of [Robert M. La Follette](#) in 1924.^[28]

Knights of Labor

The first effective labor organization that was more than regional in membership and influence was the Knights of Labor, organized in 1869. The Knights believed in the unity of the interests of all producing groups and sought to enlist in their ranks not only all laborers but everyone who could be truly classified as a producer. The acceptance of all producers led to explosive growth after 1880. Under the leadership of [Terence V. Powderly](#) they championed a variety of causes, sometimes through political or [cooperative](#) ventures.^[29]

Powderly hoped to gain their ends through politics and education rather than through economic coercion. The Knights were especially successful in developing a [working class culture](#), involving women, families, sports, and leisure activities and educational projects for the membership. The Knights strongly promoted their version of [republicanism](#) that stressed the centrality of free labor, preaching harmony and cooperation among producers, as opposed to parasites and speculators.^[29]

One of the earliest railroad strikes was also one of the most successful. In 1885, the Knights of Labor led railroad workers to victory against [Jay Gould](#) and his entire Southwestern Railway system. In early 1886, the Knights were trying to coordinate 1,400 strikes involving over 600,000 workers spread over much of the country. The tempo had doubled over 1885, and involved peaceful as well as violent confrontations in many sectors, such as railroads, street railroads, coal mining, and the McCormick Reaper Factory in Chicago, with demands usually focused on the eight hour day. Suddenly, it all collapsed, largely because the Knights were unable to handle so much on their plate at once, and because they took a smashing blow in the aftermath of the [Haymarket Riot](#) in May 1886 in Chicago.^[30]

As strikers rallied against the McCormick plant, a team of political anarchists, who were not Knights, tried to piggyback support among striking Knights workers. A bomb exploded as police were dispersing a peaceful rally, killing seven policemen and wounding many others. The anarchists were blamed, and their spectacular trial gained national attention. The Knights of Labor were seriously injured by the false accusation that the Knights promoted anarchistic violence. Many Knights locals transferred to the less radical and more respectable AFL unions or railroad brotherhoods.^[31]

American Federation of Labor

The [Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions](#) began in 1881 under the leadership of [Samuel Gompers](#). Like the [National Labor Union](#), it was a federation of different unions and did not directly enroll workers. Its original goals were to encourage the formation of trade unions and to obtain legislation, such as prohibition of child labor, a national eight hour day, and exclusion of Chinese and other foreign contract workers.

Strikes organized by labor unions became routine events by the 1880s. There were 37,000 strikes between 1881 and 1905. By far the largest number were in the building trades, followed far behind by coal miners. The main goal was control of working conditions, setting uniform wage scales, protesting the firing of a member, and settling which rival union was in control. Most strikes were of very short duration. In times of depression strikes were more violent but less successful, because the company was losing money anyway. They were successful in times of prosperity when the company was losing profits and wanted to settle quickly.^[32]

The Federation made some efforts to obtain favorable legislation, but had little success in organizing or chartering new unions. It came out in support of the proposal, traditionally attributed to Peter J. McGuire of the Carpenters Union, for a national Labor Day holiday on the first Monday in September, and threw itself behind the eight hour movement, which sought to limit the workday by either legislation or union organizing.

In 1886, as the relations between the trade union movement and the Knights of Labor worsened, McGuire and other union leaders called for a convention to be held at Columbus, Ohio on December 8. The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions merged with the new organization, known as the American Federation of Labor or AFL, formed at that convention.^[33]

The AFL was formed in large part because of the dissatisfaction of many trade union leaders with the Knights of Labor, an organization that contained many trade unions and that had played a leading role in some of the largest strikes of the era. The new AFL distinguished itself from the Knights by emphasizing the autonomy of each trade union affiliated with it and limiting membership to workers and organizations made up of workers, unlike the Knights which, because of its producerist focus, welcomed some who were not wage workers.

The AFL grew steadily in the late 19th century while the Knights all but disappeared. Although Gompers at first advocated something like [industrial unionism](#), he retreated from that in the face of opposition from the [craft unions](#) that made up most of the AFL.

The unions of the AFL were composed primarily of skilled men; unskilled workers, African-Americans, and women were generally excluded. The AFL saw women as threatening the jobs of men, since they often worked for lower wages. The AFL provided little to no support for women's attempts to unionize.^[34]

Western Federation of Miners

The Western Federation of Miners (WFM) was created in 1893. Frequently [in competition with](#) the American Federation of Labor, the WFM spawned new federations, including the [Western Labor Union](#) (later renamed to the [American Labor Union](#)). The WFM took a conservative turn in the aftermath of the [Colorado Labor Wars](#) and the trials of its president, [Charles Moyer](#), and its secretary treasurer, [Big Bill Haywood](#), for the conspiratorial assassination of Idaho's former governor. Although both were found innocent, the WFM, headed by Moyer, separated itself from the [Industrial Workers of the World](#) (IWW) (launched by Haywood and other labor radicals, socialists, and anarchists in 1905) just a few years after that organization's [founding convention](#). In 1916 the WFM became the International Union of Mine,

Mill, and Smelter Workers, which was eventually absorbed by the [United Steelworkers of America](#).^[35]

Pullman Strike

During the major economic depression of the early 1890s, the Pullman Palace Car Company cut wages in its factories. Discontented workers joined the [American Railway Union](#) (ARU), led by [Eugene V. Debs](#), which supported their strike by launching a boycott of all Pullman cars on all railroads. ARU members across the nation refused to switch Pullman cars onto trains. When these switchmen were disciplined, the entire ARU struck the railroads on June 26, 1894. Within four days, 125,000 workers on twenty-nine railroads had people quit work rather than handle Pullman cars.^[36] Strikers and their supporters also engaged in riots and [sabotage](#).^{[37][38]}

The railroads were able to get Edwin Walker, general counsel for the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway, appointed as a special federal attorney with responsibility for dealing with the strike. Walker went to federal court and obtained an injunction barring union leaders from supporting the boycott in any way. The court injunction was based on the [Sherman Anti-Trust Act](#) which prohibited "Every contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce among the several States". Debs and other leaders of the ARU ignored the injunction, and federal troops were called into action.^[39]

The strike was broken up by [United States Marshals](#) and some 2,000 [United States Army](#) troops, commanded by [Nelson Miles](#), sent in by President [Grover Cleveland](#) on the premise that the strike interfered with the delivery of [U.S. Mail](#). During the course of the strike, 13 strikers were killed and 57 were wounded. An estimated \$340,000 worth of property damage occurred during

the strike. Debs went to prison for six months for violating the federal court order, and the ARU disintegrated.

Labor Exchanges and Tokens[\[edit\]](#)

Labor exchange notes are a rare [numismatic](#) item. They were issued by many Labor Exchanges in the western United States during the 1890s due to difficult economic times and may have been connected to early labor union cooperatives. The notes represented an exchange of labor for goods or labor for labor. However, they were issued in limited numbers and only for a short period of time because the plan to expand the Labor exchange notes program did not meet expectations.

Tokens and [medals](#) were also used as propaganda for labor movements as early as the late 1800s. They were issued by local labor groups to members of their "temples" or made to commemorate important events, such as the Haymarket Massacre in Chicago. These tokens often featured popular labor union symbols like clasped hands or an [arm and hammer](#). Some tokens were industry specific, such as those issued by the Loyal League of Loggers and Lumbermen (LLLL), which depicted airplanes, trees, logs, ships, saws, and axes.^[40]

Organized labor 1900–1920

Australian historian [Peter Shergold](#) confirms the findings of many scholars that the standard of living for US industrial workers was higher than in Europe. He compares wages and the standard of living in Pittsburgh with Birmingham, England. He finds that, after taking into account the cost of living (which was 65% higher in the U.S.), the standard of living of unskilled workers was about the same in the two cities, while skilled workers had about twice as high a standard of living. The American advantage grew over time from 1890 to 1914, and there was a

heavy steady flow of skilled workers from Britain to industrial America.^[41] Shergold revealed that skilled Americans did earn higher wages than the British, yet unskilled workers did not, while Americans worked longer hours, with a greater chance of injury, and had fewer social services.^[41]

Nationwide from 1890 to 1914 the unionized wages in manufacturing rose from \$17.63 a week to \$21.37, and the average work week fell from 54.4 to 48.8 hours a week. The pay for all factory workers was \$11.94 and \$15.84 because unions reached only the more skilled factory workers.^[42]

Coal strikes, 1900–1902

The United Mine Workers was successful in its strike against soft coal (bituminous) mines in the Midwest in 1900, but its strike against the hard coal (anthracite) mines of Pennsylvania turned into a national political crisis in 1902. President [Theodore Roosevelt](#) brokered a compromise solution that kept the flow of coal going, and higher wages and shorter hours, but did not include recognition of the union as a bargaining agent.^[43]

Farmers' Alliance, an American agrarian movement during the 1870s and '80s that sought to improve the economic conditions for farmers through the creation of [cooperatives](#) and political [advocacy](#). The movement was made up of numerous local organizations that coalesced into three large groupings.

In the American [Midwest](#) and West, [farming](#) in the late 19th century was made difficult by a combination of [drought](#) and high fees for the storage and transportation of farm goods to market. In addition, interest rates on loans were high. Farmers subsequently formed various associations to deal with these issues. One such organization was the National Farmers' Alliance (also called

the Northern Alliance), which grew out of the [Granger movement](#) (a farming coalition that fought monopolistic grain transport practices). There was an attempt in 1877 in [New York](#) to start a national organization, but the first effective body was founded in 1880 by farm journalist Milton George in [Chicago](#). Numerous local chapters were formed and organized into state groupings of the National Farmers' Alliance.

In the [South](#), the [Civil War](#) and its aftermath caused trouble for farmers, many of whom were sharecroppers, meaning that they did not own the land they farmed and remained mired in debt owed to the landowners. Smallholders also faced difficulty obtaining affordable loans. The alliance movement in the South had its genesis as the Texas Alliance, founded in the mid-1870s in Lampasas county in [Texas](#). As it expanded throughout the state, it became the Texas State Farmers' Alliance. From the mid-1880s, under the leadership of Charles W. Macune, it was known as the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union (also called the Southern Alliance). It spread throughout the South and made inroads into the West and Midwest as well.

[African American](#) farmers in the South, banned from membership in the Southern Alliance, formed the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union (also called the Colored Farmers' Alliance). This organization had many of the same goals as its white counterpart.

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Many Farmers' Alliance chapters set up [cooperative](#) stores that sold goods at lower prices than retail establishments, and they also established cooperative mills and storehouses to help decrease the costs to farmers of bringing goods to market. Many alliance members became impatient with the piecemeal approach and began making political demands as well. They

supported government regulation or ownership of railways and telegraph companies, an increase in the supply of money, a graduated [income tax](#) and a decrease in [tariffs](#), the abolition of national banks, and the establishment of subtreasuries—government warehouses in which farmers could deposit [crops](#) and borrow against the worth of the crop at a low interest rate. In addition, the alliance sought the direct election of members of the [U.S. Senate](#).

Proponents of the political objectives of the Farmers' Alliance organizations found that, while they were able to achieve some victories in local elections, they were unable to effect change on a national scale. Leaders of the Farmers' Alliance therefore in 1892 founded a [political party](#), the People's, or [Populist](#), Party, to pursue these goals and nominated [James B. Weaver](#) as their candidate in the [1892 presidential election](#). In the process the Farmers' Alliance faded away.

The [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#)

Recognizing the need for a mass movement to capitalize on the successful [Montgomery](#) action, King set about organizing the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#) (SCLC), which gave him a base of operation throughout the South, as well as a national platform from which to speak. King lectured in all parts of the [country](#) and discussed race-related issues with religious and [civil rights](#) leaders at home and abroad. In February 1959 he and his party were warmly received by [India's](#) Prime Minister [Jawaharlal Nehru and others](#); as the result of a brief discussion with followers of Gandhi about the Gandhian concepts of peaceful noncompliance (satyagraha), King became increasingly convinced that nonviolent resistance was the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom. King also looked to [Africa](#) for inspiration. "The liberation struggle in Africa has been

the greatest single international influence on American Negro students,” he wrote. “Frequently I hear them say that if their African brothers can break the bonds of [colonialism](#), surely the American Negro can break [Jim Crow](#).”

In 1960 King and his family moved to his native city of [Atlanta](#), where he became co-pastor with his father of the Ebenezer Baptist Church. At this post he devoted most of his time to the SCLC and the civil rights movement, declaring that the “psychological moment has come when a concentrated drive against injustice can bring great, tangible gains.” His thesis was soon tested as he agreed to support the [sit-in demonstrations](#) undertaken by local Black college students. In late October he was arrested with 33 young people protesting [segregation](#) at the lunch counter in an Atlanta [department store](#). Charges were dropped, but King was sentenced to Reidsville State Prison Farm on the pretext that he had violated his probation on a minor traffic offense committed several months earlier. The case assumed national proportions, with widespread concern over his safety, outrage at [Georgia](#)’s flouting of legal forms, and the failure of Pres. [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) to intervene. King was released only upon the intercession of Democratic presidential candidate [John F. Kennedy](#)—an action so widely publicized that it was felt to have contributed substantially to Kennedy’s slender election victory eight days later.

In the years from 1960 to 1965, King’s influence reached its zenith. Handsome, eloquent, and doggedly determined, King quickly caught the attention of the news media, particularly of the producers of that budding medium of social change—[television](#). He understood the power of

television to nationalize and internationalize the struggle for civil rights, and his well-publicized [tactics](#) of active nonviolence (sit-ins, protest marches) aroused the devoted [allegiance](#) of many African Americans and liberal whites in all parts of the country, as well as support from the administrations of Presidents Kennedy and [Lyndon B. Johnson](#). But there were also notable failures, as in [Albany](#), Georgia (1961–62), when King and his colleagues failed to achieve their desegregation goals for public parks and other facilities.

The Letter From The Birmingham Jail

In [Birmingham](#), Alabama, in the spring of 1963, King's campaign to end [segregation](#) at lunch counters and in hiring practices drew nationwide attention when [police](#) turned dogs and fire hoses on the demonstrators. King was jailed along with large numbers of his supporters, including hundreds of schoolchildren. His supporters did not, however, include all the Black clergy of Birmingham, and he was strongly opposed by some of the white clergy who had issued a statement urging African Americans not to support the demonstrations. From the Birmingham jail, King wrote a letter of great eloquence in which he spelled out his philosophy of nonviolence: Near the end of the Birmingham campaign, in an effort to draw together the multiple forces for peaceful change and to dramatize to the [country](#) and to the world the importance of solving the U.S. racial problem, King joined other civil rights leaders in organizing the historic [March on Washington](#). On [August 28](#), 1963, an interracial assembly of more than 200,000 gathered peaceably in the shadow of the [Lincoln Memorial](#) to demand equal [justice](#) for all citizens under the law. Here the crowds were uplifted by the emotional strength and prophetic quality of King's famous "I Have a Dream" [speech](#), in which he emphasized his faith that all men, someday, would be brothers.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr., delivering his “I Have a Dream” speech during the March on Washington, August 28, 1963. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the March on Washington, 1963.

civil rights movement

American civil rights leaders meeting with government officials at the White House on the day of the March on Washington, August 28, 1963. From left to right, Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, Mathew Ahmann, Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, Joachim Prinz, Eugene Carson Blake, A. Philip Randolph, Pres. John F. Kennedy, Vice Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson, Walter Reuther, Whitney M. Young, Jr., and Floyd McKissick.

Cecil Stoughton—Official White House Photo/John F. Kennedy Presidential Library

The rising tide of civil rights agitation produced, as King had hoped, a strong effect on national opinion and resulted in the passage of the [Civil Rights Act](#) of 1964, authorizing the federal government to enforce desegregation of public accommodations and outlawing discrimination in publicly owned facilities, as well as in employment. That eventful year was climaxed by the award to King of the Nobel Peace Prize in [Oslo](#) in December. “I accept this award today with an abiding faith in [America](#) and an audacious faith in the future of mankind,” said King in his acceptance speech. “I refuse to accept the idea that the ‘isness’ of man’s present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal ‘oughtness’ that forever confronts him.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking at a press conference, 1964. *Marion S. Trikosko, News & World Report, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (reproduction no. LC-DIG-ppmsc-0126*

Challenges Of The Final Years

The first signs of opposition to King's [tactics](#) from within the [civil rights](#) movement surfaced during the March 1965 demonstrations in [Selma](#), Alabama, which were aimed at dramatizing the need for a federal voting-rights law that would provide legal support for the enfranchisement of African Americans in the South. King organized an initial march from Selma to the state capitol building in [Montgomery](#) but did not lead it himself. The marchers were turned back by state troopers with nightsticks and [tear gas](#). He was determined to lead a second march, despite an [injunction](#) by a federal court and efforts from Washington to persuade him to cancel it. Heading a procession of 1,500 marchers, Black and white, he set out across Pettus Bridge outside Selma until the group came to a barricade of state troopers. But, instead of going on and forcing a confrontation, he led his followers to kneel in prayer and then unexpectedly turned back. This decision cost King the support of many young radicals who were already faulting him for being too cautious. The suspicion of an “arrangement” with federal and local authorities—vigorously but not entirely convincingly denied—clung to the Selma affair. The [country](#) was nevertheless aroused, resulting in the passage of the [Voting Rights Act](#) of 1965.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr., delivering his “How Long, Not Long” speech in Montgomery, Alabama, March 25, 1965.

AP Images

Selma March

Arm in arm, Martin Luther King, Jr., and his wife, Coretta Scott King (in light-coloured suit), leading the voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, March 1965.

Throughout the nation, impatience with the lack of greater substantive progress encouraged the growth of Black militancy. Especially in the slums of the large Northern cities, King's religious philosophy of nonviolence was increasingly questioned. The rioting in the [Watts](#) district of [Los Angeles](#) in [August](#) 1965 demonstrated the depth of unrest among urban African Americans. In an effort to meet the challenge of the ghetto, King and his forces initiated a drive against racial [discrimination](#) in [Chicago](#) at the beginning of the following year. The chief target was to be [segregation](#) in housing. After a spring and summer of rallies, marches, and demonstrations, an agreement was signed between the city and a coalition of African Americans, liberals, and labour organizations, calling for various measures to enforce the existing laws and regulations with respect to housing. But this agreement was to have little effect; the impression remained that King's Chicago campaign was nullified partly because of the opposition of that city's powerful mayor, [Richard J. Daley](#), and partly because of the unexpected complexities of Northern racism.

In [Illinois](#) and Mississippi alike, King was now being challenged and even publicly derided by young Black-power enthusiasts. Whereas King stood for patience, middle-class respectability, and a measured approach to [social change](#), the sharp-tongued, blue jean-clad young urban radicals stood for confrontation and immediate change. In the latter's eyes, the suit-wearing, calm-spoken civil rights leader was irresponsibly passive and old beyond his years (King was in his 30s)—more a member of the other side of the generation gap than their revolutionary leader. [Malcolm X](#) went so far as to call King's tactics "criminal": "Concerning nonviolence, it is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks." In the face of mounting criticism, King broadened his approach to include concerns other than racism. On April 4, 1967, at Riverside Church in [New York City](#) and again on the 15th at a mammoth peace rally in that city, he committed himself irrevocably to opposing U.S.

involvement in the [Vietnam War](#). Once before, in early January 1966, he had condemned the war, but official outrage from Washington and strenuous opposition within the Black community itself had caused him to relent. He next sought to widen his base by forming a coalition of the poor of all races that would address itself to economic problems such as poverty and unemployment. It was a version of populism—seeking to enroll janitors, hospital workers, seasonal labourers, and the destitute of Appalachia, along with the student militants and pacifist intellectuals. His endeavours along these lines, however, did not engender much support in any segment of the population.

Meanwhile, the strain and changing dynamics of the civil rights movement had taken a toll on King, especially in the final months of his life. “I’m frankly tired of marching. I’m tired of going to jail,” he admitted in 1968. “Living every day under the threat of death, I feel discouraged every now and then and feel my work’s in vain, but then the [Holy Spirit](#) revives my soul again.”

King’s plans for a [Poor People’s March](#) to Washington were interrupted in the spring of 1968 by a trip to [Memphis, Tennessee](#), in support of a strike by that city’s sanitation workers. In the opinion of many of his followers and biographers, King seemed to sense his end was near. As King prophetically told a crowd at the Mason Temple Church in Memphis on April 3, the night before he died, “I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the promised land.” The next day, while standing on the second-story balcony of the Lorraine Motel, where he and his associates were staying, [King was killed](#) by a sniper’s bullet. The killing sparked riots and disturbances in over 100 cities across the country. On March 10, 1969, the accused assassin, a white man, [James Earl Ray](#), pleaded guilty to the [murder](#) and was sentenced to 99 years in [prison](#).

