### SOUTHERN RESPONSE TO NORTHERN RECONSTRUCTION

Fred J. Posont
East Rockford Middle School
Rockford, MI

Summer 2012

Reconstruction was a period of political crisis and considerable violence. Most white Southerners envisioned a quick reunion in which white supremacy would remain intact in the South. In this vision, African Americans, while in some sense free, would have few civil rights and no voice in government. Many Northerners including President Andrew Johnson, who succeeded to office after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, shared these views. On the other hand, both black Southerners and the majority of Northern Republicans thought that before the Southern states were restored to their place in the Union, the federal government must secure the basic rights of former slaves.

In civil rights legislation and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, the Republican Congress wrote this policy into law. They were attempting, for the first time in history, to create a truly interracial democracy. Faced with violent opposition in the South and a retreat from the ideal of racial equality in the North, Reconstruction proved difficult, challenged and short-lived. Southern response to it created conflict that would eventually make it take another century for the nation to begin to live up to this era's promise of equality for all its citizens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Students will:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Examine and analyze photos of the KKK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read and interpret various perspectives of Southern response to Reconstruction following the Civil War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write a letter to President Grant in response to the proposed Civil Rights Act of 1871 (also known as the KKK Act)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended time frame</th>
<th>Two fifty-minute class periods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade level</td>
<td>Grade 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum fit</td>
<td>United States History, Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Primary Source Analysis Guide for Photographs/Images</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Michigan Social Studies Content Expectations

Social Studies:
U5.3: Reconstruction
8 – 5.3.3 Describe the new role of African Americans in local, state and federal government in the years after the Civil War and the resistance of Southern whites to this change, including the Ku Klux Klan. (C2, C5) (National Geography Standard 10, p. 162)

Procedures

Day One:

- Hand out a copy of the Photo Analysis Worksheet and one of the four perspectives of oral histories to each student. (Two have been provided – choose the most appropriate to your class). Use the Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing Photos to help prompt students’ thoughts and work.
- Students are to examine the photographs attached at the end of the lesson plan and analyze one (or both) using the Photo Analysis Worksheet. Student should study the photograph and make deductions based on the period and event shown. Best practice would entail examining the photograph as a whole for details and an impression and then dividing it into four sections and study each area to see additional details.
- In groups of 3-4, have students discuss what they have seen. Then have them focus on individuals within the photograph and imagine their impressions, feelings, convictions. Have students think what happened just before the picture. Then have students complete the final step in either rubric – what questions do they have and how could they work to answer them.
- Bring class together to discuss what they have seen and their observations.
- Students are to take a copy of the handout (of four oral histories) to read. I suggest you copy all four onto two pages and hand to each student – if you have limited resources, provide one copy of each of four oral histories to each group so that each member has a different reading. (I have provided five different oral histories so that you can select the four you find most compelling or applicable)
- Assign or have students select one of four
perspectives (Freedman’s Bureau representative, a KKK member, a wealthy Southern female, and an African American sharecropper). For homework, have students write a one-page minimum letter to President Grant expressing their view on a proposed act to support enforcement of the 14th amendment (which eventually becomes the Civil Rights Act of 1871, also known as the Ku Klux Klan Act). Ensure that students understand they are writing from a particular perspective and provide the rubric at the end of this lesson so they understand how their work will be evaluated.

- (Optional – To create a deeper experience, after reading their handouts, students should talk to a person taking another perspective to try to convince them of their perspective or viewpoint. This should make their writing richer.)

**Day Two:**

- Students in groups of four different perspectives read their written letter so that they gain knowledge of the different perspectives. Direct discussion regarding the following questions: 1. Why did responses differ? 2. What would President Grant’s response be to the situation?
- Come together as a class and the teacher selects one from each perspective to read their written response to the class. Have a general discussion as a class regarding the overall plan of Reconstruction, the response by Southern groups to it and the impact of that response on groups within the South.
- As a concluding activity, have each student write in their journals (or at the bottom of their written responses) two things they learned about Southern response to Reconstruction following this activity.

**Evaluation**

- Collect the Photo Analysis Worksheet and grade them according to completion, effort, reasoning, etc.
- Paragraph writing according to a writing rubric provided

**Extension**

- Analyze the efforts of the KKK to march in parades in relation to 1st Amendment rights; review in light of the Supreme Court’s decision in *[Brandenburg v. Ohio*](https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/395/444) (1969)
- Compare/contrast the KKK to al Qaeda or another terrorist organization (goals, methods used, opposition, etc.)
- Field Trip to Jim Crow Museum at Ferris State
University (http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/)
The teacher and class should have covered the Civil War and the beginnings of Reconstruction, including the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments. Students should have a strong sense of the significance of the due process and equal protection clauses of the 14th Amendment and have covered Lincoln’s goals for Reconstruction, Andrew Johnson’s conflicts with Republicans and efforts to enforce the protections conveyed in the amendments and supporting Congressional actions including the Freedman’s Bureau.

Included below for the teacher are two written pieces which richly convey the origins of the Ku Klux Klan and efforts by President Grant and Congress to carry out Reconstruction while Southern opponents fought against those efforts.

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amERICANEXPERIENCE/features/general-article/grant-kkk/

General Article: **Rise of the Ku Klux Klan**

*Other General Articles*

*Herb Peck*

*A KKK Member*

At the time of Ulysses S. Grant's election to the presidency, white supremacists were conducting a reign of terror throughout the South. In outright defiance of the Republican-led federal government, Southern Democrats formed organizations that violently intimidated blacks and Republicans who tried to win political power. The most prominent of these, the Ku Klux Klan, was formed in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1865. Originally founded as a social club for former Confederate soldiers, the Klan evolved into a terrorist organization. It would be responsible for thousands of deaths, and would help to weaken the political power of Southern blacks and Republicans.

Racist activity in the South often took the form of riots that targeted blacks and Republicans. In 1866, a quarrel between whites and black ex-soldiers erupted into a full-fledged riot in Memphis, Tennessee. White policemen assisted the mobs in their violent rampage through the black sections of town. By the time the violence ended, 46 people were dead, 70 more were wounded, and numerous churches and schools had been burned. Just two months later, on July 30, a similar outbreak of violence erupted in New Orleans. This time, a white mob attacked the attendees of a black suffrage convention, killing 37 blacks and three whites who allied with them.

In this violent atmosphere, the Ku Klux Klan grew in size and strength. By 1868, the Klan had evolved into a hooded terrorist organization that its members called "The Invisible Empire of the South." The reorganized Klan's first leader, or "Grand Wizard," was Nathan Bedford Forrest, who had been a Confederate general during the Civil War.

White Southerners from all classes of society joined the Klan's ranks. In the name of preserving law and order in a white-dominated society, Klansmen punished newly freed blacks for a variety of reasons, including behaving in an "impudent" manner toward whites. They whipped the teachers of freedmen's schools and burnt their schoolhouses.
But first and foremost, the Klan sought to do away with Republican influence in the South by terrorizing and murdering its party leaders and all those who voted for it.

In the time leading up to the 1868 presidential election, the Klan's activities picked up in speed and brutality. The election, which pitted Republican Ulysses S. Grant against Democrat Horatio Seymour, was crucial. Republicans would continue programs that prevented Southern whites from gaining political control in their states. Klan members knew that given the chance, the blacks in their communities would vote Republican.

Across the South, the Klan and other terrorist groups used brutal violence to intimidate Republican voters. In Kansas, over 2,000 murders were committed in connection with the election. In Georgia, the number of threats and beatings was even higher. And in Louisiana, 1,000 blacks were killed as the election neared. In those three states, Democrats won decisive victories at the polls.

Nevertheless, the Klan's violent actions proved to many Northerners that the South had not learned its lesson in the recent war. In this way, the Klan's activities actually backfired. People realized that harsher laws would have to be passed in order to stop the violence and protect Southern blacks. And those laws were soon in coming.

In the 1868 presidential election, Republican Ulysses S. Grant won the office with the slogan, "Let Us Have Peace." Republicans also won a majority in Congress. Many Northerners, disgusted by Klan violence, lent their support to the Fifteenth Amendment, which gave the vote to black men in every state, and the First Reconstruction Act of 1867, which placed harsher restrictions on the South and closely regulated the formation of their new governments. Other legislation attacked the Klan more directly. Between 1870 and 1871, Congress passed the Enforcement Acts, which made it a crime to interfere with registration, voting, officeholding, or jury service of blacks. More than 5,000 people were indicted under these laws; a little more than 1,000 were convicted.

In 1871 Congress also passed the Ku Klux Klan Act, which allowed the government to act against terrorist organizations. Grant did not rigorously enforce these laws, although he did order the arrest of hundreds of Klan members. But with the overwhelming support of the Klan in the South, convictions proved difficult to obtain, and the financial panic of 1873 would distract the North from the problems of Southern racism. In 1882 the United States Supreme Court declared Ku Klux Klan Act unconstitutional.

HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE ACT

Knowing the act's background is essential to understanding its place in history and its contemporary relevance. The United States Supreme Court, in its interpretation of the act, has taken that historical background extremely seriously.

The act was intended to enforce the Fourteenth Amendment. The motivation for its passage really begins with events that took place near the end of the Civil War in 1863. At the time, President Abraham Lincoln issued a simple statement called the Emancipation Proclamation. This document freed the slaves in the states that had seceded from the Union. Because the Emancipation Proclamation was a presidential order, Congress was concerned it might be overridden by subsequent legislation. Congress then passed the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude and gave Congress the power to enforce its provisions.

It soon became clear that the Thirteenth Amendment was insufficient to end the conditions of servitude in which the freed slaves found themselves. Many states enacted "Black Codes." These were laws that so closely regulated the lives of the former slaves as to be just short of slavery. For example, unemployed African Americans could be fined as vagrants or imprisoned. To enter some states, they had to post bond. As a result, African Americans found themselves limited to working for their former masters, and still ostracized and inhibited from enjoying any fruits of freedom.

Congress passed several historic civil rights acts in an effort to remedy the limitations of the Thirteenth Amendment. The Act of April 9, 1866 gave the former slaves citizenship and some basic economic and legal rights. Doubts as to the constitutional validity of this law led to the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1868. Like the 1866 act, the Fourteenth Amendment bestowed citizenship as a national birthright, overruling the Dred Scott Decision of 1857. It contained broader prohibitions against discrimination than those in the 1866 act. It guaranteed that no state would make laws to abridge "the privileges and immunities of citizens" or deprive any person of "life, liberty or property without due process of law," or "deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Section 5 of the Fourteenth Amendment gave Congress the power to enforce its provisions.

The Southern states initially refused to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment. In response, Congress instituted military, or radical, reconstruction, in the South. Congress's efforts to exert greater control were successful in reconstituting the state electorates, but unsuccessful in stemming the rebelliousness of state officials and the citizenry. Evidence of the brutal lynchings of former slaves and the destruction of property began to emerge. These attacks were the work of a number of white supremacy groups, the most notorious of which was the Ku Klux Klan. Their acts were intended to deter African Americans from exercising any of the basic rights granted to them by the Civil Rights Act of 1866 or the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Even worse, there was evidence that state officials were encouraging this vigilante action and were deliberately unresponsive to pleas they utilize law enforcement power to stop it. Even if perpetrators were apprehended, there was no commitment within the state legal systems to bringing them to justice or mete out punishment.

In March 1871 President Ulysses S. Grant came to Congress and requested emergency legislation to stem what he described as virtual anarchy in the South. He told Congress the states would not and could not control the violence. The legislative response to this plea was the Civil Rights Act of April 20, 1871. It was known as the Ku Klux Klan Act because of that group's prominent participation in the violence.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE ACT

Section 5 of the Fourteenth Amendment gave Congress the power to address the problem President Grant described. Representative Samuel Shellabarger, a Republican from Ohio, introduced "a bill (H.R. No. 320) to enforce the provisions of the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for other purposes." Section 1, the civil remedy for violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, was derived from the 1866 Civil Rights Act. It generated
little debate among the representatives. The controversial portion of the act was section 2, which imposed its penalties on "any person" conspiring to do certain acts. Opponents argued that the provision would be unconstitutional because it was not limited to those acting under color of state law. This meant it could potentially reach purely private parties. The sections granting the president the power to suspend habeas corpus and to use armed force to suppress violence were also argued to be beyond the scope of the Fourteenth Amendment's protection. First the House, and then the Senate, passed the bill. The chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Lyman Trumbull, a Republican from Illinois, was a proponent of the act though he interpreted it rather narrowly. One controversial amendment, known as the Sherman Amendment, sought to make cities and counties liable for violence occurring within their borders. The House refused to concur, and legislators held a conference committee meeting. The Sherman Amendment was rewritten to impose liability only for persons who knew of a conspiracy to violate civil rights and who could have prevented it. Finally both Houses agreed and the Ku Klux Klan Act became law on April 20, 1871.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMAGE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>CITATION</th>
<th>PERMANENT URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image of a cross being burned" /></td>
<td>Burning of 80 ft. cross, KKK, 8/9/25; glass negative</td>
<td>Library of Congress, Prints &amp; Photographs Division, Washington D.C. 20540 USA; August 9, 1925; Call Number LC-F81-36626 [P&amp;P]</td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/npcc.27468">http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/npcc.27468</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image of a KKK group with children" /></td>
<td>KKK group with children (copy); glass negative</td>
<td>Library of Congress, Prints &amp; Photographs Division, Washington D.C. 20540 USA; ca. 1912-1930; Call Number LC-F81-43556 [P&amp;P]</td>
<td><a href="http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/npc2008008117/">http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/npc2008008117/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image with text" /></td>
<td>This is a copy of the manuscript from Mrs. Jennie Isabel Coleman, an 81-year old woman describing life during Reconstruction times.</td>
<td>Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection.</td>
<td><a href="http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpa:@field(DOC_ID+@lit(wpa330080507))">http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpa:@field(DOC_ID+@lit(wpa330080507))</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mrs. Annie L. Coleman is a widow of high social connections, and has many relatives and friends throughout the county of Fairfield. She is an authority on the history of that section known as WVurberville. At the present time, she is residing with her sister, Mrs. Mary E. Frease, who lives on the east side of State Highway 41, near the intersection with the side road leading to Galena, W. I.

Our neighborhood has always had something peculiar or distinctive about it—a little different from the other portions of Fairfield County. The early settlers were Frease and Coleman. These two families have made this section noted for its conservatism and for its responsiveness to any progressive movement leading to civic betterment and commendable reforms.

The Frease are of Swiss origin, from the Canton of Geneva. The name was originally 'Freise,' but changed to 'Frease' in the early days of the Colony. The family came to the vicinity of North Carolina from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. I have seen and inspected the process of land to Andrew Frease among the records in the office of the secretary of State, Columbia, S. C.

The Coleman came from Wales to America first to Virginia, then to Wayne County, N. C., and, finally, to South Carolina, purchasing lands in this section. The first Coleman was Israel the Coleman, a remarkable man in the early days of the settlement. He was a surveyor, a humane slave owner, a useful citizen, and a good neighbor. Old Ben Tillman once said in a Charleston speech, 'I am God

Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection.

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpa:@field(DOCID+@lit(wpa330082108))
American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940

[Judge J. H. Yarbrough; project # 1655]

American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940

[C. S. Bradley]

Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpa:@field(DOCID+@lit(wpa330081707))

Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpa:@field(DOCID+@lit(wpa333010906))
American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940

[The story of Immokalee]

Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, WPA Federal Writers' Project Collection.; project #

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpa:@field(DOC ID+@lit(wpa110120220))

The story of Immokalee, as given to me by Mrs. Platt, had special interest. I had been informed, when I first went here, by Dean Leroy Hensley, who ran the United States Commission to the Seminole Indians, that Immokalee was an old Seminole name and that a Seminole Chief by that name had been in the old Seminole offices. Dean Hensley said that it was originally a little greater and grown settlement started by some settlers from Fort Myers. Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce said he was wrong, that it was Indian.

I map of Florida by Paul McNally, dated 1898 did not show anything in that part of the county, save Lake Trafford and the old Fort Myers.

Capt. J. J. Jordan agreed with Dean Hensley, so I have been investigating and finally found Mrs. Platt. I believe her story to be right. I have written in the Fort Myers Department about it.

Mrs. Platt has opened another line of study for me, namely: what did the use of watermelon mouthwash and the question of learning came to be used in Florida's early days. I have started out to question everyone as to how sales of sink and self rising flour were started to come being popular, and to get recipes of the olden time. I have asked to find out what they all for coffee in 1820. I also want to know what they did for coffee in the 1840's. I have been trying to make my own recipes for making octopus for coffee. I wish to collect cooking southerners to acquire information.

There is a chance that I may be able to go over to the next county after Immokalee. I shall visit other Old Seminole towns and perhaps Immokalee, and also go to St. Luis to see the Seminole County. Since, I believe, are the old "Government grants" of the Seminole Indians. I am going to collect data in this area.

Through Mrs. Platt, I hope to secure more close to other lines of information.
Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step 1. Observation

A. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

Step 3. Questions

A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

B. Where could you find answers to them?
**Photograph Analysis Sheet**

You are an historian examining the primary source documents assigned to you. Based on the primary source and the knowledge that you bring to this examination, what deductions can you make about the period, issue, and/or event?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBSERVATIONS</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>DEDUCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Notes on what you see; your details should help someone who has not seen the image to visualize it.)</td>
<td>(Prior knowledge based on experience or study.)</td>
<td>(What you can infer or conclude.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What questions does this primary source raise? What else would you need to know?
# Letter-Writing: Response to Proposed Civil Rights Law

**US History**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>The letter contains at least 5 accurate facts about the topic.</td>
<td>The letter contains 3-4 accurate facts about the topic.</td>
<td>The letter contains 1-2 accurate facts about the topic.</td>
<td>The letter contains no accurate facts about the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong></td>
<td>Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized fashion. It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.</td>
<td>Ideas were expressed in a pretty clear manner, but the organization could have been better.</td>
<td>Ideas were somewhat organized, but were not very clear. It took more than one reading to figure out what the letter was about.</td>
<td>The letter seemed to be a collection of unrelated sentences. It was very difficult to figure out what the letter was about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
<td>Complies with all the requirements for a persuasive letter on this topic.</td>
<td>Complies with almost all the requirements for a persuasive letter on this topic.</td>
<td>Complies with several of the requirements for a persuasive letter on this topic.</td>
<td>Complies with very few of the requirements for a persuasive letter on this topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentences &amp; Paragraphs</strong></td>
<td>Sentences and paragraphs are complete, well-constructed and of varied structure.</td>
<td>All sentences are complete and well-constructed (no fragments, no run-ons). Paragraphing is generally done well.</td>
<td>Most sentences are complete and well-constructed. Paragraphing needs some work.</td>
<td>Many sentence fragments or run-on sentences OR paragraphing needs lots of work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handouts

Burning of 80 ft. cross, KKK, 8/9/25; glass negative
KKK group with children (copy); glass negative
Mrs. Ella Gooding (aged 80) and her husband Robert (aged 82) lived in Winnsboro, South Carolina, when they were interviewed by the WPA Federal Writers Project. Mrs Gooding had been born near Winnsboro; her husband had been born in Kentucky and had moved to South Carolina after the Civil War. What were the Goodings' views toward Reconstruction and the Ku Klux Klan? What other observations do you find interesting?

View the entire interview with the Goodings from American Life Histories, 1936-1940. Use your browser's Back Button to return to this point.

Mr. Gooding: "I was born in the State of Kentucky, October 20, 1855, but my father, A. F. Gooding, and my mother with the family, moved to Polk County, Missouri, when I was but a child. My father joined the Confederate Army, although we were living in a state that didn't go with the seceded states.

"Yankees came often to our house in search for father, and they showed mother the tree on which they proposed to hang him if he was ever caught by them. They took off all our slaves without our leave, for which we never received any compensation. Mother decided to take the family, consisting of my two young brothers, Sterling and Charles, my sister, Bell, and myself back to the old home in Kentucky.

"After the war in 1869, father moved us to Winnsboro. . . .

"The military rule in Winnsboro was not oppressive; however, it was distasteful to have a Negro company of U.S. troops located here. There was no marauding, no insolence, although they were stationed here six months on Mt. Zion campus. They were transferred later and white soldiers sent in their stead. Their barracks were in the Presbyterian woods in the southern part of the town. I remember there were a good many Germans in this company who couldn't speak English to amount to much.

"The Ku Klux Klan was a necessary organization and did much to discharge [discourage?] weak white men and ignorant Negroes from lowliness. When the Ku Klux Klan wished to get rid of an undesirable white man or Negro, they would put an empty coffin at the undesirable person's front door. It usually caused the warned one to disappear. Although not a Ku Klux, one night I witnessed a parade of white-sheeted riders and recognized my own horse in the parade. In the morning my horse was in his stable, as usual. I asked no questions about the occurrence until years afterward. . . .

"After the Civil War, our people had no money. We became a one-crop people. Cotton was ready money. Northern manufacturers and western farmers encouraged this, and we were without scientific knowledge. Speculators manipulated all the profit out of cotton by a system of exchanges, grades, and quotations. A system of credit was inaugurated by the State Lien Law. By this system the farmer paid tribute to the local Caesar, twenty-five to fifty times the price for plantation supplies."

View the entire interview with the Goodings from American Life Histories, 1936-1940.
James Henry Yarborough was a Probate Judge in Chester County, South Carolina, when we was interviewed by a WPA Federal Writer's Project writer. Much of that interview dealt with his experiences as a young man in the period after the Civil War. What were Yarborough's major points about the end of the war and Reconstruction?

View the entire interview with Judge Yarborough from American Life Histories, 1936-1940. Use your browser's Back Button to return to this point.

"I was a tousled-head boy when the Yankees reached Jenkinsville and our old home, after crossing at Freshley's Ferry on Broad River. The invading army confiscated everything, such as corn, wheat, oats, peas, fodder, hay, and all smokehouse supplies. My recollection is that they came in February, 1865. I was then a freckled-face boy nine years old, and I fought like fury to retain about a pack of corn-on-the-cob that the Yankee's horses had left in a trough unconsumed.

"I remember, too, how grief stricken I was when a Yankee soldier killed my little pet dog. He had a gun with a bayonet fixed on the muzzle. He began teasing me about the corn. The little dog ran between my legs and growled and barked at the soldiers whereupon with an oath the soldier unfeelingly ran the bayonet through the neck of the faithful little dog and killed him.

"When that cruel war was over, it would have been wiser had the whites and ex-slaves been left to their own resources and inventions, to work out their future welfare. There was no lack of affection or loyalty on the part of the Negro, nor was there a lack of love and an enlightened appreciation of self-interest upon the part of the whites. Things might have been different if suffrage had been granted gradually. But with immediate equal suffrage, or the right to vote, came the carpetbagger with his preachments of social equality and the tantalizing bag of tricks to get for every Negro 40 acres of land and a mule. The Negroes were credulous and believed all the absurdities the knaves told them. The result was an inevitable curse for the Negro and lots of trouble for the white people. It ended only when Hampton was elected in 1876. Hampton is still my hero and a man of greatest worth in the annals of South Carolina."
C.S. Bradley was born in Kentucky during the Civil War. As a young boy, Bradley’s family moved to Texas soon after the war was over. He attended school, taught school for three years, and studied the law on weekends and holidays. He passed the bar exams and practiced law for many years. In the excerpt below, Bradley discusses Reconstruction as it took place in his community. What are Bradley's views about Reconstruction? About Yankees? About Carpetbaggers? Who were the Carpetbaggers?

"I am of Scotch Irish descent and was born in Kentucky during the Civil War. I attended such schools as the county afforded and labored on a farm. While I was a young boy, we came to Texas, soon after the war ended. We came in covered wagons and I have lived in Limestone County, since we came here. I attended Thornton Institute three years; taught school three years and then practiced law continuously. I studied law at night, on Saturday, Sunday and on holidays. I [?] the examination for the bar and was licensed to practice. . . .

"After the Civil War ended at Appomatox the Confederates returned to their homes broken in health and fortune, but strong in their patriotic determination to begin all over again; which, with the assistance of such men as Governor [Coke?] and Hamilton, would have succeeded quickly had it not been for the enemies of the South and the Yankee element of designing politicians who lived by the misfortunes of the South. These swooped like vultures upon the patriotic, but misguided South.

"About the time my parents removed from Kentucky to Texas, Limestone County was the center of the storm of Reconstruction. When the radical element in Congress overpowered the President and disenfranchised practically the entire white population of the South they gave the voted to the ignorant, black, ex-slaves and a few less worthy white renegades. The people of the county suffered from the abuse and domineering of the Carpet baggers as white people have seldom suffered. These abuses have often been recited. The actors, with few exceptions, have now answered the last roll call. Under Providential guidance, we have wonderfull reconstructed and rebuilt that which we had lost. The black, along with the white people, suffered as they have not suffered since. There is told the story of many a black who was misled into trouble by the carpet baggers, and renegade whites. They had their dens in the banks of the [Navasota?] River, and [one?], Merrick [?] Renfro was a typical outlaw. He was credited with the slaying of a white man, by the name of Applewhite, in Groesbeck. This caused the county to be placed under martial law. During this time, many negroes were slain in the county."
Mrs. Mary Platt was seventy-eight years old when interviewed by the WPA. In her own words, she was "not very strong on her feet" but still got around. She was a "real pioneer woman" in the words of the federal writer who interviewed her or as she expressed it herself: "A real genuine Florida cracker." How does Mrs. Platt justify her views about Reconstruction?

View the entire interview with Mrs. Platt from American Life Histories, 1936-1940. Use your browser's Back Button to return to this point.

. . . They had good hogs in those days, but when everything was demoralized during war days, and through the terrible days of reconstruction, many people were unable to feed their stock, there were no Negroes to work the farm, and "everything went to ruin." That is why the "native stock" of cattle and pigs was so poor in Florida.

North Florida, where Mary's people had lived for generations, was a cattle and hog country. Both the planters and their slaves had all the meat they wanted, such as beef, pork, poultry and wild game. During the four years of the war, times were hard but the climax came with reconstruction when "Carpetbaggers" took control.

Mary remembers her childhood home as one of comfort and peace. Her father owned a small farm which was worked by a few slaves who were well treated. There was a plentiful food supply such as various vegetables, peaches, pears, apples, plums and grapes in season, plenty of meat, both fresh and cured, and game at all times. They used to have turkey several times during the week, besides other birds and small game. Cane and sorghum cutting and boiling of syrup were festive times for both family and slaves. Things were different when the Civil War came on which only prepared the way for the suffering that followed during reconstruction.

Asked for information on the days following the war, Mary told of how the slaves were declared free. Many went off, only to come back asking for food and clothing, or for money, of which there was none, although they understood that they no longer needed to work. This was where the northern politician came into the picture, forbidding the slave to work for his old master unless he was paid for every trifling service rendered. There was no money save Confederate script and not much of that.

Slaves were encouraged to go away from the land on which they had lived. Many went away only to become vagrants and were guilty of misdemeanors in other localities. As conditions grew more desperate, so the problem of the Negro became more serious. The carpetbagger stirred them to lawlessness, and only the appearance of the Ku Klux Klan saved the women and children of the South, including the north Florida counties and the southern counties of Georgia, where the Burrell families and their connections had their properties. . . .

Another thing of which she spoke was the absence of schools for the children. In reconstruction days, there were schools for the freedmen maintained by northern money, and pretty, young New England school mams. Children of southern families were usually taught at home or, in each community, families would arrange to have children meet at one house where the teaching was done by someone, often an old man or woman, who could at least give the children the three R's. "The reason why so many elderly Florida women have scant education" Mary said, "is due to the fact that school facilities were so meager in those terrible years.

View the entire interview with Mrs. Platt from American Life Histories, 1936-1940.
Mrs. Jennie Isabel Coleman was 81 years old when interviewed by the WPA. She was a widow and in the words of the WPA interviewer "of high social connection." She obviously took pride in her community and in the "progressive" bent of her ancestors. What were her views of Reconstruction? What reasons can you find for her views?

View the entire interview with Jennie Coleman from American Life Histories, 1936-1940. Use your browser's Back Button to return to this point.

"Our neighborhood has always had something peculiar or distinctive about it - a little different from the other portions of Fairfield County. The early settlers were Feasters and Colemans. These two families have made this section noted for its conservatism and for its responsiveness to any progressive movement tending to civic betterment and commendable reform.

"The Feasters are of Swiss origin, from the [?] of [?]. The name was originally 'Pfeisters' but changed to 'Feaster' in the early days of the Colony. The family came to the Colony of South Carolina from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. I have seen and inspected the grants at land to Andrew Feaster among the records in the office of the Secretary of State, Columbia, S. C.

"The Colemans came from Wales to America; first to Virginia, then to Halifax County, N. C., and, finally, to South Carolina, purchasing lands in this section. The first Coleman was David Roe Coleman, a remarkable man in the early times of the settlement. He was a surveyor, a humane slave owner, a useful citizen, and a good neighbor.

"Our section was a long distance from a railroad; in fact, the extreme northern portion was called 'the dark corner.' Strange men would come in Ku Klux times, find a safe retreat, accept hospitality for awhile, and then leave. The women and older children would surmise that these men were Ku Klux members in hiding, and our romantic fancies would surmise their deeds, hair-breath escapes, and romances. But we really never learned anything - so reticent were our parents and elders on the subject.

"Our section yielded to none in its ardent support of the Red Shirt movement that elected Wade Hampton governor. The hate of oppression and the love of independence united these people to throw off the yoke of carpetbag government. The casuist may see a crime in the acts of fraud at the Feasterville box in 1876, but our people realized that a condition, not a theory, confronted them. Half our votes had been left on the battlefields of our country, we were already the political serfs of our former slaves. And if things kept on as they were, we would become their industrial servants also. We feared that the scum of the North's disbanded army, not content with political supremacy and ownership of lands and property, would come down South and demand social equality, and that the South, held down by Federal bayonets, would have to submit and live among its horrors or seek asylums and homes in other parts of the world."