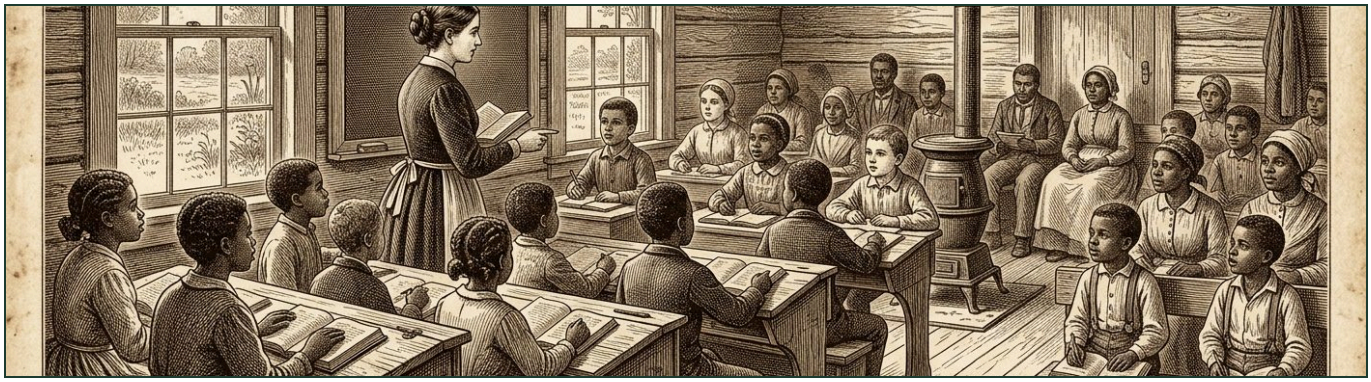


1865 – 1877

Reconstruction Era Timeline

Reconstruction was the period after the Civil War when the federal government worked to reunite the nation and define the rights of formerly enslaved Black Americans.

1865 — **Civil War Ends; Lincoln Assassinated**

The Civil War ends in April with the Confederate surrender; President Lincoln is assassinated by John Wilkes Booth five days after Lee surrenders.

> **Why it mattered:** *Lincoln's death was a catastrophic blow — his plan for a lenient reconciliation was replaced by a harder Congressional approach, and leadership passed to the far less skilled Andrew Johnson.*

1865 — **13th Amendment — Slavery Abolished**

The 13th Amendment is ratified in December, abolishing slavery everywhere in the United States.

> **Why it mattered:** *Slavery's legal end was Reconstruction's greatest achievement — but it left four million formerly enslaved people free with no land, no money, and uncertain legal rights.*

1865 — **Freedmen's Bureau Created**

Congress creates the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands to help formerly enslaved people transition to freedom.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Freedmen's Bureau provided food, housing, schools, and legal assistance to millions of Black Americans — the first major federal social welfare program in US history.*

1865–66 — **Black Codes**

Southern states pass restrictive laws called Black Codes to limit Black Americans' rights and keep them in conditions as close to slavery as possible.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Black Codes outraged Republicans in Congress and led them to take control of Reconstruction away from President Johnson — triggering the more radical phase.*

Reconstruction Era Timeline *continued*

1867 — **Congressional Reconstruction**

Congress passes the Reconstruction Acts, dividing the South into military districts and requiring states to grant Black men the right to vote before rejoining the Union.

> **Why it mattered:** *For the first time, Black men across the South voted and held office — electing senators, congressmen, and local officials in significant numbers.*

1868 — **14th Amendment**

The 14th Amendment is ratified, granting citizenship to everyone born in the United States and guaranteeing equal protection of the laws to all persons.

> **Why it mattered:** *The 14th Amendment fundamentally changed the Constitution — its equal protection clause became the legal foundation for almost every major civil rights advance in the 20th century.*

1870 — **15th Amendment**

The 15th Amendment is ratified, prohibiting the denial of voting rights based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

> **Why it mattered:** *For the first time Black men throughout the nation had a constitutional right to vote — a right they exercised in large numbers across the South during Reconstruction.*

1870–71 — **Ku Klux Klan Acts**

Congress passes laws giving the federal government power to prosecute the Ku Klux Klan and other groups using terrorism to stop Black Americans from voting.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Klan Acts led to real prosecutions and temporarily reduced Klan violence — demonstrating that federal enforcement could protect civil rights when the will existed to use it.*

1873 — **Economic Panic Shifts Attention**

A severe financial panic leads to a deep economic depression; Northern Republicans lose interest in Reconstruction as economic problems dominate attention.

> **Why it mattered:** *The panic shifted Northern focus away from the South — and without Northern pressure, the forces working to end Reconstruction grew stronger year by year.*

1877 — **Reconstruction Ends**

A political compromise to resolve the disputed 1876 presidential election results in the withdrawal of the last federal troops from the South.

> **Why it mattered:** *Without federal troops, Southern states rapidly stripped Black Americans of voting rights and civil liberties through Jim Crow laws — rights that would not be restored for nearly a century.*