

Section

4

Texas after Reconstruction

Main Ideas

1. Texas politics changed with the Constitution of 1876 and one-party rule.
2. African Americans were denied equal rights after Reconstruction.
3. After Reconstruction, many Texas farmers became sharecroppers and tenant farmers.

Key Terms and People

- Redeemers
- segregation
- Jim Crow laws
- tenant farmers
- sharecroppers

Why It Matters Today

Texans wrote a new constitution in 1876. Use current events sources to learn about how laws are made in Texas today.



TEKS: 1C, 5B, 6A, 10B, 17C, 21A, 21B, 21C, 21D, 21E, 21F, 22A, 22B, 22C, 22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on the changes that took place in Texas after Reconstruction.

The Story Continues

The Democratic delegates to the constitutional convention were determined to cut costs. They refused even to keep a journal of the convention proceedings, convinced that doing so would be a waste of money. Many delegates argued that state officials earned too much. But they could not agree on what the governor's salary should be. Was \$5,000 a year, as provided in the Constitution of 1869, too high? Delegate J. L. German, a teacher, thought so. "The position should not be one that men would aspire to [desire] for the sake of money," he argued. "But rather for the honor attached to it."



The Texas Constitution of 1876

Democrats soon called for another constitutional convention, and in 1875 delegates met to write a new constitution. Of the 90 delegates, 15 were Republicans. Six of the Republicans were African American. Under the new constitution, the governor's term again became two years rather than four. The governor's power to appoint officials was reduced, and the legislature was again scheduled to meet once every two years instead of every year.

KEY DATE 1876

Delegates to the constitutional convention pass the Texas Constitution of 1876, which remains the foundation of our state government today.

To limit government spending, the constitution did not let the legislature go into debt for more than \$200,000. Many spending proposals had to be approved by Texas voters. The issue of education prompted considerable debate. Delegate Richard Sansom called for reduced support for public schools because Texans had complained about taxes. Most delegates agreed, and the new constitution dramatically cut back public school funding. Texas voters approved the constitution in February 1876. The Constitution of 1876 is still the state's basic law.

In addition to writing a new constitution, the Democrats immediately began to reverse the policies of the Davis administration. They removed Republican officials and cut government spending. Richard Coke's victory marked the beginning of 100 years of Democratic control in Texas. During this period of one-party rule, Democrats in Texas won nearly all state and local offices. Democrats continued to limit taxes and government spending, including education spending. School attendance was no longer required, and local authorities were allowed to take control of schools.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea What was the Democrats' goal in writing the Constitution of 1876?

BIOGRAPHY

Richard Coke

(1829–1897) A native of Virginia, Richard Coke moved to Waco in 1850. Coke attended the Secession Convention and fought for the Confederacy. After the war he served on the Texas Supreme Court. He was removed from office by federal military authorities in 1867. As governor he reversed many policies put in place by the Radical Republicans. Coke was reelected governor in 1876 but resigned that year to take a seat in the U.S. Senate. **What positions did Richard Coke hold in Texas government?**

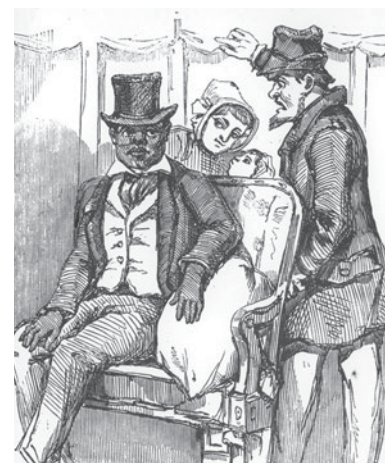
★ Segregation and Jim Crow

African Americans' political power, which had peaked during the years of Radical control, fell along with the influence of the Republican Party in Texas. Nonetheless, African Americans remained active in the Republican Party throughout the late 1800s. In counties with large numbers of African Americans, local offices were sometimes won by black Republicans.

Before 1897, at least one African American served in every Texas legislature but one. During these years, African American Norris Wright Cuney led the Republican Party in Texas. He was a delegate to every Republican national convention between 1872 and 1892.

As African Americans' political power declined, they once again lost many of their civil rights. After Reconstruction ended, many Texas and other southern leaders—mostly Democrats—tried to “redeem,” or restore, the South to its prewar days. These “**Redeemers**” limited the size of state government and cut back on political participation by African Americans. They also supported social separation of the races.

At first this separation was customary and informal. However, Redeemer lawmakers began passing laws to enforce **segregation**, the forced separation of people of different races. These laws became known as **Jim Crow laws**. The name *Jim Crow* came from the racist song “Jump Jim Crow.” It was made famous by white performer Thomas Rice, who wore blackface in his act. His act was so popular in the South that, for many, the term became synonymous with African American.



The character Jim Crow, representing all African Americans, is forced to leave a whites-only railway car in this cartoon from the 1850s.

It became illegal for African Americans—and in some cases Mexican Americans—to eat in the same restaurants as white Texans. Nor could they stay in the same hotels, attend the same schools, or ride in first-class railcars. One white southerner described segregated areas as “in every instance . . . the most uncomfortable, uncleanest, and unsafest place[s].” Norris Wright Cuney’s daughter Maud remembered when her mother tried to take a seat in a first-class railcar.

Analyzing Primary Sources
Drawing Inferences and Conclusions Why did the conductor believe it necessary to lock the door?

TEXAS VOICES

“My uncle Joseph had gone to the depot with mother to see her off to Houston. . . . The conductor of the first-class coach saw them coming, and, . . . he quickly locked the door of the coach, as he knew from experience that no argument or force could compel [force] mother to enter a second-class car. . . . Mother looked around and then innocently turning to Uncle Joseph, said: ‘Well Joe . . . I see but one means of entrance and that is the window, so give me your hand. . . .’ She got in the window and took her seat.”

—Maud Cuney Hare, Norris Wright Cuney: *A Tribune of the Black People*

The Jim Crow system in Texas not only instituted segregation but also denied African Americans equal rights, equal opportunity, and equal protection under the law. African Americans challenged these laws in court. In 1883, however, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment applied only to the actions of state governments. This allowed private businesses and individuals to continue practicing discrimination and segregation.

Reading Check Summarizing How did the end of Reconstruction affect African Americans in Texas?



The Growth of Tenant Farming

With Reconstruction over, large landowners once again returned to political power. Agriculture continued to be the most important part of the economy. But many Texans—particularly freedpeople—could not afford land. Many of them became **tenant farmers**, or people who rent land to grow crops. A landowner would usually receive a part of a tenant farmer’s crop as payment for using the land.

Farmers who lacked land and necessary supplies, such as mules, plows, and seed, promised a larger part of the crop in return for these items. These farmers were called **sharecroppers**. To make a profit, landowners made tenant farmers grow the most valuable cash crop—cotton.

A tenant farmer who was unable to grow enough cotton to cover the land rental would have to take out more loans. These loans often had very high interest rates, which made them difficult to pay back. Most farmers did not make enough in a year to pay back a single loan. To make matters worse, another bad crop would force the farmer to borrow even more money. As a result, many people never repaid their loans.

The landowner provides land and tools to the sharecropper in exchange for part of the crop.

The sharecropper borrows goods from merchants on credit during the growing season.

The cycle begins again.

Low crop prices or a poor harvest—caused by poor weather, crop disease, or other factors—often leaves the sharecropper in debt or with little to show for the work.

The Sharecropping Cycle

Many Texans who could not afford land became sharecroppers or tenant farmers. Because of debt, it was hard to get out of the sharecropping cycle.

Visualizing History

- 1. Geography and Economics** How do you think geographic factors influenced the sharecropping system?
- 2. Connecting to Today** How do you think debt and geographic factors affect farmers today?

As long as they owed money, tenant farmers and their children could not leave the land. They had to keep working for the landowner. This system gave landowners a great deal of power over tenant farmers.

Many Texans worked as tenant farmers during Reconstruction. The highest numbers were in counties where slavery had flourished before the Civil War. For example, about three fourths of farmers worked as tenant farmers in Fort Bend County. Both white and black Texans were tenant farmers, but the percentage was far higher among African Americans. By 1880, about 40 percent of all Texas farmers worked as tenant farmers.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea What were the economic effects of Reconstruction on farming?

Section 4 Review

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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- segregation
- tenant farmers
- sharecroppers

2. Identify and explain

- the historical significance of:
- Redeemers
 - Jim Crow laws

3. Comparing and Contrasting

Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to show the differences between the 1869 and 1876 constitutions.

	1869	1876
1. Public schools		
2. Governor's term		
3. Legislature's term		
4. Debt		

4. Finding the Main Idea

- a. Explain how the Constitution of 1876 and one-party rule changed Texas politics.
- b. How did Jim Crow laws affect the rights of black Texans?

5. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Analyzing Information Imagine that you are a tenant farmer in Texas in the 1870s. Write a letter to a friend describing some of the challenges you face.

Consider the following:

- why you grow cotton
- how you obtained the tools and supplies you need