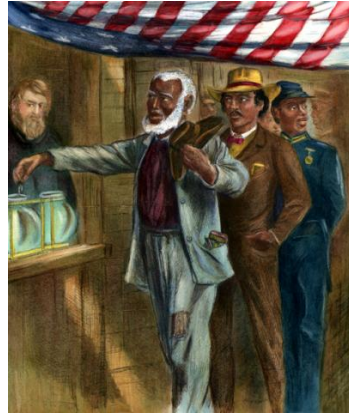




0. Governor Wade Hampton - Story Preface
1. South Carolina - Beginnings
2. South Carolina - European Settlers
3. Free and Enslaved Africans in South Carolina
4. Natural Resources Led to Economic Prosperity in South Carolina
5. Pre-Revolutionary Period in South Carolina
6. The Patriot Movie and Conditions of Colonial Life in South Carolina
7. South Carolina - Causes and Effects of American Revolution
8. South Carolina and Adoption of the Declaration of Independence
9. South Carolina - Different Perspectives During the Revolution
10. Summary of the People and Battles in South Carolina during Revolution
11. Role of South Carolina after the Revolution
12. The Rebel Flag and a Shooting in Charleston
13. The Development of the New National Government
14. New Governments are Created
15. The Basic Principles of the US Constitution
16. Issues that Divide a Nation
17. Events Leading to the U.S. Civil War
18. Civil War Stirrings in South Carolina
19. 1860 Secession from the Union?
20. Military Strategy Impacts South Carolina
21. Reconstruction Policies in South Carolina
22. Economic Impact of Reconstruction in South Carolina
23. White Society Refuses Black Freedom
- 24. Governor Wade Hampton**
25. South Carolina Industry Expansion

When the Civil War was over, former male slaves were given the Constitutional right to vote. Alfred R. Waud created the original of this illustration during 1867. *Harper's Weekly* published "The First Vote" on the title page of its November 16, 1867 issue.

After the election of 1876, Governor Wade Hampton and the so-called Redeemers had political authority as well as political power in South Carolina. The Conservative Democratic Party had "redeemed" South Carolina from the Republicans, as they had other southern states, by reminding them of the recently lost Civil War, the "lost cause."

The antebellum political elite regained control of the government. They wanted to restore South Carolina's government and society as nearly as possible to its condition before the war. This meant that the state's government would be under the control of the elite (and there would be limited taxes).

Governor Wade Hampton was willing to maintain the status quo established during Reconstruction, on race relations, and he recognized the rights of African-Americans to vote and hold office. Other members of the Democratic Party, however, soon moved to disenfranchise the African-American voter.

Taking advantage of the still-high illiteracy rates among impoverished former slaves, politicians adopted the "Eight Box Law" and the poll tax. The Eight Box Law, and the poll tax, also frequently disenfranchised poor whites.

The SC legislature also adopted a plan in which Congressional districts were redrawn so that only one district had an African-American majority. This redistricting limited the number of African-Americans elected to the United States Congress.

To combat this situation, poor white farmers in South Carolina accepted the leadership of Ben Tillman because of his extraordinary oratorical and political skills:

- Tillman was a Populist who appealed to the values and needs of the common people against the Conservative elite.
- He never supported the appeal for the vote of the African-American farmers, who suffered as much or more from declining economic conditions as did the white farmer.
- This appeal led to an increase of violence and lynching against African-Americans and opposition to the Populist Party in many parts of the South.
- In SC, Tillman ran on a platform of white superiority and later led the movement to further disenfranchise the African-American voter.
- Tillman's bigotry, and racist rhetoric, led to the reemergence of the terrorism of the Reconstruction era Violence.
- Lynchings increased and African-Americans who dared to protest were intimidated into silence.
- Race-baiting increased during economic hard times as poor whites took out their frustrations on an easy target.

In 1895, Senator Benjamin Tillman urged his followers to call for a new state constitution to replace the Reconstruction constitution of 1868. Tillman wished to cement his control of the Democratic Party and to be sure that the black majority did not provide political support to his Conservative opposition.

The new constitution:

- Established a literacy test for voting by requiring that voters be able to read and interpret the United States Constitution.
- Required that the poll tax be paid six months before the election.

Poor, illiterate white voters were protected by the new Constitution's "grandfather clause" because they were able to vote if their grandfathers were able to vote in 1860. The new constitution required separate schools for black and white children.

South Carolinians further limited the social opportunities of African-Americans by passing a series of laws, called "Jim Crow Laws," which made social segregation part of the law, not just part of societal practice. In 1896, the U.S Supreme Court held that such laws were constitutional.

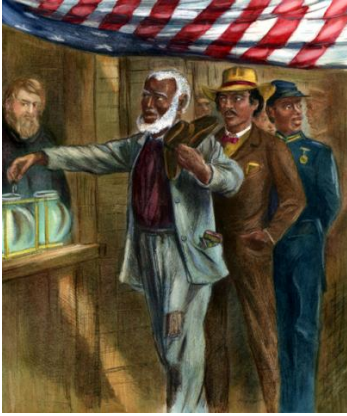
The Court ruled that separate-but-equal facilities satisfied the 14th amendment's requirement for equal protection under the law in the case of *Plessy v Ferguson*. Nationally sanctioned Jim Crow laws impacted, both directly and indirectly, every aspect of the African-American experience for most of the next six decades.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Governor-Wade-Hampton-South-Carolina-History>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Governor-Wade-Hampton-South-Carolina-History>



The First Vote - African-Americans after the Civil War

Alfred R. Waud's illustration, "The First Vote," was published in Harper's Weekly on November 16, 1867. It is online via the Library of Congress. Harper's weekly, v. 11, no. 568 (1867 November 16), p. 721 (title page).

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