

"Redemption" and the End of Reconstruction ^[1]

As southern states were readmitted into the Union, as former Confederates were granted amnesty and regained their voting rights, and as the Union army gradually withdrew from the South, it became harder for southern Republicans to hold onto power and for black Americans to hold onto their civil and political rights. Conservatives charged that Republicans were corrupt. The Ku Klux Klan, organized in 1867, terrorized blacks and whites who supported them. In 1870, North Carolina Governor William Holden called out the militia to stop the Klan and began what would be known as the "Kirk-Holden War." By the end of that year, Conservatives had regained control of the legislature.

In this chapter we'll examine the conflicts — political and violent — between Republicans and Conservatives in Reconstruction-era North Carolina, and we'll evaluate why Reconstruction came to an end in the 1870s — and where that left the South.

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Ku Klux Klan costumes in North Carolina, 1870.

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