

Southern Politics: The New South and the Anti-Redeemers (1877-1900)

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Overview

① The New South Economy

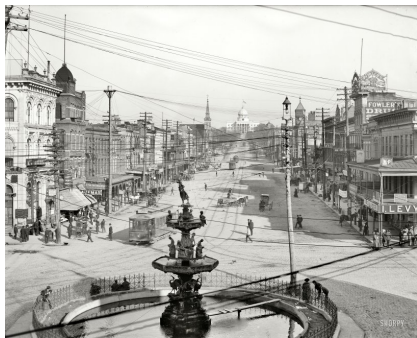
② Republicans

③ Populists

④ Conclusion

Introduction

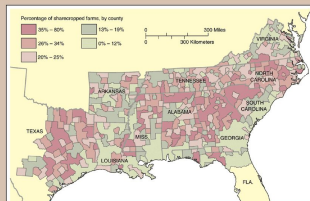
- After Redemption, the South remained a poor, agrarian region, badly lagging the North. Per capita wealth in the South was 35 percent the non-South average.
- But during this “New South” era, industrialization was on a rapid upswing.
- Efforts were made to catch up with other regions economically, but not without serious factional disputes.



Tenant Farming

- Between 1860 and 1880, total farms doubled, but their size shrank by half; farm equipment disappeared and cotton prices tumbled.
- Neo-planters (a mixture of ante-bellum planters and (New) English speculators) replaced the plantation economy with a share-cropping or lien economy.
- Owners wanted tenants farming cash crops, not staples

Map 16.3: Southern Sharecropping, 1880

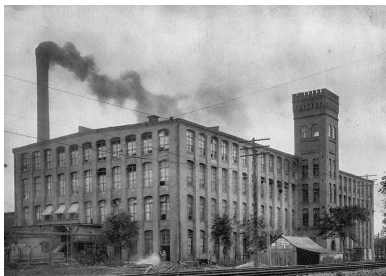


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Map 16.3: Southern Sharecropping, 1880

Mill Villages

- Industrialization (funded by North and South) began to arrive near the end of the 1870s.
- Cotton, steel, and tobacco mills in particular fueled an urbanization movement.
- Total southern mills increased from 161 in 1880, to 239 in 1890, to 400 in 1900 (148 percent increase)



Avondale Cotton Mill (B'ham, AL)

Mining and Railroads

- From 1880 to 1890, the South added around 23,000 miles of track (including a gauge readjustment)—a 136 percent increase.
- Rail lines like the Louisville-Nashville helped kick-start a mining and steel economy in places like Birmingham.
- Between 1876-1901, southern pig-iron production increased by a rate of 17.



Blocton Coal Mine

Convict Leasing

- Attractive to southern jurisdictions due to budgetary retrenchments
- Used to enforce racial codes, white supremacy, and undermine labor unions
- Rife with corruption, discrimination, and human rights abuses
- In AL, nearly 1/19 of all black men in a state of involuntary servitude



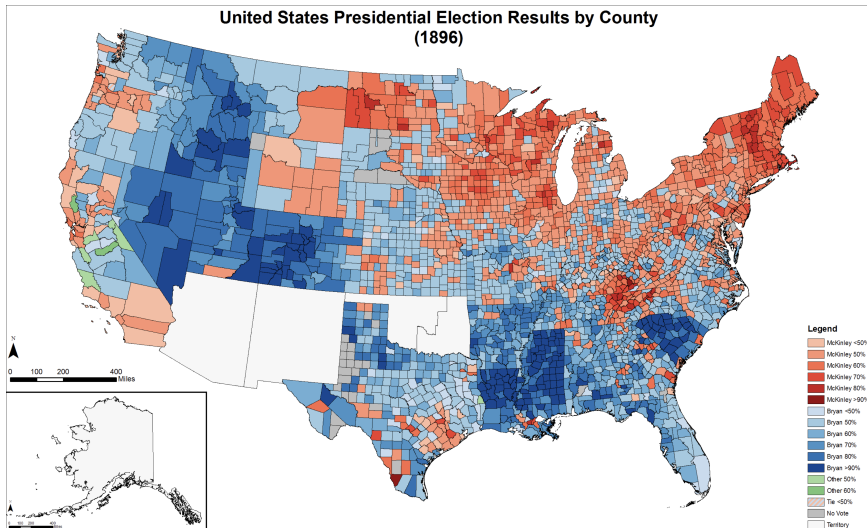
Mountain Republicans

- Roots in opposition to secession in Appalachia and Ozarks
- Only a relevant statewide faction in NC, TN, and VA



Winston County, AL

Mountain Republicanism (1896)



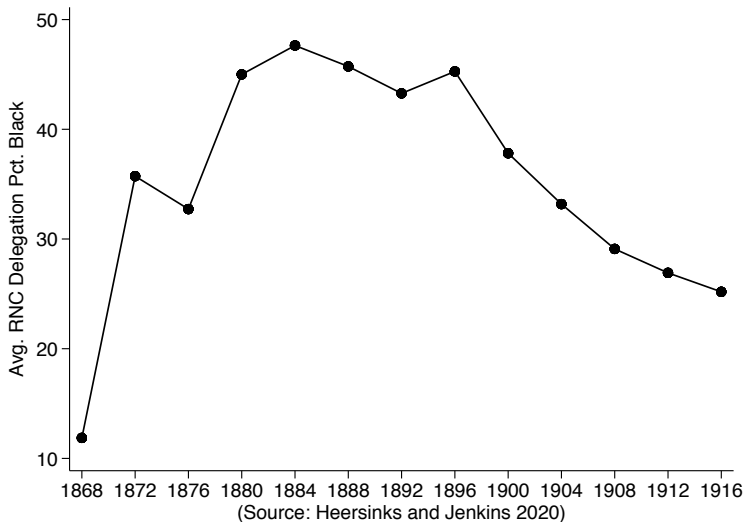
Black Republicanism

- Black electoral participation did not disappear entirely after Redemption
- Black and Tans vs. the Lily Whites



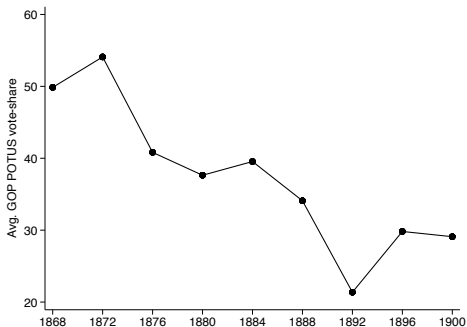
Perry Howard (1877-1961)

Southern Black Representation at the RNC



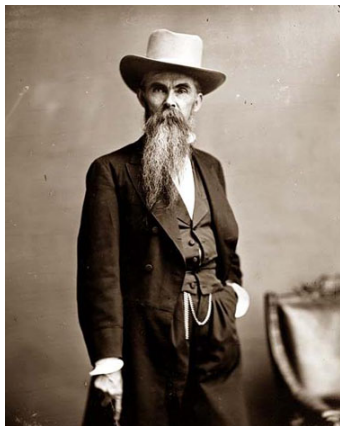
The Logic of Southern Republicanism

- Patronage
- RNC politics
- “Rotten burroughs”



The Readjusters

- Southern states faced with massive state debt following Reconstruction
- Factions arose to either honor or repudiate (“readjust”) debt; budget fights



William Mahone (1826-1895)

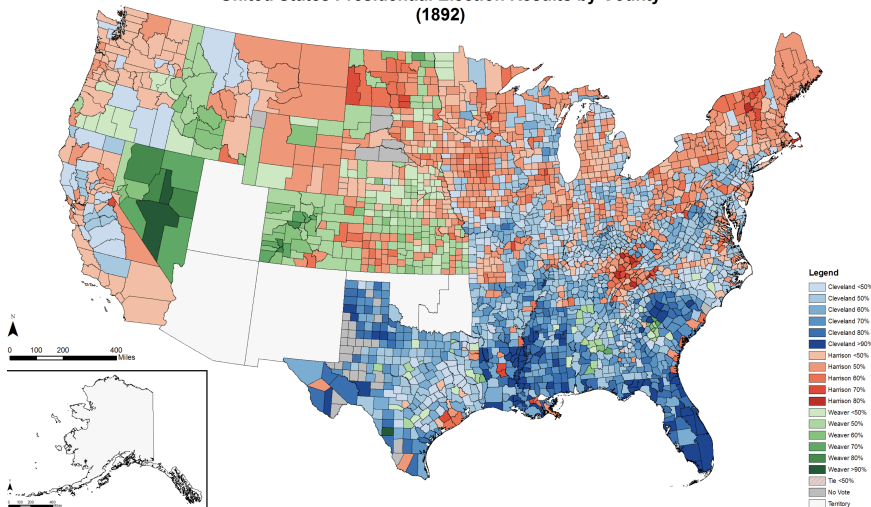
Agrarian Populism

- Depressions and sinking commodity prices throughout the period squeezed farmers/share-croppers
- Factions arose to oppose Redeemers for economic reforms
- Northern vs. Southern and White vs. Black Farmers Alliances



Agrarian Populism in 1892 Presidential Election

United States Presidential Election Results by County
(1892)



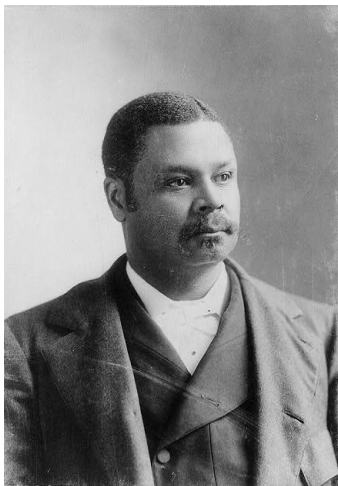
Labor Unions

- Depressions also limited opportunities for city/mill workers
- National tariff policies, convict leasing, etc. helped urban populism find a foothold



Fusion Politics

- Throughout the era, “fusion” parties emerged to contest the redeemers
- These included fusions of white and black populists and Republicans and Democrats



George Henry White (1852-1928)

Populist Triumphs and Tribulations of the 1890s

- The Populists won offices across the South (see Reuben Kolb of Alabama)
- They were most successful in North Carolina with the Populist-Republican fusion administration
- The result was a massacre at the hands of white supremacists and the dawn of Jim Crow



Wilmington Insurrection Aftermath
(*The Daily Record Rubble*)

Conclusion

- The period between Redemption and Jim Crow in the South was marked by dramatic social, economic, and political change.
- Redeemers largely moved to restrict voting rights and to entice northeastern investments in the New South economy.
- Populists sought relief from crushing debt, suffrage restrictions, and a bifurcated economy.
- The brief success of these efforts in the 1880s and 1890s helped set the stage for Jim Crow near the turn of the century.