

## Virginia: Reconstruction and Life in Virginia Today

Virginia's land and economy were in ruins after the Civil War. Virginians faced serious problems in rebuilding the state after the war.

### Terms to Know

- **Reconstruction:** the time period following the Civil War in which Congress passed laws designed to rebuild the country and bring the southern states back into the Union
- **sharecropping:** an agreement where people could rent farmland, grow crops, and promise to pay back the landowner with crops when they were harvested

Virginians faced numerous problems during Reconstruction.

- Millions of freed slaves needed housing, clothing, food, and jobs.
- Virginia's economy was in ruins.
  - Money had no value.
  - Banks were closed.
  - Railroads, bridges, plantations, and crops were destroyed.
- *Virginia had no functioning government and was no longer a part of the United States of America.*



Virginians had to work hard to resolve problems during Reconstruction.

- *Congress created the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865.* This government agency provided food, schools, and medical care for freed African Americans and others in the South.
- A new system of farming called sharecropping developed because plantation owners lacked money to pay workers. The former slaves needed land and work. Sharecropping allowed freed men and farmers to rent land from a landowner by promising to pay the landowner with a share of the crops when harvested.

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The freedoms and rights promised to African Americans were slowly taken away after Reconstruction, when laws were passed that made it almost impossible for them to vote and hold office.

### Terms to Know

- **segregation:** the separation of people, usually based on race or religion
- **prejudices:** *negative opinions formed about people without proof*
- **discrimination:** an unfair difference in the treatment of people

During Reconstruction, African Americans began to have power in Virginia's government and men of all races could vote. Virginia adopted a new Constitution that banned slavery and gave African-American men the right to vote.

After Reconstruction, new laws were passed that were unfair to African Americans. "Jim Crow" laws were passed by the southern states. "Jim Crow" laws established segregation or separation of the races and reinforced prejudices held by many white people.

### African Americans

"Jim Crow" laws had an effect on African-American life.

- African Americans found it very difficult to vote or hold public office.
- Unfair poll taxes and voting tests were established to keep African Americans from voting.
- African Americans were forced to use separate drinking fountains.
- African-American and white children attended separate public schools. *They weren't allowed to sit together in public buses, trains, or restaurants.*



### American Indians

Discrimination also had an affect on American Indians.

- *American Indians were not allowed to attend white public schools.*
- *High school education was not available to many Virginia Indians.*
- *Public schooling was not made available to Virginia Indians until 1963, even though the Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that "separate but equal" was unconstitutional.*

### Virginia: Reconstruction and Life in Virginia Today

**After the Civil War, advances in industry, technology, and transportation were key factors to Virginia's growing economy.**

After the Civil War and Reconstruction, industries, technology, and cities contributed to Virginia's economy.

- As more people traveled, Virginia's cities grew with more people, businesses, and factories. The need for more and better roads increased.
- Railroads were a key to the expansion of business, agriculture, and industry. *They helped small towns grow into cities. Railroad centers attracted the building of factories where clothing, furniture, and other useful items were made.*
- Other parts of Virginia grew as other industries developed. Coal deposits, discovered in Tazewell County after the Civil War and in nearby counties, became a source of new jobs for residents of southwest Virginia.
- Tobacco farming and tobacco products recovered from the effects of the Civil War and again became an important Virginia industry.

