

Constitutional and social developments from 1860-1877 amount to a revolution essa...

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



The United States was in a very turbulent time period between 1860 and 1877. Those dates saw the Civil War cast its horrendous shadow over America, as well as the rise and fall of Reconstruction. Changes that occurred during this time period are staggering, to say the least.

Developments in both constitutional and social areas from 1860 to 1877 can be considered to have been a revolution.

The Civil War was, obviously, the first revolution that occurred during this time period. With the election of Lincoln in 1860, South Carolina announced its secession from the Union. They seized the federal Ft. Sumpter which lay off their coast and Lincoln ordered federal troops to protect the fort. This set off a chain reaction of secession which finally resulted in the formation of the Confederate States of America. In South Carolina's Declaration of Causes of Secession, the reasons for leaving the Union are outlined. Evident throughout all of it is the development of an interpretation of the Constitution as a pact between states that may be broken if the states so choose. From that arises the basic premise of states' rights: that states, and not government, are the sovereign entities. While not a new idea, the development of such thinking during this time period, this lack of nationality if you will, led to the Confederate rebellion according to John Sherman, a Senator from Ohio in the 1860s.

The plight of blacks during this time period is extremely significant. The 13th Amendment to the Constitution gave them their freedom. Because of this constitutional development many more developments followed. In 1865, African American citizens petitioned the Union convention in Tennessee for

the right to vote because they had helped put down the rebellion. civil Rights was the objective of the Freeman & Edict Island Petition. This was gained with the Civil Rights Act of 1865 and the 14th Amendment. Senator Lott Morrill of Maine saw the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 as profoundly revolutionary, but argued at the same time that everything that had transpired since the Civil War was novel and revolutionary. Some people such as Gideon Welles, Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy, did not believe the federal government had the authority to grant Civil Rights to blacks. "The First Vote", a picture from the Harper's Weekly in 1867 shows the result of the 15th Amendment: blacks could now legally vote everywhere in the U. S.

These developments set off even more changes that can be considered revolutionary. As illustrated in Thomas Nast's picture from Harper's Weekly in 1874, the south did not accept the developments for blacks easily. They passed Jim Crow segregation laws and poll taxes to prevent blacks from voting. Lynching became frighteningly popular. these revolutionary reactions by the Southern whites led to even more revolutionary actions taken by the federal government. In 1871, they passed the Ku Klux Klan Act which notion can be revolutionary because the federal government had never had to protect life and property with such action. Military occupation of the South is another example of revolutionary action.

Constitutional and social developments of this time period, 1860-1877, were very significant and revolutionary. One change led to another and each reaction to each change seemed revolutionary. Constitutional developments

often led to novel social developments and vice versa. This is a period of time that profoundly changed the course of history as we know it.