Chapter 17
A New South: Economic Progress and Social Tradition, 1877—1900

Chapter Summary

Chapter 17 examines the post-Reconstruction South with a focus on determining how new the New South was. Topics considered in this chapter include the limited industrial and urban growth in the South after the Civil War, the southern Populist movement, women in the New South, and post-Reconstruction race relations in the South.

I. The Newness of the New South
   A. An Industrial and Urban South
      1. Steel mills and textiles
      2. Tobacco and Coca-Cola
      3. Railroads and growth
   B. The Limits of Industrial and Urban Growth
      1. Effects of low wages
      2. Limited capital
   C. Farms to Cities: Impact on Southern Society

II. The Southern Agrarian Revolt
   A. Cotton and Credit
   B. Southern Farmers Organize, 1877–1892
      1. Salvation and cooperation
      2. Storing cotton
   C. Southern Populists

III. Women in the New South
   A. Church Work and Preserving Memories
   B. Women’s Clubs

IV. Settling the Race Issue
   A. The Fluidity of Southern Race Relations, 1877–1890
   B. The White Backlash
   C. Lynch Law
   D. Segregation by Law
   E. Disfranchisement
   F. A National Consensus on Race
   G. Response of the Black Community
      1. An urban middle class
      2. Black women’s roles
      3. Booker T. Washington’s accommodation
      4. W. E. B. Du Bois attacks the Atlanta Compromise

V. Conclusion
Learning Objectives

After a careful examination of Chapter 17, students should be able to do the following:

1. Define the terms *Old South* and *New South* and make a distinction between the two.
2. List the factors that attracted investors to the southern textile industry.
3. Identify the major commercial and industrial successes in the New South during the late nineteenth century.
4. Explain the impact of railroad construction on the development of the postwar South.
5. Explain the negative impact of low wages on the depressed southern postwar economy.
6. Point out factors that led to the South’s inability to benefit from a booming national economy during the late nineteenth century.
7. Define the term *urban-rural conflict* and explain its relevance to late nineteenth-century southern culture.
8. Describe the impact of the late nineteenth-century agricultural depression on the cotton economy of the New South.
9. Define the term *crop lien* and explain how it defined the system of credit in the postwar South. Explain why the crop lien system forced the South to remain a one-crop economy.
10. Describe the effectiveness of Redeemer Democratic state governments in the South during the late nineteenth century.
11. Identify the major farmers organizations that emerged in the United States during the late nineteenth century.
12. Discuss the connection between the National Alliance movement and evangelical Protestant religion.
13. Explain the impact of the National Alliance movement on race issues in the South.
14. Explain the emergence of the Populist Party and describe the role it played in the presidential elections of 1892 and 1896.
15. Describe the link between southern women’s reform efforts and evangelical Protestant religion. Compare and contrast southern women’s reform movements with their counterparts in the North.
16. Explain the significance of the southern women’s federated clubs.
17. Identify the principal motivations for lynching in the postwar South.
18. Define the term *segregation* and explain how this system of racial separation was implemented in the postwar South. Explain the Supreme Court ruling in the case *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

19. Define the term *disfranchisement* and list examples of how southern state governments effectively deprived blacks of the right to vote after Reconstruction.

20. Discuss the emergence of a black urban middle class in the South during the late nineteenth century.

21. Identify Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois and compare and contrast their approaches to the improvement of race relations in the United States at the turn of the century.

**Topics for Classroom Lecture**

1. Discuss the emergence of the cotton textile industry in the southern Piedmont. Among the issues to consider, include the following:
   a. The composition of the labor force of the cotton textile industry. Identify the regional, racial, and socio-economic origins of the cotton textile labor force.
   b. How did the emergence of a new southern laboring class affect the social structure of the New South? How were textile workers received by middle-class southerners already living in industrial towns?
   c. How would the emergence of a laboring class impact Piedmont politics? How did a lower-class white labor force fit into the racially defined southern political system?

2. Discuss the issue of racial segregation in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Was racial segregation unique to the American South? Had it been a characteristic of antebellum southern culture? Why did southerners embrace segregation after the Civil War? What institution of racial order did it replace? How did segregation guarantee the preservation of white supremacy?

3. Discuss the peculiar impact of populism on southern politics. Why did white southerners find the Populist movement threatening? Explain the potential danger southerners saw in the political union of lower-class whites and blacks. How could that union have impacted the white elite political structure already in place? How were members of the Populist Party treated by southern Democrats? Explain the concept of fusion and how it figured into the 1892 and 1896 presidential elections. Is there a connection between the Populist movement and the southern disfranchisement movement of the 1890s? Did southern disfranchisement impact only the black community?

**Topics for Classroom Discussion and Essays**

1. Discuss the meaning of the term *New South.* Have students comment on the following:
   a. What does *New South* mean? What did it mean to late nineteenth-century southerners? Did all southerners support the creation of a New South after Reconstruction?
   b. How successful were efforts to create a New South? How effective were efforts to industrialize, urbanize, and modernize the New South?
   c. Have a general discussion on the meaning of the word *Southern* in American culture. Has there been a change in the meaning of this word since the Civil War? Are there distinctions between the South at the turn of the twenty-first century and the antebellum South? Are there similarities? Are there distinctions between the South at the turn of the twenty-first
century and the South at the turn of the twentieth century? Are there similarities? Did a
New South ever emerge after the Civil War? If so, when did it happen?

2. Was racism a regional, a national, or an international trend in the late nineteenth century?
Discuss the importance of Darwinism in late nineteenth century western social and racial philosophy. How did Charles Darwin and the theory of evolution as well as Herbert Spencer and the theory of social Darwinism impact western ideas about race and class at the turn of the century? Did traditional southern ideas about racial superiority and inferiority seem out of place in the late nineteenth century? How did the northern reaction to southern racial policies after Reconstruction reflect these characteristics of late nineteenth-century social philosophy? Connect American ideas about southern race and class to other nineteenth-century issues such as nativism and imperialism.

3. Discuss the current debate involving the use of the Confederate flag by former Confederate states. South Carolina recently voted to remove the Confederate flag from the top of the state capitol where it has flown since the 1960s. It is being relocated to the Confederate monument also on the grounds of the state capitol where it will fly from atop a flagpole. Do you agree with South Carolina’s resolution of this issue? What are the issues involved in this debate? What is a flag? What is its purpose? What is being said when a flag flies over a state or nation? Georgia and Mississippi are former Confederate states that use the Confederate flag as an emblem in their present-day state flags. Should these states adopt new state flags?

Topics for Class Projects and Term Papers

1. Write a paper on Durham, North Carolina, as an example of new South urbanization. Distinguished both as the home of the North Carolina tobacco industry and the locale of a flourishing black business community, Durham seemed to epitomize the potential of the New South.

2. Research the issue of lynching and its historical connection to the preservation of southern white female purity. How true is this historical myth? Why was the separation of white women and black men so important to southern white males? How did southern women feel about being used as a justification for lynching? Research of this topic might also involve predicting the work of Jessie Daniel Ames during the 1930s and 1940s.

3. Choose one former Confederate state and research the state constitutional convention proceedings that created that state’s post-Reconstruction state constitution. In many former Confederate states, this process was the last major political exercise on a state level in which black delegates actively participated until the Civil Rights Movement. It was also one of the last opportunities among southern blacks and whites to discuss southern race relations in an open political arena. Look carefully at the white justifications for disfranchisement and at black resistance to these efforts to curtail the vote. Also note the variety of positions taken by southern whites on the issue. Did all southern whites support disfranchisement, and did those who supported it always support it for the same reasons?

Resources for Lectures and Research Projects

Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy since the Civil War* (1986).

**Audio-Visual Resources**

*Empires of Industry: Leaves of Gold*, History Channel, 50 minutes.
This video examines the history of the tobacco industry in the United States.

This film records the life of Du Bois, an advocate of civil and political rights and one of the founders of the NAACP.