"The Policy Which Put Down the War Shall Settle the Result": Loyalty, Race, and the Reconstruction of Missouri

Jeremy Neely

Robert Van Horn wielded his newspaper, the *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, as a blunt instrument of righteous Republican anger. A fierce partisan and patriot, he proclaimed the congressional elections of November 1866 as not just a referendum on the costly Civil War that had ended just a year before, but indeed a continuation of that struggle to preserve the Union. Defiantly waving the bloody shirt before his readers, he declared, "The Democratic Party supported the traitors while butchering 200,000 soldiers, and they support them now."[1] As a former Union soldier and mayor of Kansas City,

Robert T. Van Horn was a Kansas City newspaper editor, Union veteran, and Radical Republican who served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1865 to 1871.

Van Horn had a personal stake in this contest, and his re-election to a second term representing the Sixth District of Missouri in the U.S. House of Representatives was particularly satisfying. Beneath a headline that crowed "The Defeat of the Rebels," Van Horn celebrated the news that fellow Republicans had won even larger majorities in the U.S. House and Senate as demonstrable proof that stalwart Unionists would now seize control of Reconstruction policy.[2] Their victory, he believed, marked a forceful repudiation of Democratic President Andrew Johnson's leniency toward the defeated Confederacy. Eager to readmit these Southern states into the Union, Johnson hardly intervened as former Confederates moved swiftly to keep freed Blacks in a subordinate position little different from chattel slavery. Former rebels, emboldened by the president's *laissez-faire* approach, seemed to behave as though the Civil War had changed very little.

Jeremy Neely is an assistant professor of history at Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri.

[1] *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, October 20, 1866, 1.

[2] *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, November 17, 1866, 2.

Republicans maintained that ex-Confederates deserved no such forbearance and instead saw their 1866 landslide as an opportunity to consolidate transformative changes unleashed by the war. Van Horn framed these terms clearly: "The elections teach one thing, and one thing only—that the policy which put down the war shall settle the result."[3] The twin policies of government by loyal men and an increasingly hard line toward Southern intransigence had suppressed the rebellion and made possible a stronger, more prosperous nation. Such results, however, were hardly assured. Union victory had demonstrated the bloody folly of secession, but until state governments ejected the disloyal figures who had instigated the Confederate rebellion, the prospect for renewed civil strife seemed real.

An additional wartime policy, emancipation, went unmentioned in Van Horn's declaration, an omission that suggested that the exact meanings of liberty and equality for freedpeople were yet unclear. To bring forth Lincoln's "new birth of freedom," congressional Republicans advanced a bold legislative agenda that included the extension of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) and the sweeping Civil Rights Act of 1866.[4] Congress promptly overrode Johnson's vetoes of both measures and in 1867 passed a Reconstruction Act that reorganized the former Confederacy into five military districts, which the U.S. Army would occupy until each state government voted to rejoin the Union according to the terms set forth by Congress.

Reconstruction in the Border States

Recent works by Gregory Downs, Kate Masur, and other historians demonstrate the value of studying Reconstruction, both as a process and a period, in all of its regional complexities.[5] Most of the existing scholarship on Reconstruction has focused, with good reason, upon the Deep South, where Confederate defeat, the destruction of slavery, and military occupation by Federal troops brought forth far-reaching political and social transformations. The four slave states that remained within the Union— Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware—did not experience a comparable occupation, but their postwar histories have received much less attention. Within the

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[3] "Lessons from the Election and the Prospect," 1, *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, October 20, 1866.

[4] The final line of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address: "We here highly resolve these dead shall not have died in vain; that the nation, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

[5] See Gregory P. Downs and Kate Masur, eds. *The World the Civil War Made* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015). For growing scholarly interest in the Reconstruction-era history of the trans-Mississippi West, see Adam Arenson and Andrew R. Graybill, eds. *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 95–180.

past decade, new monographs have begun to correct this problem, demonstrating how in a liminal region where sectional extremes blurred into a broad and combustible mix of political views, the experiences of border states both affirm and complicate previous narratives of Reconstruction.[6] As in the former rebel states, Republican leaders in the border states took control of civil government, but lacking the military support that the U.S. Army provided in the old Confederacy, these Unionist coalitions struggled to suppress the violent resistance of former rebels that posed a growing threat to the lives of freedpeople and the survival of these postwar regimes.

Van Horn's confident declaration about the meaning of the 1866 congressional election belied the more complicated political realities in his adopted home. By midcentury the so-called "Central Clique" of slaveholding Democrats had come to dominate Missouri politics, toppling powerful U.S. Senator Thomas Hart Benton and embracing the proslavery rhetoric of fire-eaters in the Deep South. Yet in St. Louis, the state's largest city, where the number of inhabitants had grown by more than 80 percent in the past decade, the divided populace included an increasingly powerful faction of antislavery Republicans, many of them recent German immigrants. Unionist candidates dominated the presidential election of 1860, with Missouri voters giving Northern Democrat Stephen Douglas his only statewide victory in the Electoral College. Constitutional Union nominee John Bell finished close behind, and Southern Democrat John C. Breckenridge and Republican Abraham Lincoln finished a distant third and fourth, respectively. Amid the secession crisis that followed Lincoln's victory, the sympathies of the state's voters ranged from unconditional loyalty to the United States to avowed secessionism, with a great many households embracing a murkier degree of neutralism. Delegates at a statewide convention in February 1861 rejected secession, voting 98–1 in favor of a resolution that stated there was "no adequate cause to impel Missouri to dissolve her connections to the Federal Union." New governor Claiborne Fox Jackson, however, proved to be a more eager disunionist than his moderate campaign had suggested. Playing upon the fears of federal "coercion" expressed by some convention delegates, he suspected that Missourians might yet embrace secession, until a confrontation with Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon, the U.S. Army commander in St. Louis, convinced the governor and secessionist leaders to flee Jefferson City ahead of advancing Federal troops.[7]

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[6] Christopher Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Aaron Astor, *Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky and Missouri* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 32–80.

[7] Christopher Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 238–43.

Soon after the secessionists absconded in June 1861, the army installed a loyal provisional government composed of many men who had participated in the February convention. Within the first weeks of the war, Union forces held St. Louis, many of the major towns, and vital rail and river corridors, but their control of the countryside beyond these points was increasingly tenuous. Only two states, Virginia and Tennessee, witnessed a greater number of conventional engagements during the Civil War, and even more endemic to Missouri was the irregular violence, most often carried out by pro-Confederate guerrillas, which roiled nearly every county.[8] Struggling to discern the loyalties of civilians, Unionist leaders deployed a test oath to carry out a broad political winnowing that disfranchised and ousted from power Confederate sympathizers across the state.

By focusing upon the Unionist faction that ascended to power as a result of that winnowing, this article argues that the short-lived pursuit of Reconstruction in Missouri illuminated the challenges that undermined the larger efforts toward racial equality in states that had not seceded. After Federal troops left Missouri by the end of 1865, determining the contours of Reconstruction thus fell to the state's own leaders, without the benefit or burden of military supervision. How Unionists would rebuild the state remained an open question. Unlike Thaddeus Stevens and other Radical Republican leaders in Congress, who recognized an opportunity to bring forth bold reforms following the destruction of slavery, many white Unionists remained ambivalent about the plight of the formerly enslaved. In Missouri, such divisions among Republicans not only diluted the support for Black freedom but also foreshadowed the collapse of the Unionist coalition whose strength was an essential foundation of postwar Reconstruction. This article explores the writings, statements, and actions of one such Unionist, Robert Van Horn, who exemplified the lukewarm Radicalism of border state Republicans. The visions of post–Civil War America nurtured by Van Horn and his peers were largely circumscribed by changes that the war had already accomplished. These Republicans' primary goal became the removal of disloyal people from the body politic, deeming such

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[8] In the years since Michael Fellman's pathbreaking *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), much of the scholarship on Civil War Missouri has focused upon various dimensions of this widespread irregular violence. See Joseph M. Beilein, Jr., *Bushwhackers: Guerrilla Warfare, Manhood, and the Household in Civil War Missouri* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2016); Matthew C. Hurlburt; *The Ghosts of Guerrilla Memory: How Civil War Bushwhackers Became Gunslingers in the American West* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016); and Jeremy Neely, *The Border between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007). For an interpretation that suggests that recent works overemphasize the guerrilla war, see Louis S. Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri: A Military History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012).

excisions necessary for the lasting preservation of the Union. Yet that punitive impulse toward former rebels, the ideological glue that held together Unionists of clashing racial views, did not endure, and its erosion by 1870 spelled the collapse of Reconstruction and the Republicans' hold on statewide politics.

Van Horn's recent metamorphosis from proslavery apologist testified to the transformative potential of the Civil War era. The Pennsylvania native moved from Cincinnati to the western edge of Missouri in October 1855 and quickly cast his lot with the proslavery partisans who were battling for control of Kansas Territory. Writing under a masthead that declared "THE WORLD IS GOVERNED TOO MUCH," the young newspaperman was a conservative Democrat and proud defender of "Southern rights." He laced his support for the proslavery Lecompton faction with equal doses of anti-Black racism and attacks upon Republicans whose abolitionist views, he argued, threatened the nation with disunion and civil war.[9] After the Confederate attack upon Fort Sumter, ardent Unionism fueled Van Horn's rapid ascent from editor to mayor, state senator, and after the 1864 elections, representative in the 39th Congress. His service as lieutenant colonel in the 25th Missouri Infantry and then as provost marshal in Kansas City further burnished his credentials among loyalists in the Missouri Valley.[10] Candidate Van Horn accepted his subsequent election—as a Republican—as a product of the times, writing,

Consistency in public policy is impossible; he who really practices it, is guilty of treason to earth and to humanity. The ideas of 1861 are now obsolete; in the whirl of questions which for five years have agitated the public mind the only

[9] *Kansas City Enterprise,* December 1, 1855, and February 23, 1856. The proslavery leaders who won the first elections in Kansas, many of them recent arrivals from Missouri, established their territorial government at the town of Lecompton. Not long thereafter, free-state rivals organized an extralegal antislavery government in Topeka. See Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 50–88.

[10] Van Horn was instrumental in organizing the Unionist home guard in Kansas City under the auspices of the United States Reserve Corps, which later mustered into Federal service as the 25th Missouri Volunteer Infantry. See Robert T. Van Horn, Compiled Service Record, p.6, *Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Missouri* (National Archives Microfilm Publication M405), roll 583, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group (RG) 94, National Archives Building, Washington, DC; Van Horn to the Adjutant General, Kansas City, August 7, 1861, v. 19, part 1, series 2593, Box 5, Letters Received, 1861–67, Military Division of the Missouri, 1866–91, Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821–1920, RG 393, National Archives Building, Washington, DC; Van Horn to William E. Prince, Kansas City, July 18, 1861, *The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* (OR), Series 1: Vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902): 41–42; Report of Lieut. Col. Robert T. Van Horn, 25th Missouri Infantry, Pittsburgh Landing, April 9, 1862, OR, 1:10, Part 1 (1884): 284–85.

consistency possible, is loyalty and honesty. The man who says, I am the same now which I was in 1860, has but a poor idea of the lessons revealed by the age, or the demands of the times.[11]

As a younger man Van Horn had once escaped financial ruin by finding work as a steamboat captain; that he quickly learned to maneuver shifting currents both literal and political was perhaps no surprise.

Van Horn's political evolution suggested no small degree of opportunism, but a careful study of his words and behavior through the Civil War reveals threads of continuity beyond his professed lodestar of Union loyalty. The most important of these was his relentless boosterism, manifested most directly in the railroad development that he championed before, during, and after the war. This aspect of Van Horn's career has been the focus of the few scholarly works that examine his public life; one study claimed that such civic contributions launched nearly a dozen local histories celebrating the rise of Kansas City.[12] These works, however, overlook important parts of his Republican worldview, including his free-labor principles and the lesser importance that he placed upon the rights of Black Americans. This article adds to the growing scholarship on the border West by exploring how a coalition of white Unionists struggled to withstand its own internal divisions over race. Recent works by Christopher Phillips and Matthew Stanley demonstrate that a significant number of white Unionists in the border West submerged their opposition to Black equality through the cant of a "Loyal West," which underscored the survival of the Union, not emancipation, as the Civil War's greatest legacy. Van Horn's wartime evolution, however, reveals a pro-emancipation flip side to that loyalist coin. Scholars such as Gary Gallagher and Chandra Manning continue to debate which issue most animated Civil War soldiers, Union or emancipation, but works that focus on the ideological motivations of these volunteers generally do not look past the end of fighting in 1865, when the muddled politics of loyalty and race defied such binary terms. In addition, although Radical leaders in Missouri have received considerable attention, as have African American leaders who fought for greater political influence in the post–Reconstruction era, there remains a gap in the scholarly literature regarding the ambiguous commitment of rank-and-file

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[11] "Consistency," *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, November 3, 1866, 2.

[12] Charles N. Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads: Community Policy in the Growth of a Regional Metropolis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 55–190. A. Theodore Brown, "Business 'Neutralism' on the Missouri-Kansas Border: Kansas City, 1854–1857," *Journal of Southern History* 29 (1963), 229–40; Richard Wohl and A. Theodore Brown, "The Usable Past: A Study of Historical Traditions in Kansas City," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 23 (1963), 237–59.

Republicans like Van Horn, who rallied behind wartime emancipation but later exhibited tepid support for Black civil rights.[13]

A New Constitution

For self-described Radicals like Van Horn, the first months of 1865 represented an opportunity to protect the dearly won gains of the Civil War at a time when major Confederate armies had not yet surrendered. Vigorous enforcement of the test oath had largely cleansed disloyal men from public life. The number of Missourians who cast votes in presidential elections declined from 165,573 in 1860 to 104,346 four years later. Across those two races, the number of votes for Abraham Lincoln jumped from 17,028, roughly one-tenth of the electorate, to more than 70,000, or two-thirds of voters, in 1864.[14] As a result of this electoral sea change, the kind of social and political transformations that were scarcely imaginable when the war began now seemed within reach. On January 6, 1865, delegates convened in St. Louis to address the question of abolition, the future of voting rights in the state, and how best to square the state's original constitution with the changes they might embrace. Five days later, the convention adopted an ordinance abolishing slavery in the state by a margin of 60 to 4. Another three weeks would pass before Congress, after a slim victory in the House, finally voted to send the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery out to the states for ratification, an achievement that would not arrive until the coming December.[15]

Divergent understandings of what the 1865 convention should accomplish, beyond its endorsement of the abolition ordinance, widened the fracture between conservative and radical Unionists. Conservatives favored a narrow reading of

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[13] Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward*, 291–325; Matthew E. Stanley, *The Loyal West: Civil War and Reunion in Middle America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 57–129; Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Vintage, 2007); Adam Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 154–77; William E. Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule, 1865–1870* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965); Gary R. Kremer, *James Milton Turner and the Promise of America: The Public Life of a Post–Civil War Black Leader* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991); John W. McKerley, "Citizens and Strangers: The Politics of Race in Missouri from Slavery to the Era of Jim Crow" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 2008): 101–79.

[14] "State Election Returns," *Glasgow (Missouri) Weekly Times*, 3, November 22, 1860, *https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86063325/1860-11-22/ed-1/seq-3/* (accessed January 27, 2022); Chronicling America, Library of Congress; John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, 1864, The American Presidency Project, University of California–Santa Barbara, *https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/statistics/elections* (accessed January 27, 2022).

[15] Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small-Slaveholding Households, 1815–1865* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010): 299.

the convention's mandate, constrained by the terms explicitly set forth when the Missouri General Assembly empowered delegates to address abolition and voting rights one year earlier. The curiously named *Missouri Daily Republican*, edited by a conservative Democrat, dismissed as preposterous the idea that the convention might remain in session for another month, writing, "There is no good reason in the world why the final adjournment of the Convention should be delayed beyond a week." [16] Radical leaders, though, saw the convention's mandate in more open-ended terms, convinced that tinkering with the original state constitution would prove insufficient for uprooting the vestiges of slavery from civic life. They favored drafting an entirely new constitution, one that would buttress the civil rights of formerly enslaved Missourians and preserve wartime safeguards limiting the public influence of Confederate sympathizers.

Van Horn's subsequent assertion about Republican victories and postwar results help to illuminate Unionists' contradictory understandings of what the Civil War had done in Missouri and beyond. His 1866 claim can be read in at least two ways, with one interpretation of the words *shall settle* assuming a dispositive significance and another that is future-oriented, meaning that anticipated changes were yet to come. A large number of conservative loyalists maintained that the war's two objectives ("*the result*"), the preservation of the Union and the destruction of slavery, had already been achieved; with such questions *settled*, no further action, including a convention to overhaul the state's fundamental law, would be necessary. For Radicals, the Union victory that put control over postwar policy into their own hands marked a beginning rather than an end to needed changes; further reforms ("*the result*") awaited and would arrive in near future.

The fractures among Missouri's Unionist coalition repeatedly threatened to stall progress at the St. Louis convention. Nowhere was the Radicals' vision more forward-thinking—or controversial—than on questions of civil rights for formerly enslaved Missourians. Abolition, they believed, was just the first step toward true freedom, which also required due process protections, equal access to the courts, secure property rights, and, according to some Radicals, even the right to vote. These delegates advocated several educational reforms at the 1865 constitutional convention. Among them were a requirement that local districts maintain free public schools that would operate for at least three months each year; the creation of a new Public School Fund and a state Board of Education to oversee it; and empowering the General Assembly to establish a separate, segregated system of public schools for Black pupils.

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[16] "The Convention," *Daily Missouri Republican*, January 14, 1865, 2.

Convention vice president Charles Drake, noting the penurious condition of the state treasury, advanced another measure that promised to spare from taxation only government property and lands used for public schools. The prospect that Missouri would tax church property and charitable institutions incensed critics like Moses L. Linton, who exclaimed, "Are you going to take graveyards and take the tombs for paving stone if the tax is not paid?"[17] Even though Drake managed to win that particular battle, the convention debates that stretched across 95 days demonstrated that the larger war to shape Reconstruction policy in Missouri was anything but settled.

St. Louis attorney and Radical Republican Charles Drake became the namesake of the Missouri state constitution of 1865, which imposed an "Ironclad" loyalty oath that disfranchised large numbers of Confederate sympathizers.

"Slavery Is Dead"

The fate of slavery had been an explosive question in Missouri since the earliest days of the Civil War. In August 1861, Gen. John C. Frémont, the Federal commander in St. Louis, declared martial law in the state and held that soldiers could emancipate the enslaved property of disloyal slaveowners. President Lincoln, however, countermanded that measure, fearful that such bold action would alienate conservative Unionists, particularly those who owned slaves, and shatter Missouri's fragile loyalist coalition, among other reasons. Lincoln, therefore, did not extend the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, to the loyal slave states, but the collapse of slavery in Missouri had already begun to accelerate. Enslaved people proved to be the most vital actors in its demise, seizing upon the chaos of war to flee from bondage into the lines of nearby Federal soldiers. Despite the president's hesitancy, Union troops played an essential part in the process of military emancipation, sometimes actively liberating people from slavery, as in the case of Kansas troops who raided western Missouri, but more often providing refuge to those who sought protection from pursuing masters.[18]

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[17] Quoted in William E. Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965) 40–41, 118.

[18] Bryce Benedict, *Jayhawkers: The Civil War Brigade of James Henry Lane* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 147–164; Amy Murrell Taylor, *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Chandra Manning, *Troubled Refuge: Struggling for Freedom in the Civil War* (New York: Vintage, 2017).

Missouri voted to abolish slavery on January 11, 1865, three weeks before Congress narrowly passed the 13th Amendment and nearly a year before final ratification made it part of the U.S. Constitution

Recognizing this "prodigious social revolution," a constitutional convention approved an ordinance on July 1, 1863, that set slavery on a path to legal extinction in the state.[19] Debates over that plan revealed that Missouri Unionists had broken into at least three factions: the so-called Charcoals, Radical Republicans who favored immediate and uncompensated emancipation, as well as the enlistment of Black men in the Union military; Snowflakes, loyal slaveholders who sought to preserve slavery beyond the war; and Claybanks, moderate Republicans and War Democrats, many of them slaveowners, who pushed the compromise program of gradual and compensated emancipation that prevailed.

The ordinance of January 11, 1865, superseded that measure and declared the immediate and uncompensated abolition of slavery. White supremacist violence and material privation, however, persisted for many newly freed Missourians. After a pair of white men murdered two black farmers near Cote Sans Desseins, the attackers posted an announcement at the village store that declared their intention to mete out similar punishments upon freedmen who refused to work

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[19] William Frank Zornow, "The Missouri Radicals and the Election of 1864," *Missouri Historical Review* 45:4 (July 1951), 359.

for their former masters.[20] Yet when a Sullivan County farmer, many miles to the north, traveled to a distant town and hired a Black family to work his fields, white neighbors, aggrieved by the prospect of "thieving negroes" in their area, ordered him to return the laborers or else they would be killed; according to a newspaper account, the would-be employer promptly heeded the warning.[21] Many African Americans thus fled the countryside to seek safety and opportunity in nearby communities. The Freedmen's Bureau, established in March 1865, had only a limited reach in Missouri, and what little aid existed for the formerly enslaved came from private charity and Federal troops, who would largely withdraw from the state by year's end.[22] Writing from Macon, Union General Clinton Fisk described his army's struggle to address the mounting crisis that accompanied urban overcrowding. "The poor blacks are rapidly concentrating in the towns and especially at garrisoned places. My hands and heart are full," he reported to James Yeatman, head of the Western Sanitary Commission. "There is much sickness and suffering among them, many need help."[23] One Missouri newspaper alleged that more than two dozen African Americans crowded into a single St. Louis tenement. In Columbia, 30 destitute formerly enslaved men, women, and children died of disease in just the first month after the abolition ordinance.[24]

People of color rarely surfaced in Van Horn's *Journal of Commerce*.[25] As the war drew to a close, he addressed columns to the former slaveowners in his audience. "Slavery is dead. Let them give up the carcass. The negroes are amongst them, and cannot at present be removed," he wrote.[26] Allusions to the impracticality of colonization, whereby people of color could somehow be removed to Africa, the Caribbean, or another distant land, illuminated the worldview of white

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[20] *Missouri State Times,* April 8, 1865.

[21] *Daily Missouri Republican*, March 23, 1865.

[22] Records of the Field Offices for the State of Missouri, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1908), Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, RG 105. See Marlin C. Barber, "Citizens Under the Law: African Americans Confront the Justice System in Kentucky, Missouri, and Texas, 1790–1877," (Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2011), 212–60.

[23] Clinton Fisk to James E. Yeatman, March 25, 1865, in Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Thavolia Glymph, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds. *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 489.

[24] "Coming to Town," *Daily Missouri Republican*, February 1, 1865; *Daily Missouri Republican,* February 20, 1865.

[25] The Black population in Jackson County, Missouri, where Kansas City is located, increased from 4,014 in 1860 to 5,223 people in 1870. Francis A. Walker, *A Compendium of the Ninth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 66.

[26] "One People," *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, August 25, 1865, 2.

Missourians who struggled to adjust themselves to life in a multiracial America. Van Horn believed that a mutual embrace of free-labor values could unite Blacks and whites in a stable, if not altogether harmonious, postwar relationship. Foreshadowing the "cast-down-your-bucket" ethos of Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise, he acknowledged the importance of white landowners and employers making their peace with a new reality of Blacks who earned wages for their labor.[27] Yet the real responsibility, he maintained, fell upon freedpeople who needed to accept with gratitude their lot as unskilled laborers. "Let them strive to make them useful to themselves and the country," wrote Van Horn. "They must learn this lesson, that the laborers to be a benefit must be contented."[28] Subsequent editorials reasserted his claim that the contours of Black freedom would be defined through the relationships of the formerly enslaved with their former masters.

Economic readjustment, Van Horn claimed, required the patience of whites and Blacks alike. "We know the sudden transition from slave to free labor, gives to the South at this time a great shock. The late master expects too much from the late slave. The late slave may not comprehend the responsibilities of liberty," he concluded. Van Horn left such responsibilities undefined, but his observation betrayed a telling skepticism that Black Missourians were fully capable of valuing a newfound freedom whose exercise must be negotiated in connection with white neighbors. "The true philosophy of tacts [decorum] has not penetrated either class, but they will sooner or later learn it from experience. They can learn it no other way." Many of the Missouri men who styled themselves Radicals thus resisted bold measures to advance economic justice for formerly enslaved people. Van Horn dismissed the confiscation and redistribution of lands held by former slaveowners, even those disloyal neighbors he was otherwise eager to drive from public life. The very idea of the state foisting such changes upon Missourians struck him as self-defeating. "If you *enforce* a policy upon a people, they will hate the *policy*, from the fact that it was enforced, while even their judgments may be convinced of its justice," he wrote.[29] High regard for the property rights of private citizens thus drew sharp limits upon the revolutionary potential of Reconstruction.

"We Cannot Tolerate Them in our Midst"

Drake recognized that anger toward disloyal neighbors could serve as the ideological glue to hold together Unionist delegates divided over abolition. Sharpening the terms of the wartime loyalty oath assumed top priority in the first weeks of the convention. He declared, "We intend to erect a wall and a barrier in the shape of a constitution

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[27] See Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (Garden City, New York: Country Life Press, 1900), 219–22.

[28] "One People," *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, August 25, 1865, 2.

[29] "The Southern Problem," *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, September 16, 1865, 1.

that shall be as high as the eternal heavens, deep down as the very center of the earth, so that they," here meaning Democrats and former rebels, "shall neither climb over it nor dig under it."[30] This wall took the shape of a loyalty oath even more restrictive than that imposed by Unionist authorities during the war. In addition to ousting hundreds of disloyal Missourians from public office, the so-called "ironclad oath" had such coercive reach that any of 86 prohibited behaviors might disqualify a person from voting, serving on juries, or finding work as an attorney, educator, or minister. Van Horn believed that the assurances implicit within the oath were a small price to ask. "After the bloodshed and desolation of the last four years," he wrote, "it is not to be wondered at that

A conservative Unionist and delegate to the Missouri constitutional convention of 1865, newspaper publisher William Switzler opposed Radical efforts to disfranchise former rebels and advance Black equality.

the people should demand extraordinary guarantees for future good conduct."[31]

Most delegates did indeed rally to the expulsion of unrepentant rebels from public life, but the new oath's expansive definition of disloyalty in either word or deed provoked outrage from some corners of the convention. Opponents charged that the proscription against Missourians who had ever been disloyal unfairly punished erstwhile Confederates who later declared themselves solid Unionists. Delegate William F. Switzler empathized with citizens buffeted by the turbulent politics of the war's first year. Southern sympathizers who were "misled by this glittering toy of secession in 1861" and took up arms on behalf of the Confederacy, Switzler wrote, "have since become 'enlightened'" and "have since seen the error of their ways." The new constitution, added M. L. Linton, threatened to disfranchise now-loyal men "who have ever said an impudent word or done an impudent action any way favoring secession."[32] The insistence upon targeting latter-day Unionists, these critics maintained, also violated President Lincoln's December 1863 proclamation, which had extended amnesty to former Confederates who both swore their allegiance to the United States and accepted the abolition of slavery.[33]

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[30] Quoted in Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule,* 25.

[31] "The Fourth of September, 1865," *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, September 2, 1865.

[32] "M. L. Linton to the Radical Union Men of Missouri," *Missouri Daily Republican,* April 25, 1865.

[33] "Disfranchisement of Rebels, Speech of William F. Switzler," *Daily Missouri Republican*, February 8, 1865. See Abraham Lincoln, Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, December 8, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, *https://www.loc.gov/item/mal2849300/*, (accessed January 27, 2022).

Many Republicans had little patience for such arguments. They worried that professions of loyalty were a ruse by ex-Confederates to affect contrition simply to regain the vote and plot their return to power. Such doubts flashed in several of Van Horn's postwar editorials. A typical warning read: "We have no confidence in the genuineness of the repentance of these men, and believe that to-day they are as rebellious at heart as ever, and that they have only laid down their arms as a strategical measure."[34] Nearly a year after the surrender of major Confederate armies, Radicals within the Missouri General Assembly held that the preservation of the Union required vigilant action. "The conflict which has existed for the last five years between loyalty and disloyalty is still pending," read one resolution. "The safety of the nation demands that the Government be retained in loyal hands."[35] Governor Thomas C. Fletcher added, "Our bitter experiences make us recognize but two parties—the loyal and disloyal. We are not willing to divide the control of the Government with the latter, much less to turn over the loyal people wholly to their mercies."[36] Having won the war, such Unionists feared that political graciousness might yet squander the peace.

Unionists' anger toward Confederate sympathizers transcended such political deliberations and sometimes manifested as a popular determination to purge disloyal neighbors from entire towns. Missourians did not have to look far to find precedent for the expulsion of Southern sympathizers. By 1863 Federal soldiers had begun to banish from Missouri the families of known guerrillas, whom the Union command blamed for sustaining the pro-Confederate insurgency; the most forceful application of this policy, General Orders Number 11, depopulated parts of four Missouri counties by exiling several thousand disloyal residents.[37] As convention delegates pondered how to best constrain disloyal influence within the state, one Radical in central Missouri recommended that Unionists in each county draft lists of former rebels—including women and children—whose continued presence undermined peace and good order. Mass meetings in several Missouri towns adopted resolutions that aimed to prevent former rebels, including longtime residents, from remaining within their communities. Pettis County citizens who gathered on the courthouse square at Sedalia decried the continued presence of ex-Confederates. "We cannot tolerate them in our midst," said one resolution. "We

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[34] "Johnson's Speech to Southern Delegation," *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, September 23, 1865. For the vindictive impulse among Radicals, see Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule,* 50–75.

[35] "Missouri to the President Greeting," *Missouri State Times*, February 23, 1866. Congress soon overrode the veto, by a vote of 122–41 in the House and 32–15 in the Senate. "The Civil Rights Bill a Law," *Missouri State Times*, April 12, 1866.

[36] *Missouri State Times*, March 6, 1866.

[37] Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 207–20.

will protect ourselves against these thieves, murderers, and rebels, peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must." The *Missouri State Times* wrote approvingly, "It is the *duty* of the people, acting as a community, to drive these men away in order to secure peace to themselves and quiet to the State."[38]

In April 1865 delegates finished drafting the proposed constitution and submitted it to voters for ratification. Radicals worried that if citizens failed to approve the new constitution, Missouri faced a ruinous future. A rejection of the stringent loyalty oath, said one newspaper, represented a tacit invitation to disloyal emigrants from across the Confederacy: "Our State will be flooded with rebels, and those seeking homes in the West will shun us as a community of semi-barbarians."[39] Yet in some quarters of Missouri the mere prospect of ratification led to just the opposite, with a substantial number of former secessionists "beating the most hasty retreat possible," which led one Radical editor to observe, "This hegira is a glorious sign of the future prosperity of Missouri."[40] Voters ultimately adopted the new state constitution by a statewide margin of only 2,827 votes, and the new charter took effect on July 4, six months after delegates first gathered at Mercantile Hall.[41] From Jefferson City, the headline of the *Missouri State Times* voiced the Radicals' exultation: "Victory—The Country Is Safe—Rebels Are Disfranchised—Union Men are to Rule Missouri."[42]

"I Am Done with Them"

The narrow ratification vote testified to sharp divisions among loyal Missourians, even after delegates stripped away many of the proposed constitution's most controversial provisions, particularly those concerning the rights of the formerly enslaved. Delegates, for example, quickly quashed a Radical proposal to ban racial discrimination on railroad cars.[43] Section III recognized for Black Missourians the right to buy, hold, and sell property, to worship freely, and to serve as witnesses at trial, but the question of whether Blacks should be able to testify against whites in court proved remarkably contentious. Delegate John W. Fletcher, brother of the

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[38] "Radical Meeting at Sedalia," *Missouri State Times,* March 9, 1866; "The Prospect in Missouri," *Missouri State Times*, May 13, 1865.

[39] *Missouri State Times*, April 22, 1865.

[40] *Missouri State Times*, April 1, 1865. For further evidence of such emigration, see "From Plattsburg," *Daily Missouri Republican*, January 26, 1865.

[41] Dennis Belcher, "The Judicial Ouster Ordinance of 1865 and Radical Reconstruction in Missouri," in Kenneth Winn, ed. *Missouri Law and the American Conscience: Historical Rights and Wrongs* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2016), 102; "New Constitution," *Holt County Sentinel*, 2, Chronicling America, Library of Congress, *https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85034039/1865-07-07/ed-1/seq-2/* (accessed January 27, 2022).

[42] "Victory," *Missouri State Times*, July 7, 1865.

[43] "Negroes in Railroad Cars," *Daily Missouri Republican*, January 24, 1865.

Radical governor, said, "I am not here for the purpose of giving any rights to the negro further than the right of freedom. I desired to see every slave in the State free, but when they are free, I am done with them."[44] The suggestion that the convention ought to repeal Missouri's prohibition on interracial marriage likewise drew howls of protest from many whites. "The intermarriage of whites and negroes is naturally criminal and revolting to every refined sense," exclaimed one St. Louis newspaper.[45]

The most intractable question to roil the 1865 convention—whether to extend the franchise to Black men—illuminated not only white Unionists' anxieties about racial equality but also how thoroughly they understood the question of Black rights in connection to those of former Confederates. Soon after the ratification of the postwar constitution, the *Missouri State Times* wrote, "It was not *philanthropy* for the black man, but *hatred* for the white rebel, which made Missouri a Free State. The effect of the war was to engender in the hearts of Union men a hatred for rebels that was vastly stronger than their previous prejudice for negroes."[46] A week earlier, that self-proclaimed "Official Paper of the State" estimated that of the loyal voters who had cast ballots for the new constitution, more than three-fourths were "radically in favor of disfranchising rebels," but far fewer held the same kind of zeal for emancipation or legal equality for freedpeople.[47]

Some Unionists went so far as to suggest that the formerly enslaved did not actively seek the vote, but the 200 Black residents of St. Louis who petitioned the convention for equal suffrage offered irrefutable evidence to the contrary.[48] In response to the suggestion that a lack of education among former slaves justified their exclusion from the ballot box, the *Grand River News* remarked, "We hold it safer to place the franchise even with negroes who cannot read and write, than with American white traitors, who inaugurated a war for the perpetuation of human bondage, and a total obliteration of Republican liberties and the Federal Union."[49] Another Missouri

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[44] Quote from William E. Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 115–16.

[45] "Miscegenation in Missouri," *Daily Missouri Republican*, January 17, 1865. See also "Interesting Discussion on The Negro Question—Intermarriage of Whites and Blacks—Advancement Indeed," *Daily Missouri Republican*, January 15, 1865; and "The Mania for Negro Legislation," *Daily Missouri Republican*, January 25, 1865.

[46] "Negro Suffrage," *Missouri State Times*, July 14, 1865.

[47] "Missouri Politics," *Missouri State Times*, July 7, 1865.

[48] One such voice claimed "No negroes are clamoring to vote." "The Elective Franchise," *Howard Union*, August 3, 1865.

[49] *Grand River News*, quoted in "Spirit of the Country Press," *Missouri State Times*, July 21, 1865; "Colored Franchise," *Daily Missouri Republican*, February 3, 1865. For similar Unionist defenses, see the expressions of the *LaGrange American* in "Spirit of the Country Press," *Missouri State Times*, August 18, 1865.

paper concluded that if a Black man was indeed ignorant of civic behavior, granting him access to the polls would prove the best sort of school.[50]

Other Unionists maintained that the endorsement of Black voting rights posed a destabilizing threat to a political and social order organized for the protection of white liberty. Switzler described full racial equality as "a progress too rapid for our condition," adding that "This Government was made by white men, and for white men, and their posterity forever." Framing the question of civil rights as a zero-sum game, he concluded that the "well meant but mistaken efforts to thrust freedom and equality upon the black man, endangers, if it does not destroy, the liberties of the white man."[51] Eli Smith, a delegate from Worth County, also warned that the Radical pursuit of equal suffrage threatened to overstep the public sentiments that prevailed among whites across Missouri and would likely result in miscegenation and harm to Blacks and whites alike.[52] A conservative Jefferson City paper claimed that equal suffrage would degrade the electoral process and attract such a wave of Black migration that Missouri, if it became the only former slave state to enfranchise freedmen, would soon be "overrun with negroes."[53] Walter Lovelace, the speaker of the Missouri House of Representatives, urged patience on the issue and couched his opposition to equal suffrage in terms of natural rights. Freedom, he claimed, required the right of protection in person and property, but voting was less a political right than a privilege. "If the negro could stand the lash of the slaveholder for three hundred years, now that he is free, he can stand a few years without this privilege of the franchise," Lovelace concluded. White voters might yet extend the ballot to their Black neighbors, but he predicted that such change was not soon forthcoming.[54] The 1865 constitution ultimately did not extend suffrage to Black Missourians, and for the time being the boundaries of full citizenship in Missouri followed strict lines of race and loyalty.

Van Horn, like some Radicals, viewed the issue of Black voting rights in terms of partisan advantage as much as one of simple equality. In the days after the 1866 election, he anticipated the coming moment when both Black men and former Confederates, relieved of the test oath proscription, would each gain the ballot. "Even rebels, who have forfeited every right, we do not design to keep under disability longer than the public safety imperatively demands," he wrote. "Good behavior on their part will hasten the day of their enfranchisement, and by the time the freedmen

50 "Negro Suffrage," *Missouri State Times*, March 30, 1866.

51 "Remarks of Mr. Switzler," *Daily Missouri Republican*, January 21, 1865.

52 "Constitutional Convention," *Daily Missouri Republican*, February 2, 1865.

53 "Negro Suffrage," *People's Tribune*, October 4, 1865.

54 "Speech of Hon. Walter L. Lovelace," *Daily Missouri Republican*, February 3, 1865.

will have learned the duties of citizenship to be endowed with its privileges."[55] With an eye toward this impending restoration, many Radicals looked to Black men as a potential bloc of faithful Republicans. Van Horn made this point explicitly in 1867, writing, "What we in Missouri need is people, voters, and it becomes our duty not only to encourage emigration from the loyal States, but to use the material we now have in the negro to counteract that which is sure to come—the rebel vote."[56] Yet when a proposal to extend voting rights to Black men in the District of Columbia had come before Congress in early 1866, Missouri's House delegation—nearly all of them Radicals—split over the measure, with only three representatives voting to approval the measure. Among the five men who voted in opposition was Robert Van Horn.[57] The contrast between his professed support for Black rights back home and his demonstrated indifference in the nation's capital could hardly have been more striking. On this particular issue, the congressman's convictions ran only as deep as the newspaper ink on which he previously printed them.

As an editor, Van Horn was rarely shy about the issues that animated him most, but his postwar writings and legislative record revealed how civil rights stood among his lesser political priorities. The *Congressional Globe* reveals that he introduced only three bills during the 39th Congress: one to provide relief to "loyal settlers" living on the public domain; another to aid in the construction of the Kansas and Neosho Valley railroad, which would connect the Great Lakes to the Texas Gulf coast, by way of his western Missouri district; and a third to authorize construction of a railroad bridge across the Missouri River, again at Kansas City.[58] To be fair, on April 9, 1866, he—like nearly every other Republican representative—voted to pass the civil rights bill that served as the foundation of the eventual 14th Amendment.[59] According to the *Globe*, however, Van Horn said very little regarding that momentous bill, which also received only passing attention in the dispatches that he crafted for Kansas City readers of the *Western Journal of Commerce*. Such silence was a marked contrast to his consistently long editorials that condemned the treachery of Confederates or rhapsodized about future railroads. If the number of words that Van Horn expounded on a topic revealed its importance within his political firmament, the future of formerly enslaved people was a rather dim star indeed.

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[55] "Radicalism Saves Missouri," *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, November 17, 1866, 1.

[56] "Impartial Suffrage," page 2, *Weekly Western Journal of Commerce*, February 23, 1867.

[57] *People's Tribune*, January 31, 1866.

[58] *Congressional Globe*, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., 1342, 1349, 3406, 3811, 4059.

[59] Ibid., 1861.

Aftermath

A pair of ideological cords had bound loyal Missourians throughout the war—their shared commitment to saving the Union and a determination to crush the treasonous rebels who sought to destroy it. Emancipation emerged as a parallel objective of the war and drew together a growing number of white Unionists, but that cord of antislavery politics held ambivalent abolitionists only lightly and conservative critics not at all. Loosened by the withdrawal of Federal troops in 1865, the knot that fastened this wartime coalition soon unraveled, its threads frayed by competing political priorities, white supremacy, and a mounting backlash from the Confederates marginalized by the ironclad oath. By the time that Congress was beginning to implement its Radical vision of Reconstruction in the former Confederacy, Van Horn and his Republican peers came to agree that in Missouri, at last, the work of the Civil War was all but done.

The years immediately after the Republican triumph of 1866 witnessed a steady erosion of the Radical program in Missouri. The proscriptions imposed by the ironclad oath began to slowly dissolve, weakened by inconsistent enforcement and the legal challenges waged by Confederate sympathizers and sympathetic conservative Unionists. Restrictions upon clergy who refused to swear the oath were among the first to fall, as the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1867 that they amounted to unconstitutional bills of attainder.[60] That same year, former U.S. Congressman Frank Blair, Jr., challenged the oath required of Missouri voters. In that case the Supreme Court upheld the state's power to set rules for voting, but growing support among Republicans to grant amnesty to former rebels signaled that the oath's days were likely numbered.[61]

Of the many differences between the postwar political landscape of Missouri and that of the Deep South, none were more striking than the disparate fates of freedpeople. Delegates at the 1865 St. Louis convention managed to agree on some civil rights reforms, removing the antebellum prohibitions that barred Blacks from serving as witnesses at trial or joining the state militia, but other restrictions, such those that limited jury service to whites, remained in place. For most Republicans, Black suffrage likewise proved to be a bridge too far. Congress required that rebel states accept the 14th Amendment and expand the franchise to Black men in order to gain readmission to the Union. Missouri, having not seceded, faced no such requirement, and its Black population thus remained disenfranchised. Black voters

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[60] *Cummings v. Missouri*, 71 U.S. 277 (1867).
[61] McKerley, "Citizens and Strangers," 101–17; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 272–73.

quickly became a vital constituency in the nascent Republican administrations that took power in each of the former Confederate states, where men of color won election to several local, state, and federal offices. These gains were also the result of the proscription imposed upon white rebels, as well as the ongoing presence of Federal troops, who safeguarded the polls and worked to limit racial violence across the Southern countryside. The withdrawal of such federal agents from Missouri, coupled with the indifference of state officials, meant that its Black population remained targets of vigilante terror for many years to come.

In Missouri, the 1865 constitution limited the rights to vote and hold office to white men. An 1868 amendment to the state constitution that would have enfranchised Black men failed to gain majority approval. Legislative efforts to eliminate racial discrimination on Missouri streetcars or in the state asylum were also unsuccessful, as was the campaign to enforce the constitutional provision of educational access for Black children.[62] Missourians later voted to ratify the 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, and only with the coming ratification of the 15th Amendment in February 1870, which declared that states could not deny the ballot on the basis of race, did Missouri leaders finally extend the vote to men of color. Acting under the guise of "impartial" and "universal suffrage," they simultaneously ended the disfranchisement of Confederate sympathizers. Over the next many decades Black Missourians would become an increasingly important voting bloc, first as a reliable part of the state's Republican coalition, but they would not match the Reconstruction-era gains of Black officeholders in the Deep South, however short-lived, until well into the 20th century.[63]

The first statewide elections that followed the removal of voting proscriptions witnessed the denouement of the Missouri Radicals. Their fall from power resulted in part from the "possum policy" embraced by the state's Democratic leaders, who announced that they would not seriously contest statewide elections. With Democrats focusing upon local races and essentially ceding the statewide field to Republicans, the increasingly sharp divisions among the coalition that had controlled Missouri politics since the Civil War assumed outsized significance. An ascendant faction of so-called Liberals, which prioritized tariff and civil service reform, eclipsed the Radical wing of the party, with challenger (and former

[62] McKerley, "Citizens and Strangers," 81–97.

[63] Kremer, *James Milton Turner and the Promise of America*, 40–56, 98–130; McKerley, "Citizens and Strangers," 124–228. For the postbellum political gains of Black Southerners, see Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Radical) B. Gratz Brown—aided by a significant number of Democratic voters—defeating incumbent governor Joseph McClurg by a margin of 104,374 to 63,336. Democratic candidates, meanwhile, retook the state legislature, winning 77 of 138 seats, and claimed four of Missouri's nine congressional seats.[64] One of them had belonged to Van Horn, who lost his bid for a fourth term in the U.S. House. The conservative resurgence was complete by 1875, when a new state constitution rolled back much of the progressive charter drafted just a decade before. By decade's end, Missouri's two U.S. senators were former Confederate general Francis Cockrell and former Confederate congressman George Vest.

In the wake of his reelection defeat, editor Van Horn resumed full-time control of the *Western Journal of Commerce*, a perch that he would maintain through the first decade of the 20th century. By that point, his political legacy was secure. Kansas City at last obtained the railroad connection to the cross-state Missouri Pacific line that he had championed for a decade. The city's commercial triumph over Leavenworth, St. Joseph, and other rival towns was complete in 1869 after Congressman Van Horn secured federal support for the completion of the Hannibal Bridge, the first railroad span across the Missouri River. By linking Kansas City to Chicago and cities further east, these connections were catalysts for the explosive growth of the coming decades. Van Horn later recalled that such internal improvements were the most consequential developments of the post–Civil War era, a claim readily embraced by succeeding generations. The railroads had indeed sparked the immigration and investment he had long prophesied, and it was hard to deny the fulfillment of many elements of his "New West" vision, with Kansas City as the hub of sprawling Missouri valley hinterland.[65]

Americans often point to 1877 as the year when the period of Reconstruction came to an end, but if understood as a process of political and social transformation, whereby a new Republican coalition of Black and white voters attempted to remake the former Confederacy, it had collapsed years earlier, with Democrats' recapture of state governments. In Virginia and Tennessee, this occurred in 1869, with North Carolina following the next year, and then Georgia a year after that. By 1876, the post–Civil War military occupation of the Deep South persisted in only

[64] Andrew L. Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction: The Liberal Republicans in the Civil War Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 1–24; Heather Cox Richardson, *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 78–120.

[65] Many years later, Van Horn returned to the U.S. House for a pair of terms in the 47th (1881–1883) and 54th (1895–1897) Congresses. J. M. Greenwood, "Col. Robert T. Van Horn: His Life and Public Service," An Address delivered before the Greenwood Club of Kansas City, Mo., March 10, 1905, 7–14, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

three states: Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina. As that year's presidential election devolved into an intractable stalemate, those three happened to be the pivotal states where Democrats and Republicans each claimed that their slate of presidential electors was victorious. After a months-long impasse, a subsequent compromise recognized the Republican electors, resulting in the victory of Rutherford B. Hayes, even though he had lost the popular vote by a quarter-million votes but triumphed in the Electoral College tabulation by a single vote. Soon after Hayes was inaugurated as president, he ordered the removal of the few thousand Federal troops who remained in the South.[66]

By 1877 Missouri Unionists had long since abandoned Reconstruction. Those early moments when the wartime abolition ordinance and the push for a new state constitution signaled the far-reaching potential of postwar change were now a distant memory. Unlike the Deep South, where direct congressional oversight and a years-long military occupation yielded the first serious attempts at multiracial democracy in U.S. history, the control of postwar affairs in Missouri remained squarely within the hands of the state's Unionist leaders. The early accomplishments of this coalition were considerable and included the abolition of slavery, unprecedented investments in public education, and the preservation of self-government by loyal men. Yet the advancement toward greater equality in Missouri soon stalled and never matched the subsequent achievements of the Reconstruction governments in the old Confederacy. Blunted by white supremacy, undermined by the caution of so-called Radicals, and at last killed by a Republican fracture that made possible a conservative restoration, the Reconstruction of Missouri was ultimately a series of inconclusive half-steps. Leaders like Robert Van Horn could proudly insist that they had finished the work of the Civil War—saving the Union and destroying slavery—but the years that followed, marked by the restoration of former rebels and the precarity that faced the formerly enslaved, would demonstrate that its legacies were yet unsettled.

Picture credits: Robert Van Horn, National Archives and Records Administration; Charles Drake, Library of Congress; Missouri Abolition Ordinance, Missouri History Museum, Missouri Historical Society; William Switzler, The State Historical Society of Missouri.

[66] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper, 1988), 566–81.