

# **American History**

## **"Rebuilding the Nation"**

**By the 1870's, Radical Republicans were losing power in Congress. Many northerners grew tired of trying to change the South.**

**President Grant won reelection in 1872, but many northerners had lost faith in Republican leaders and their policies.**

**By 1876, only three southern states were still under Republican control: South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana.**

**The end of Reconstruction came with the election of 1876. The Democrats nominated Samuel Tilden for President, and the Republican candidate was Rutherford B. Hayes.**

**When the votes were tallies, Tilden had 250,000 more popular votes than Hayes. But Tilden had only 181 electoral votes – one vote short of the number needed to win the election. Twenty other votes were in dispute. The outcome of the election hung on these votes!**

**As inauguration day drew near, the nation still had no one to swear in as President! Congress set up a special committee to settle the crisis. A majority of the committee members were Republicans. The committee decided to give all of the disputed electoral votes to Hayes.**

**Southern Democrats could have fought the election of Hayes. But Hayes had privately agreed to end Reconstruction! Once in office, he removed all remaining federal troops from South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana. Reconstruction was over.**

**By the late 1880's, many southern states had passed poll taxes. Poll taxes required voters to pay a fee each time they voted. Because of the poll taxes, poor freedmen could rarely afford to vote!**

**Literacy tests required voters to read and explain a difficult part of the Constitution. Since freedmen had little education – such tests kept them away from the polls!**

**Some southern whites were poor and illiterate (not able to read/write). To allow more whites to vote, states passed grandfather clauses. If a voter's father or grandfather had been eligible to vote on January 1, 1867, the voter did not have to take a literacy test. Since no African Americans in the south could vote before 1868, grandfather clauses were a way to ensure that only white men could vote!**

**At the same time African Americans were losing the right to vote segregation became the "law of the South". Segregation means separating people of different races. Southern states passed laws separated blacks and whites in schools, restaurants, theaters, trains, streetcars, playgrounds, hospitals, and even cemeteries. The laws were called the Jim Crow Laws.**

**African Americans filed lawsuits to challenge segregation. In 1896, the Supreme Court upheld segregation in Plessy v. Ferguson. The court ruled that segregation was legal as long as facilities for blacks and whites were equal.**