



Still the Arena of Civil War: Violence and Turmoil in Reconstruction Texas, 1865-1874

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Following the Civil War, the United States was fully engaged in a bloody conflict with ex-Confederates, conservative Democrats, and members of organized terrorist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, for control of the southern states. Texas became one of the earliest battleground states in the War of Reconstruction. Throughout this era, white Texans claimed that Radical Republicans in Congress were attempting to dominate their state through “Negro-Carpetbag-Scalawag rule.” In response to these perceived threats, whites initiated a violent guerrilla war that was designed to limit support for the Republican Party. They targeted loyal Unionists throughout the South, especially African Americans who represented the largest block of Republican voters in the region.

Was the Reconstruction era in the Lone Star State simply a continuation of the Civil War? Evidence presented by sixteen contributors in this new anthology, edited by Kenneth W. Howell, argues that this indeed was the case. Topics include the role of the Freedmen’s Bureau and the occupying army, focusing on both sides of the violence. Several contributors analyze the origins of the Ku Klux Klan and its operations in Texas, how the Texas State Police attempted to quell the violence, and Tejano adjustment to Reconstruction. Other chapters focus on violence against African-American women, the failure of Governor Throckmorton to establish law and order, and the role of newspaper editors influencing popular opinion. Finally, several contributors study Reconstruction by region in the Lower Brazos River Valley and in Lavaca County.

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