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Joseph A. Ranney

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The Civil War devastated the South, and the end of slavery turned Southern society upside down. How did the South regain social, economic, and political stability in the wake of emancipation and wartime destruction, and how did the South come together with its former enemies in the North? Why did the South not slip back into chaos? This book holds the keys to the answers to these tantalizing questions. Author Joseph Ranney explodes the myth of a unified South and exposes just how complex and fragile the postwar recovery was. The end of slavery and the emergence of a radically new social order raised a host of thorny legal issues: What place should newly freed slaves have in Southern society? What was the proper balance between states' rights and a newly powerful federal government? How could postwar economic distress be eased without destroying property rights? Should new civil rights be extended to women as well as blacks? Southern states addressed these issues in surprisingly different ways. Ranney also shatters the popular myth that a new legal system was imposed upon the South by the victorious North during Reconstruction. Southern states took an active hand in shaping postwar changes, and Southern courts often defended civil rights and national reunification against hostile Southern legislators. How did that come about? Ranney provides some surprising answers. He also profiles judges and other lawmakers who shaped Southern law during and after Reconstruction, including heretofore little-known black leaders in the South. These extraordinary individuals created a legal heritage that assisted leaders of the second civil rights revolution a century after Reconstruction ended. This book adds immeasurably to our knowledge not only of Southern history, but also of American legal and social history.

From Booklist Ranney's careful and well-organized study of Reconstruction is an examination of Southern states' responses to the political, economic, and social changes following the Civil War. Since the federal government held limited power over the states, he argues, the states were able to rebuild their legal systems in a surprisingly varied evolution that tackled issues of race, property rights, and economic rehabilitation in an effort of reconciliation with a new American legal order. Ranney also profiles key political and legal figures who were at the forefront of their respective states' issues. Although significant laws were enacted during Reconstruction--notably the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth Constitutional amendments and the Civil Rights Act of 1866--the period also saw the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and Jim Crow laws. Ranney's thesis acknowledges that although Reconstruction forced white Southerners to acknowledge blacks as more than property and allowed blacks to take an active part in lawmaking, the lasting legacy of the legal framework would come to fruition nearly 100 years later during the civil rights movement of the twentieth century. Elliot Mandel Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "The era of Reconstruction was one of the most tumultuous times in US history, rife with social, economic, and political upheaval. One mechanism that attempted to ease the chaos was the state legal system of the defeated Confederate states. Law professor Ranney presents a broad discussion of the post-Civil War efforts to reestablish state law in the southern states in the aftermath of economic collapse and social emancipation. He attempts to demonstrate that, unlike the general perception of southern law as the instrument of racism and anti-Reconstruction agitation, newly freed African Americans had some influence upon the re-creation of southern law.... Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above." - Choice "Ranney details the diversity of approaches to Reconstruction --from civil punishment of those who fought for the Confederacy to the significant and largely effective efforts to silence black voters and limit their economic rights. The matrix of responses to the war demonstrates how much was unsettled. This is a study of cases and statutes. There are many facts in this study and it will be an important companion to scholars sifting the grains of sand of Reconstruction.... There is much to be said about law during Reconstruction; scholars now have a concise and important summary of many of those changes." - The Historian "This book has much to recommend in it, both to the specialist and the general historian. Its focus on the purely legal aspects of Reconstruction gives it a unique perspective.... Ranney offers worthwhile insight into the role of Southern lawmakers, and the judiciary in particular, in the outcome of what Eric Foner calls the unfinished revolution. The most important insight Ranney offers is in the complexity of the judicial process that was far from a simple North versus South or Radical versus Redeemer contest." - H-Net s "Ranney's careful and well-organized study of Reconstruction is an examination of Southern states' responses to the political, economic, and social changes following the civil war. Since the federal government held limited power over the states, he argues, the states were able to rebuild their legal systems in a surprisingly varied evolution that tackled issues of race, property rights, and economic rehabilitation in an effort or reconciliation with a new American legal order. Ranney also profiles key political and legal figures who were at the forefront of their respective states' issues.... [t]he lasting legacy of the legal framework would come to fruition nearly 100 years later during the civil rights movement of the twentieth century." - Booklist "Practicing attorney Ranney shows how the South was in fact not at all unified, and that building a new social order from the ruins of a slave economy was a state-by-state enterprise. He also finds that far from operating under a legal system imposed by the victorious North, Southern courts operated largely independently. Along with the economic issues, which each state handled largely on its own, many courts made surprising rulings toward reunification and civil rights in defiance of Southern legislators. The result is a fascinating account of how the relationship of law and society can be simultaneously interdependent,

delicate and complex." - Reference Research Book News "In this succinct treatise on southern law and judicial culture during Reconstruction, attorney Joseph R. Ranney makes the innovative argument that conservative southern judges played important roles in facilitating national reconciliation and in preserving basic civil rights for African Americans." - Journal of Southern History " . . . detailed and meticulously documented. . ." - Civil War History About the Author Joseph A. Ranney teaches legal history as an adjunct professor at Marquette University Law School and is a partner in the Madison, Wisconsin, law firm of DeWitt Ross Stevens S.C., practicing commercial and intellectual property litigation.