

1865 - 1877

RECONSTRUCTED

A Journey Through the Reconstruction Era in Columbia SC

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The following locations and people tell the story of the post-Civil War Reconstruction Era in Columbia SC. Curated with the assistance of Historic Columbia, each site or person offers connections to understand important events that shaped the period.

The Reconstruction Era spanned from 1865–1877 and marked the challenging period when the United States grappled with reintegrating the states that had seceded and determining the legal status of African Americans.

This era in Columbia SC was a time when the South Carolina State House was home to the first Black majority legislature, Black churches emerged as centers of community, social life and political power, Benedict College was founded and 90 percent of the students at the South Carolina College in 1870 – now the University of South Carolina – were Black.

**Journey with us through this period
in person and online at
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RECONSTRUCTED TRAILBLAZERS

Clarissa Minnie Thompson Allen (1859-1941)

In the 1880s, Thompson published a series of stories about “Capitola,” a fictionalized version of Columbia, in *The Boston Advocate*.



Photo courtesy of Library of Congress

Mack Johnson

Born into slavery, Mack Johnson became the first Black pastor at Ladson Presbyterian Church in 1874.



Photo courtesy of Library of Congress

Robert Brown Elliott (1842-1884)

Elliott relentlessly pursued comprehensive civil rights, advocated for public education and helped strike down requirements

for poll taxes and literacy tests for voters.

William Beverly Nash (1822-1888)

Nash represented Richland County in the 1868 South Carolina State Constitutional Convention and served in the state senate as a Republican from 1868 until 1877.



Photo courtesy of the South Carolina Library
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

Henry E. Hayne (born 1840)

By registering as a medical student at the University of South Carolina in 1873, Hayne led the first racial desegregation of the University of South Carolina.

The Rollin Sisters

Frances, Charlotte, Katherine, Louise and Florence Rollin moved to Columbia after the Civil War and were among the first and most significant women suffragists in South Carolina.

Read their full stories online
at ReconstructedColumbiaSC.com



RECONSTRUCTED TRAIL STOPS

- 1 - The Museum of the Reconstruction Era at the Woodrow Wilson Family Home
- 2 - Benedict College
- 3 - Reconstruction Churches *4 total locations*
First Calvary Church, Bethel AME Church, Ladson Presbyterian Church & Zion Baptist Church
- 4 - Phoenix Building
- 5 - South Carolina State House
- 6 - University of South Carolina
- 7 - Hampton-Preston Mansion & Gardens
- 8 - Randolph Cemetery



Courtesy of Historic Columbia

The Museum of the Reconstruction Era at the Woodrow Wilson Family Home

1705 Hampton St., Columbia, SC

The Museum of the Reconstruction Era at the Woodrow Wilson Family Home is the nation's first museum dedicated to interpreting the post-Civil War Reconstruction period and is housed in South Carolina's only remaining presidential site. Visitors have the opportunity to explore the years following the Civil War brought to life by influential figures and landmark events, such as the Ku Klux Klan trials of 1870 and 1871.

To learn more, scan QR Code or visit ReconstructedColumbiaSC.com



Courtesy of Historic Columbia

Benedict College

1600 Harden St., Columbia, SC

Founded in 1870, Benedict College embodies a significant achievement in the Reconstruction Era — equitable access to education for people of color. The campus, established on former plantation land, ensured newly freed people, and their descendants, could benefit from educational opportunities. Benedict College's Historic District — listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1987 — includes Morgan Hall, the school's oldest remaining building, constructed in 1895.

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From the John H. McCray Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

Reconstruction Churches

Existing structures are not original to the Reconstruction Era

During the Reconstruction era, many of Columbia's Black churches began, not only as independent places of worship, but as centers critical to building community, social life and political power in the years after the Civil War. Bethel AME Church (**819 Woodrow St.**), First Calvary Church (**1401 Pine St.**), Zion Baptist Church (**801 Washington St.**) and Ladson Presbyterian Church (**1720 Sumter St.**) all were established during Reconstruction — several other community churches were key gathering places during this era as well.



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Phoenix Building

1625 Main St., Columbia, SC

Completed in 1866, the home of the influential and hyper-partisan newspaper, *The Daily Phoenix*, still stands today. The newspaper's owner, Julian Selby, amplified voices of disempowered Democrats seeking to restore the past, despite many stories being biased or misleading. The information published shaped the general public's view of the Civil War and Reconstruction for generations.



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Courtesy of Historic Columbia

South Carolina State House

1100 Gervais St., Columbia, SC

Construction began on the State House in the 1850s but was halted in 1861. In 1869, South Carolina's Black-majority state legislature became the first to occupy the structure, having immediately prioritized salvaging the structure that had been left uncompleted and without a roof throughout the Civil War. To this day, South Carolina is the only state in the U.S. to elect a Black-majority legislature, and it did so four times in a row, from 1868 until 1874.

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Courtesy of University of South Carolina Archives

University of South Carolina

Downtown Columbia

Originally known as South Carolina College, the institution closed between 1861 and 1865 as the Civil War disrupted life in the South. With the onset of Reconstruction and new leadership at the state level, South Carolina College reopened as the University of South Carolina in 1866. In 1869, the Black-majority state legislature began integrating the university, first with the appointment of two African American board members. In 1873, the university hired Black faculty member Richard T. Greener and admitted Black students. A statue dedicated Greener stands outside Thomas Cooper Library.

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Courtesy of Historic Columbia

Hampton-Preston Mansion & Gardens

1615 Blanding St., Columbia, SC

Completed in 1818, the Hampton-Preston Mansion is one of Columbia's oldest remaining structures and is most commonly associated with the politically-powerful families that owned it from 1823 until 1873. Today, tours of the furnished house's exhibits explore the lives of enslaved workers and their planter-class owners. Through enslaved labor prior to the Civil War, the four-acre grounds were transformed into regionally-acclaimed gardens that contained a remarkable collection of native varieties and plants from around the world.

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Courtesy of Historic Columbia

Randolph Cemetery

Western Terminus of Elmwood Ave

Reverend Benjamin F. Randolph played a significant role in the 1868 South Carolina State Constitutional Convention. He briefly served as a Republican state senator before his assassination in October 1868. In 1871, 19 local Black legislators and businessmen purchased land and established this cemetery as a more dignified final resting place for African Americans in Columbia, naming it in Randolph's honor.

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