

Lecture 4: “Civil War, Reconstruction, and Change in Charleston”

Teacher Script

Use the following information as a guide for teaching the “Civil War, Reconstruction, and Change in Charleston” MS PowerPoint presentation.

Slide 1: Civil War, Reconstruction, and Change in Charleston

- A. The Civil War and Reconstruction years had an incredible impact on the city of Charleston.
- B. This presentation will seek to provide a very brief glimpse into the events leading up to the Civil War as well as the Reconstruction years.
- C. Finally, the Old Citadel at Marion Square will be used as an example of how buildings change in appearance and use over time.

Slide 2: Plantations and Prosperity

- A. The years preceding the Civil War were very prosperous for Charleston planters and merchants.
- B. Even though plantation agriculture was the dominant mode of economic development for the lowcountry, with cotton being the major cash crop, the fact that the city is one of the South’s major seaports helped Charleston flourish during the mid-nineteenth century.
- C. In 1860, Charleston’s population was a little over 40,000.¹
- D. Roughly one third of the city’s population were slaves at this time.²

Slide 3: Growing Tensions Between North and South

- A. The extensive success of Charleston’s plantation agriculture would not have been possible were it not for the forced labor of African slaves.
- B. The moral issues surrounding slavery had been debated since the early 1800s.

¹ Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 4.

² Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 59.

- C. Charleston was seen as the center of Southern slavery due in large part because most African slaves entered the United States through Charleston's port.
- D. By the 1830s and 1840s, abolitionists were using various methods such as printing pamphlets and preaching to speak against slavery.
- E. These efforts antagonized southern slave owners and created further tension between the North and South.³
- F. Sarah and Angelina Grimké, sisters born in Charleston around the turn of the nineteenth century, became two of the first women to publicly advocate abolition and women's rights. They were able to speak about slavery with firsthand accuracy from their experiences growing up on the family plantation.
- G. Many Charlestonians feared their way of life would be obliterated if slavery was abolished. Southern planters were right to be concerned. The plantation system simply could not function on the same scale without the cheap and abundant labor provided by slavery.
- H. Even though the practice of slavery is now understood to be unconstitutional and morally wrong, it is important to remember that Charlestonians living during this time relied heavily on slave labor and were not eager to give up their wealthy lifestyle.
- I. Many of them had grown up surrounded by slavery and did not necessarily see it as being wrong or immoral.
- J. That does not excuse them of the wrongful enslavement of so many African slaves, but it does help to put their motives into perspective.

Slide 4: Secession

- A. In the 1830s, South Carolina became a major player in national politics during the nullification crisis when the state declared it had the right to refuse to obey any Federal law it disagreed with.⁴
- B. Charleston became further entrenched in the national slavery debate by the mid-1850s. Charleston's position as the nation's major slave port created an unyielding

³ Robert N. Rosen, *Confederate Charleston: An Illustrated History of the City and the People During the Civil War* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 16.

⁴ Rosen, *Confederate Charleston*, 16.

- tie to the slave industry, and many locals believed the city's interests could only be protected if the South seceded from the Union.⁵
- C. In April of 1860, Charleston was chosen to host the Democratic National Convention. Even though choosing a Southern city such as Charleston was an attempt to foster harmony within the Democratic Party, Charlestonians and other southerners were dissatisfied with the direction the nation's government was taking when Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860.⁶
 - D. Despite the bad feelings between North and South, Charlestonians did not really believe that the situation would result in a war. Rather, they believed that the North would peaceably allow South Carolina to secede from the Union.⁷
 - E. A secession convention met in Columbia, the capitol of South Carolina, on December 17, 1860. However, an outbreak of smallpox resulted in the convention moving locations to Charleston.⁸
 - F. The vote to secede from the United States was passed unanimously and the Ordinance of Secession was signed on December 20, 1860.⁹
 - G. This decision made South Carolina the first state to secede from the Union and led to the establishment of the Confederate States of America.

Slide 5: Civil War

- A. On April 12, 1861, the first shots marking the beginning of the Civil War were fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston's harbor.
- B. After this momentous exchange, the city of Charleston remained relatively untouched by Union forces until federal troops bombarded the city with shells in August 1863.
- C. Many buildings in the southern portion of the peninsula were damaged or completely destroyed by the constant shelling.

⁵ Rosen, *Confederate Charleston*, 18.

⁶ Rosen, *Confederate Charleston*, 28 and 38.

⁷ Rosen, *Confederate Charleston*, 40.

⁸ Rosen, *Confederate Charleston*, 42.

⁹ Rosen, *Confederate Charleston*, 44.

- D. This barrage continued until February 18, 1865 when federal troops entered the city with very little opposition. Confederate troops left the city the previous night, setting fire to and blowing up many of the supplies such as cotton, rice, and munitions so they would not be left for federal troops to capture.¹⁰
- E. The effects of heavy shelling and the presence of Union troops in the city made the prospect of successful economic development in the city very unlikely.¹¹

Slide 6: Reconstruction

- A. Even after Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865, federal troops remained in Charleston.
- B. With many of the city's young men having gone off to fight in the Confederate army, the city began to languish.
 - “Reporter Sidney Andrews, arriving in September 1865, saw ‘a city of ruins, of desolation, of vacant houses, of widowed women, of rotting wharves, or deserted warehouses, of weed-wild gardens, of miles of grass-grown streets, of acres of pitiful and voiceful barrenness.’”¹²
- C. Union troops had little or no fond feelings toward Charleston for its influential role in leading the secession of southern states from the Union.
- D. Once known for its picturesque architecture and lively culture, Charleston sank into a demoralizing bleakness that would affect the city's society, economy, built environment, and politics for decades to come.
- E. South Carolina's white male population during the Civil War began at 146,000. Out of the 85,000 men who served in the military in some capacity, almost 40,000 were killed or disabled.¹³
- F. This made South Carolina the state that sustained the heaviest losses of any other state in the Confederacy.

¹⁰ Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 52.

¹¹ Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 56.

¹² Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 56.

¹³ Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 60.

- G. Charleston sent between 5,000 and 6,000 men who made up around 42 military companies that sustained a 30 percent loss on average.
- H. Many of the young men who had not been killed or injured during the war left the city to seek their fortunes and took their vigor and potential for leadership with them.
- I. Unfortunately, the older generation of men who had hit their prime in the 1850s and 1860s were disillusioned after the war and were left to deal with a broken city. Their disenchantment colored the way they conducted business and affected cultural and economic development.¹⁴
- J. “For these men, the Confederate disaster of 1865 meant defeat of their principles, their interests, their way of life.”¹⁵
- K. The Reconstruction years were difficult for many southern cities. Union troops did not seek to make things easier for people they saw as traitors to the United States. Punishment for disobedience became a severe reality for the states that had seceded from the Union.
- L. Many Charlestonians fell on tough financial times after the Civil War.
- M. Even though times were extremely hard for Charlestonians after the Civil War, the fact that there was not much money being made meant that families did not have enough money to make significant changes to their existing homes or build new ones.
- N. The economic downturn is one of the primary reasons why Charleston has so many examples of nineteenth century architecture preserved in the city.

Slide 7: Change – The Old Citadel at Marion Square

- A. The Old Citadel at Marion Square is a building that has been particularly significant to Charleston history since its use as a fortified arsenal in 1826.
- B. The following slides will use images of the Old Citadel at Marion Square to show how historic buildings can change over time.

¹⁴ Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 61.

¹⁵ Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 59.

- C. As you go through the photographs, have the student raise their hands to try and figure out what has changed from picture to picture.
- D. You may have to flip back and forth between the photographs so students can see the changes.
- E. The site where the Embassy Suites Charleston Hotel is now located has been used for military purposes since 1758 when an earlier structure acted as a fort for the city.
- F. From 1789 to 1822, the state used the site as a tobacco warehouse.¹⁶

Slide 8: The Citadel During the Civil War

- A. In 1826, the current structure was completed as a “fortified arsenal” and was known as “The Citadel.”
- B. In 1842, South Carolina established a military school at The Citadel. This school eventually relocated to the northern part of the peninsula along the Ashley River in 1922.
- C. A third story as well as east and west wings were added to the Citadel in the mid-1800s.¹⁷

Slide 9: Federal Occupation

- A. During the Civil War, Federal troops occupied the building at which time the west wing (on the left side) was burned in a fire. It is difficult to see in this photograph, but it is possible that this picture was taken after the west wing had burned. However, the date of the photograph is unknown so it is not possible to confirm that.
- B. Notice the rounded dome on the parapet in the upper left corner of the photograph. This feature can be seen in the previous picture, but it will eventually be removed in future images.

Slide 10: 1886 Earthquake Damage

¹⁶ Embassy Suites Charleston, “History of the Hotel,” <http://embassysuites.hilton.com/en/es/hotels/hotelpromo.jhtml?ctyhocn=CHSESES&promo=history> (accessed March 5, 2010).

¹⁷ Embassy Suites Charleston, “History of the Hotel.”

- A. The earthquake of 1886 left a significant portion of Charleston's buildings damaged or completely destroyed.
- B. Here is a photograph of the Old Citadel after the earthquake.
- C. Notice the crumbling parapet with piles of masonry that have fallen along the building's base.
- D. The drainage system on the left side of the building can be seen sagging.

Slide 11: John C. Calhoun Monument – 1896

- A. The John C. Calhoun monument was erected in Marion Square in 1896. John C. Calhoun was a leading Southern politician as well as the seventh vice president of the United States in the early 1800s. This monument became a central structure in Marion Square after its construction.
- B. The west wing (on the left side) was reconstructed when the Citadel military school reopened in 1882.
- C. The parapet along the top of the building has been restored.
- D. Notice the dome behind the top left parapet is no longer there. It is possible that it was damaged during the earthquake and never replaced.

Slide 12: 1908 Postcard

- A. This postcard shows the Old Citadel two years before a fourth floor was added in 1910.

Slide 13: World War I

- A. In this image, the addition of the fourth floor can be seen.
- B. There are mirroring turrets located in the center of the building above the front entryway.
- C. It also looks as if some additional molding around the arched door and windows above has been installed and painted white.

Slide 14: Historic American Buildings Survey 1958

- A. These photographs were taken for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engineering Record collections.

- B. HABS documents historic structures through architectural drawings and photographs.
- C. Notice the building is relatively the same, but there are now automobiles parked along the front of the building.
- D. While allowing people to travel further distances with more ease, automobiles also proved to be a challenge in Charleston like in many other urban areas. The streets had to change by being paved, widened, or installed with traffic signals, crosswalks, and signs.
- E. For a city like Charleston, with its narrow streets and high density buildings, adapting to the automobile is an ongoing challenge to this day.

Slide 15: Embassy Suites Charleston Hotel

- A. Today, the Old Citadel is home to the Embassy Suites Hotel.
- B. The Citadel military school is now in a different location. What is interesting to consider is to look at all of the different uses the Old Citadel has had since its construction: fortified arsenal, military school, headquarters for occupying Federal troops, and modern hotel.
- C. One question that you may ask of the students during the discussion time is about how we should use historic properties today. Should they all be turned into museums to be preserved as they were originally, or should other uses be explored in order to let the building be utilized in a more modern way?
- D. This question is brought up again and again with historic structures. It is an important one because not all historic structures can or should be turned into museums. Finding modern uses for historic buildings allows people to use them on a daily basis.
- E. Adaptive reuse is a definite challenge, but it is one that preservationists, developers, and city planners face every day to discover new and inventive ways to use a historic building so they may remain a vibrant part of a city's culture.
- F. Charleston is a city that has been quite successful in reusing historic structures.

