

# LIFE IN NEW ORLEANS IN THE ERA OF RECONSTRUCTION

The city is plagued by political and racial violence as the North tries to bring a new social and economic order to the South after the Civil War



from **1837–1860**

**NEW ORLEANS** was the primary port in the South for immigration into the United States & second in the nation behind **NEW YORK**.

During Reconstruction, tensions remained from the *fierce struggles* that took place between immigrants and the native-born for jobs and political power.

**1857**

- The first modern Mardi Gras themed parade in New Orleans, with a secret Mardi Gras society, "Mistick Krewe of Comus."



**1858**

- New Orleans Yellow Fever Epidemics of 1858 leave 4,800 dead.

**1861**

- Louisiana secedes from the Union, following other Southern states that had done so after the election of Abraham Lincoln. They become part of the Confederate States of America.
- The American Civil War begins. The war is fought by the South to protect the institution of slavery. In Louisiana, racial tension is palpable as over half the state's population is enslaved.



**1863**

- Emancipation Proclamation—January 1, 1863.

**1865**

- American Civil War ends. The war lasted for over 4 years with an estimated 750,000 Americans dead.
- President Abraham Lincoln is assassinated by John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theatre. He was 56 years old.
- Black Codes were passed by Southern states in 1865 and 1866, after the Civil War. These laws had the intent and the effect of restricting African Americans' freedom, and of compelling them to work in a labor economy based on low wages or debt.



**1867**

- Military Reconstruction Act of 1867: Congress authorizes the United States military to create new state governments in the South and to register African American men to vote. Ex-Confederates call this 'Radical Reconstruction.'

**1868**

- Louisiana Constitutional Convention of 1868: the biracial convention produced one of the most progressive state constitutions in the nation—including the extension of suffrage to African American men and provisions calling for integrated public schools and public accommodations.

- The Fourteenth Amendment guaranteeing birthright citizenship, "due process," and "equal protection of the laws" is ratified. The amendment makes state laws like the "black codes" unconstitutional.

**1870**

- Fifteenth Amendment is ratified, giving African American men the right to vote.



## NEW ORLEANS POPULATION

in **1860**



(\*Source Richard Campanella's book Bienville's Dilemma: A Historical Geography of New Orleans (Center for Louisiana Studies: University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2008)

in **1870**

**26%** of the total population in New Orleans was **AFRICAN AMERICAN**

## JOBS HELD

### AFRO CREOLE

- skilled artisans
- doctors
- merchants
- poets

### AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

- laundresses
- street vendors
- housekeepers
- nannies
- cooks

### AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN

- policemen
- militiamen
- legislators
- government clerks
- jurors
- laborers

### IRISH IMMIGRANT MEN

- carriage drivers & cart men
- laborers

### IRISH IMMIGRANT WOMEN

- bakers
- servants
- laundry & sewing
- cooks
- nannies

## NEW ORLEANS METROPOLITAN POLICE FORCE

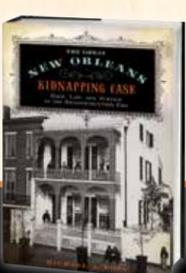
**11%** & **28%**

were northern born white men

were African American

**HUNDREDS of CHILDREN** in **NEW ORLEANS** **WENT MISSING** each year (but most were returned safely to their families)

Few received much media attention. But the kidnaping of *Mollie Digby* would be different as it quickly became intertwined with the fearsome politics of Reconstruction.



Read more about post Civil War era New Orleans and the background it sets in the captivating new whodunit true crime thriller *The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case*. Available October 2014 wherever books are sold.