A. Reconstruction Period

1. Andrew Johnson became president upon Lincoln's assassination and faced the issue of restoring the nation.

   A central question involved the status of former slaves. Johnson's opposition to civil rights measures to advance the rights of former slaves led to a major conflict with Radical Republicans in Congress who favored full political equality regardless of race.

2. Grant was commissioned the first full (four-star) general in American history on July 25, 1866.

3. Conflict with Radicals in Congress led to passage of the Tenure of Office Act, which required Senate approval for the removal of a cabinet member.

   Convinced that the act, which clearly undermined his authority, was unconstitutional, Johnson defied the law by removing Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton without Senate approval.
   Johnson appointed Grant Secretary of War *ad interim* on August 12th, 1867.
   Troubled by Johnson's attempts to create the impression that he supported his action, Grant served until 1868, but declined to become a part of Johnson's further plans that year.
   Johnson was impeached, escaping removal by one vote.
B. Nomination of Grant and His Election, 1868.
1. Grant was nominated as the Republican candidate for president on May 21st, 1868. He was clearly the most popular figure in the country. Although he had an aversion to politics, Grant became concerned that Johnson's Reconstruction policies were detrimental to the country and came to support the Radical platform, which called for rights for former slaves. He came to believe he had to accept the presidency to ensure the gains of the War were not lost through legal maneuvering in the South. He declared “Let us have peace,” in his letter of acceptance upon his nomination for the presidency. This phrase was later inscribed on his tomb.

2. He was elected to his first term as president, defeating Governor Horatio Seymour of New York, on November 3, 1868.

Please return to the Students page in LibGuides for the other segments of Grant’s life history.

Further reading: Ulysses S. Grant Chronology, at the Ulysses S. Grant Association website.

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