

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

The Port Royal Experiment

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Resources

If you can read only one book

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Rose, Willie Lee	<i>Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment</i> . New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Books and Articles

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year. “Title,” in <i>Journal</i> ##, no. # (Date): #.
Burton, Orville Vernon, Wilbur Cross, and Emory Campbell	<i>Penn Center: A History Preserved</i> . Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014.
Dougherty, Kevin	<i>The Port Royal Experiment: A Case Study in Development</i> . Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014.
Foner, Eric	<i>Reconstruction, 1863-1877: America’s Unfinished Revolution</i> . New York: Harper & Row, 1988.
Gannett, William C. and E. E. Hale	“The Freedmen at Port Royal,” <i>The North American Review</i> 101, no. 208 (July 1865): 1-28.
_____.	“Education of the Freedmen,” <i>The North American Review</i> 101, no. 209 (October 1865): 528-550.
Holland, Rupert Sargent, ed.	<i>Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne, Written from the Sea Islands of South Carolina, 1862-1884</i> . Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1912.

Oakes, James	<i>Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861–1865.</i> New York: W. W. Norton, 2013.
Ochiai, Akiko	“The Port Royal Experiment Revisited: Northern Visions of Reconstruction and the Land Question.” <i>The New England Quarterly</i> 74, no. 1 (2001): 94–117.
Pearson, Elizabeth Ware ed.	<i>Letters from Port Royal Written at the Time of the Civil War.</i> Boston: W. B. Clarke Company, 1906.
Rachal, John R.	“Gideonites and Freedmen: Adult Literacy Education at Port Royal, 1862-1865.” <i>The Journal of Negro Education</i> 55, no. 4 (1986): 453–69.
United States. Department of the Treasury and Edward Lillie Pierce	<i>The Freedmen of Port Royal, South-Carolina. Official Reports of Edward L. Pierce.</i> New York: Rebellion Record, 1863.
Williamson, Joel	<i>After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina during Reconstruction, 1861-1877</i> (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965).

Organizations

Organization Name	Description, Contact information including address, email
Penn Center	Penn Center is the site of a former school of the Port Royal Experiment and a heritage center for the Sea Islands. Their website is: http://www.penncenter.com/

Web Resources

URL	Name and description
http://civilwarwomenblog.com/port-royal-experiment/	The Civil War Women’s Port Royal experiment is a brief summary of the Port Royal Experiment.
https://ajkoelker.wordpress.com/the-port-royal-experiment/	The Port Royal Experiment is a brief documentary produced by A. J. Koelker.

Other Sources

Name	Description, Contact information including address, email
Voices of the Civil War Episode 9: "Port Royal Experiment	This is a short YouTube video on the Port Royal Experiment. The website is: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0vAo4uQr2E

Scholars

Name	Email
Ben Parten	bparten@g.clemson.edu

Topic Précis

The Port Royal Experiment began when Union naval forces captured Port Royal and the surrounding South Carolina Sea Islands in November 1861. White planters abandoned their plantations which were taken over by freed slaves who began farming on self-surveyed plots. Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase sent Abolitionist Edward Lillie Pierce to assess conditions at Port Royal. Pierce reported in February 1862 that the former slaves were willing to work as free men and women. Pierce brought a task force of northern abolitionist missionaries, educators and doctors to oversee the development of the community at Port Royal. The militant zeal exhibited by these young abolitionists led to the derisive nickname, the Gideonites, given them by the army after the biblical Gideonites. Friction among the army, cotton agents and Gideonites resulted from the differing objectives of each group. For the Gideonites and the Federal government the Port Royal Experiment would be judged on whether prewar cotton yields obtained under the southern system of bondage could be obtained under the northern system of free labor. While they focused on work as a primary objective, the Gideonites introduced a comprehensive program of adult education and literacy. The army also recruited a volunteer regiment of United States Colored Troops from Port Royal, the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, which served successfully in combat. After completing his march through Georgia, Sherman issued an order in January 1865 confiscating all the land on the South Atlantic coastline from Charleston to Jacksonville, and thirty miles inland. The land was redistributed to freed men and women in 40 acre plots held through a possessory claim. However, following Lincoln's assassination in April 1865 President Andrew Johnson began implementing his own reconstruction plan. In the process lands sold outright at public auction remained in freed men and women's hands but those land redistributed by possessory claim were restored to former owners whose title had not been extinguished by the possessory claims, provided they paid taxes and received a pardon. It became clear that radical land distribution was not going to be part of Reconstruction and the Port Royal Experiment withered as reconstruction progressed. The effects of the Port

Royal Experiment, combined with Port Royal's isolation and large African American population, produced a black community that was largely self-sufficient and independent. Men and women worked, children went to school, and local issues were resolved at the cornerstone of the community, the church. The freed men and women of Port Royal also remained politically active until 1895, when South Carolina's Constitutional Convention voted to disenfranchise African American voters. Thus, the Port Royal Experiment's status as a model for Reconstruction did not end with the Port Royal Experiment. Well into the the post-war period it remained an exemplar of what might have been had Reconstruction not reversed its course and given way to the white supremacy of Southern home rule.
