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RECONSTRUCTION, JIM CROW, AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF FEDERAL LAW IN THE SOUTH, 1871-1884



This AU collection on law and order documents the efforts of district attorneys from southern states to uphold federal laws in the states that fought in the Confederacy or were Border States. This publication includes their correspondence with the attorney general as well all other letters received by the attorney general from the states in question during that period, including the correspondence of marshals, judges, convicts, and concerned or aggrieved citizens.

Date Range: 1871-1884

Content: 59,185 images

Source Library: U.S. National Archives

Detailed Description:

Faced with enforcing the laws, prosecuting offenders, and collecting taxes from a citizenry ravaged by the effects of the Civil War and its aftermath, federal officials in the South operated in a perilous world that presented many obstacles to the successful discharge of their duties, including at times the personal or political antagonisms of officials with whom they had been charged to perform them.

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- Reconstruction conflicts
- Special classes of claims involving the U.S.
- Civil rights

- Voting rights
- Internal revenue and customs
- Regulation of trade, commerce, and transportation
- Defense and supervision of public officers
- Protection of the rights and property of the U.S. government

The correspondence also covers such administrative matters as the submission of statistical reports, authorizations of expenditures, retention of assistant counsel, and the conduct of litigation.

This collection highlights the various problems and issues that the U.S. district attorneys grappled with in each state across the expanse of the South. These regional problems and issues included the enfranchisement of African Americans, the development of organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan to combat Reconstruction and oppose the granting of equal rights to African Americans, the rising level of terror and violence spreading across southern states aimed at intimidating African Americans and white Republicans into not voting or seeking political office, and the creation and implementation of the Enforcement Acts in 1870 and 1871 that authorized law enforcement agents in the South to vigorously prosecute those infringing upon the newfound legal rights of African Americans.

This collection goes beyond the race issue and tracks the efforts of the attorney generals to prosecute violators of the nation's internal revenue laws, trespassers upon public lands, counterfeiters, and corrupt officials. In addition, there is content that documents how well or poorly prisoners were treated in a sometimes overburdened detention system.

States Include:

Alabama

Arkansas

Florida

Georgia

Kentucky

Louisiana

Maryland

Mississippi

North Carolina

South Carolina

Tennessee

Texas

Virginia