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The Reconstruction Era in Alabama, Reconsidered
LSU Press to Publish Reconstruction in Alabama in March 2017

Baton Rouge—Coming in March 2017 from LSU Press, Michael W. Fitzgerald's *Reconstruction in Alabama* is the first comprehensive reinterpretation of that state's history in over a century. Fitzgerald's work not only revises the existing troubling histories of the era, it also offers a compelling and innovative new look at the process of rebuilding Alabama following the war.

Attending to an array of issues largely ignored until now, Fitzgerald's history begins by analyzing the differences over slavery, secession, and war that divided Alabama's whites, mostly along the lines of region and class. He examines the economic and political implications of defeat, focusing particularly on how freed slaves and their former masters mediated the postwar landscape. For a time, he suggests, whites and freedpeople coexisted mostly peaceably in some parts of the state under the Reconstruction government, as a recovering cotton economy bathed the plantation belt in profit. Later, when charting the rise and fall of the Republican Party, Fitzgerald shows that Alabama's new Republican government implemented an ambitious program of railroad subsidy, characterized by substantial corruption that eventually bankrupted the state and helped end Republican rule. He explains, however, that the state's freedpeople and their preferred leaders were not the major players in this arena: they had other issues that mattered to them far more, like public education, civil rights, voting rights, and resisting the Klan's terrorist violence.

After Reconstruction ended, Fitzgerald suggests that white collective memory of the era fixated on black voting, big government, high taxes, and corruption, all of which buttressed the Jim Crow order in the state. This misguided understanding of the past encouraged Alabama's intransigence during the later civil rights era. Despite the power of faulty interpretations that united segregationists, Fitzgerald demonstrates that it was class and regional divisions over economic policy, as much as racial tension, that shaped the complex reality of Reconstruction in Alabama.

Michael W. Fitzgerald is professor of history at St. Olaf College and the author of *Urban Emancipation: Popular Politics in Reconstruction Mobile, 1860-1890* and *The Union League Movement in the Deep South: Politics and Agricultural Change During Reconstruction*.

13 March 2017
464 pages, 6¹/₈ x 9¹/₄, 11 halftones, 7 maps
978-0-8071-6606-2
Cloth \$49.95s, ebook available
Civil War Studies / Southern History

To request a review copy or set up an interview with the author,
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