

Black and Tan Constitution ^[1]

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by William C. Harris, 2006

See also: [State Constitution](#) ^[2]; [Convention of 1835](#) ^[3] (from *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*); [1835 Constitutional Convention](#) ^[4] (from *Tar Heel Junior Historian*); [Convention of 1868](#) ^[5]; [Convention of 1875](#) ^[6]; [Governor](#) ^[7].

The Black and Tan Constitution was a derisive label used by many white Democrats to characterize the [North Carolina Constitution of 1868](#) ^[2]. The term referred to the individuals who were believed to have a primary influence on the framing of the constitution—recently arrived northern whites ("carpetbaggers"), southern white Unionists ("[scalawags](#)" ^[8]), and blacks who were thought to be mainly of mixed blood. Conservative Democrats throughout the South applied the epithet to other state constitutions drafted at Republican conventions during [Reconstruction](#) ^[9].

Although labeled "black and tan" by opponents, the Constitution of 1868 was a progressive document for its time, providing for a number of important changes. For example, it gave all male adults, including blacks, the right to vote and extended some nonpolitical rights to women. Voters were to elect state executive officers, judges, and county officials, and all property and taxation requirements for holding office and apportioning seats in the State Senate were eliminated. The governor's term of office was extended from two to four years, and [separate](#) ^[10] public school systems for both blacks and whites were established.

Ratified by a vote of 93,086 to 74,016, the 1868 constitution was frequently amended and remained the state's fundamental law until 1971.

References:

William C. Harris, *William Woods Holden: Firebrand of North Carolina Politics* (1987).

Otto H. Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade: The Life of Albion Winegar Tourg e* (1965)

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Authors:

[Harris, William C.](#) ^[14]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[15]

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