At Levine Museum of the New South, we look at how Charlotte and the surrounding area has changed since the end of the American Civil War in 1865. These changes range from the types of jobs people have held to the constitutional rights we hold dear today. When we think about the New South, we like to define it as:

- **A Time** — The New South is the period of time from 1865, following the Civil War, to the present.
- **A Place** — The New South includes areas of the Southeast U.S. that began to grow and flourish after 1865.
- **An Idea** — The New South represents new ways of thinking about economic, political and cultural life in the South.

Let’s begin our journey into the past looking at the decades immediately following the Civil War. By 1865, Charlotte, NC had been a farming community for 100 years. In *Farming Transformed*, we’ll learn how the Civil War changed life in South and the different ways people reacted to these changes.

### Glossary:

- **Civil War (1861-1865)** - the war fought between the Northern states and Southern states, with slavery at the root of the cause.
- **Sharecropping** - a farming agreement in which families rented small plots of land from a landowner, and gave a portion of the crop back to the landowner each year.
- **Reconstruction Era (1865-1877)** - the time period after the Civil War during which the federal government worked to rebuild the south. Farming was reinvented and African Americans gained new rights.
- **Segregation** - the separation of different racial groups in society.
- **Jim Crow** - laws that segregated whites and African Americans in the United States.
- **Disfranchisement** - being denied the right to vote.
- **Poll Tax & Literacy Test** - two disfranchisement tactics used to stop African Americans from voting.
- **Ku Klux Klan (KKK)** - a group of people that used fear against African Americans to stop them from using their new rights, mainly the right to vote.

At the end of the Civil War, slavery was outlawed but largely replaced by a new farming system called **sharecropping**. Newly freed African Americans and poor whites farmed for very low wages. Everyone in a sharecropping family worked to make ends meet. The growth of the railroad helped farmers send the cotton they grew to market. During this time, African Americans gained new rights with the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. However, some white southerners used local laws, intimidation, and violence as a way to keep African Americans from exercising their rights. **Jim Crow** laws segregated the South and treated African Americans as unequal to whites.
Section 1: Sharecropping

Many newly freed African Americans and poor white farmers became part of the sharecropping and tenant farming system throughout the South. People with land had an advantage over people without land. The poor farmers who rented from landowners owed either money or a large percentage of their crops to the landowner at the end of the farming season.

Three out of four black farmers and one out of three white farmers in North Carolina worked on someone else’s land. Many farmers started out in debt, and it was hard to get ahead!

Everyone in a farm family worked, including the children. Typical jobs for children included feeding animals, churning butter and even emptying the family chamber pots (toilets) in the morning.

Think About It!

Look at sharecropper’s cabin and notice how much different and difficult life must have been for sharecroppers. Imagine 6-8 people living in this one room. How does the cabin similar or different from your home?

Answer It!

How would your life be different if you lived on a farm?
Section 2: Cotton is King

After the Civil War, tenant farmers and sharecroppers were able to grow cotton, which was a cash crop. A cash crop is a crop that farmers grow for selling instead of using it themselves.

Farmers would plant cotton in the spring and then harvest it in the late summer to early fall. Farmers would pick cotton all day, sometimes for at least twelve hours. The bags of cotton they picked could sometimes reach 100 pounds!

Think About It!

Look at the farming photos and imagine working all day in the hot Carolina sun. How do you think you would feel?

Answer It!

What other kinds of plants do you think are cash crops today?
Farming was a difficult and almost year-round job, and since the whole family worked, children could only go to school when they weren’t needed on the farm. Schools were made of one large room, and the teacher taught all grades and subjects.

Most students only went to school about three months out of the year and only completed about a fourth-grade education.

**Jim Crow** laws segregated the South, forcing white and African American students to attend different schools. The schools were unequal, because white schools received more money to spend on their students.

**Think About It!**

Look at the photos of the girl at work and the children at the white and African American schools and imagine what it would have been like to be in their shoes.

**Answer It!**

What was more important in a sharecropping family, going to school or working?
During the Reconstruction era, three new constitutional amendments gave African Americans new democratic rights. The 13th Amendment abolished slavery. The 14th Amendment made African Americans US citizens. The 15th Amendment gave African American men the right to vote and hold political offices.

Those who had held all the power before the Civil War, mostly white male landowners, did not like sharing power with African Americans and began to use tactics to keep them from voting.

Confusing tests (called literacy tests) were given, and you could not vote if you didn’t pass them. People were made to pay to vote through poll taxes, and many could not afford the taxes, so they couldn’t vote.

Violence was also used to keep people from voting!
Another way whites began to control African Americans in the South was through Jim Crow segregation, which mean that whites and African Americans were separated in public by law. Many African Americans left the South, hoping for a better life, in what was called the Great Migration.

**Think About It!**

Look at the images of the first African American men voting and the African American family fleeing the South. Do you think their actions took courage?

**Answer It!**

How were African American and white families treated differently in the South?