

definition of rutherford b hayes

definition of rutherford b hayes refers to the comprehensive understanding of the 19th President of the United States, who served from 1877 to 1881. Rutherford B. Hayes is a significant historical figure known for his role in ending the Reconstruction era following the Civil War, his efforts in civil service reform, and his impact on American politics during a transformative period. This article explores the life, presidency, and legacy of Hayes, providing a detailed explanation of his contributions and historical context. Key aspects include his early life and career, the contentious election of 1876, his administration's policies, and his influence on the nation's political landscape. Understanding the definition of Rutherford B. Hayes involves examining both his achievements and the controversies that surrounded his presidency. The following sections will guide readers through these important facets in detail.

- Early Life and Career of Rutherford B. Hayes
- The 1876 Presidential Election and Controversy
- Presidency and Major Policies
- Impact and Legacy of Rutherford B. Hayes

Early Life and Career of Rutherford B. Hayes

Rutherford Birchard Hayes was born on October 4, 1822, in Delaware, Ohio. His early years were marked by a strong commitment to education and public service. Hayes attended Kenyon College and later Harvard Law School, preparing for a career in law and politics. Before his presidency, he served as a lawyer, legislator, and military officer during the American Civil War, where his leadership and bravery earned him recognition.

Education and Legal Career

Hayes's academic background was notable for the time. He graduated from Kenyon College in 1842 and went on to study law at Harvard. After completing his education, he returned to Ohio to practice law, quickly establishing himself as a prominent attorney. His legal career provided the foundation for his future political roles.

Civil War Service

When the Civil War broke out, Hayes enlisted in the Union Army, eventually rising to the rank of brevet major general. His service was distinguished by participation in significant battles such as South Mountain and Cedar Creek. His military record bolstered his public image and helped launch his political career on a national scale.

The 1876 Presidential Election and Controversy

The 1876 election remains one of the most disputed and controversial presidential contests in American history. Rutherford B. Hayes, the Republican candidate, faced Democrat Samuel J. Tilden in a tightly contested race. The election results in several states were highly contested, leading to uncertainty about the rightful winner.

Electoral Dispute and Compromise

The election hinged on disputed electoral votes from Florida, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Oregon. Both parties claimed victory in these states, and the results were unclear. To resolve the impasse, Congress established an Electoral Commission, which ultimately awarded the disputed votes to Hayes, giving him a one-vote margin in the Electoral College.

The Compromise of 1877

In exchange for accepting Hayes's presidency, Republicans agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South, effectively ending Reconstruction. This agreement, known as the Compromise of 1877, had profound implications for the South and African Americans, as it marked the end of federal efforts to protect the rights of newly freed slaves.

Presidency and Major Policies

Rutherford B. Hayes served as President from 1877 to 1881, a period marked by efforts to heal a divided nation and reform government practices. His administration focused on civil service reform, restoring trust in government, and addressing issues related to the post-Reconstruction South.

Civil Service Reform

One of Hayes's most significant policy initiatives was the push for civil service reform to combat the widespread patronage and corruption known as the "spoils system." He advocated for a merit-based system for federal employment, laying the groundwork for future reforms such as the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act.

Economic and Social Policies

Hayes's presidency took place during an era of economic recovery following the Panic of 1873. He supported the gold standard to stabilize the currency and opposed inflationary measures such as the extensive use of greenbacks. Additionally, Hayes sought to improve education and civil rights, although his ability to enforce federal protections in the South was limited due to the political compromises of his election.

Native American Policy

Hayes also focused on Native American affairs, promoting policies aimed at assimilation and education rather than military confrontation. He supported efforts to integrate Native Americans into American society through schooling and land ownership, reflecting the assimilationist attitudes of the time.

Impact and Legacy of Rutherford B. Hayes

The legacy of Rutherford B. Hayes is complex and multifaceted. His presidency marked a turning point in American history, particularly in terms of Reconstruction and civil service reform. While he is often overshadowed by other presidents, his administration had lasting effects on the nation's political development.

End of Reconstruction

Hayes's withdrawal of federal troops from the South effectively ended Reconstruction, leading to the rise of "Jim Crow" laws and the disenfranchisement of African Americans. This aspect of his legacy is often viewed critically by historians, as it signaled a retreat from efforts to ensure racial equality.

Advances in Government Reform

Despite the controversies, Hayes's commitment to civil service reform is widely recognized as a positive contribution. His efforts to reduce corruption and promote meritocracy helped set the stage for more extensive reforms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Personal Character and Post-Presidency

Known for his honesty and integrity, Hayes was respected for his dedication to public service. After leaving office, he remained active in social causes and education until his death in 1893. His personal character continues to be a defining element of his historical image.

- Born in Ohio in 1822, educated at Kenyon College and Harvard Law School
- Union Army general during the Civil War
- Won the highly contested 1876 presidential election through the Electoral Commission
- Ended Reconstruction by withdrawing federal troops from the South

- Advocated for civil service reform and a merit-based government system
- Supported the gold standard and focused on economic stability
- Promoted assimilation policies toward Native Americans
- Legacy includes both the end of Reconstruction and progress in government reform

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was Rutherford B. Hayes?

Rutherford B. Hayes was the 19th President of the United States, serving from 1877 to 1881.

What is the definition of Rutherford B. Hayes in American history?

Rutherford B. Hayes is defined as a U.S. president known for ending the Reconstruction era and promoting civil service reform.

When did Rutherford B. Hayes serve as President?

Rutherford B. Hayes served as President from March 4, 1877, to March 4, 1881.

What is Rutherford B. Hayes known for?

He is known for winning one of the most disputed presidential elections in U.S. history and for overseeing the withdrawal of federal troops from the South, effectively ending Reconstruction.

What was Rutherford B. Hayes' role before becoming President?

Before becoming President, Rutherford B. Hayes was a lawyer, a Union Army officer during the Civil War, and served as Governor of Ohio.

How is Rutherford B. Hayes defined in terms of his political party?

Rutherford B. Hayes was a member of the Republican Party.

What major event is associated with Rutherford B. Hayes' presidency?

The Compromise of 1877, which resolved the disputed 1876 election and resulted in Hayes becoming president, is a major event associated with his presidency.

What reforms did Rutherford B. Hayes advocate?

Rutherford B. Hayes advocated for civil service reform to reduce corruption and promote merit-based government employment.

What is the historical significance of Rutherford B. Hayes?

Rutherford B. Hayes is historically significant for restoring stability after a contentious election and for initiating reforms that helped modernize the U.S. government.

Additional Resources

1. Rutherford B. Hayes: The Life of a Reluctant President

This biography explores the life of Rutherford B. Hayes, focusing on his rise from a humble Ohio background to the presidency. It delves into his military service during the Civil War, his political career, and his efforts to reconcile a divided nation after the tumultuous Reconstruction era. The book also highlights Hayes's commitment to civil service reform and his controversial election in 1876.

2. Rutherford B. Hayes and the End of Reconstruction

This book provides an in-depth analysis of Hayes's presidency, particularly his role in ending Reconstruction in the South. It examines the Compromise of 1877 and its impact on African American rights and Southern politics. The author discusses Hayes's policies and the long-term consequences of his decisions on American history.

3. The Presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes: Reconstruction and Reform

Focusing on Hayes's four years in office, this title covers his administration's major challenges and achievements. It discusses his efforts to reform the civil service and fight corruption, as well as his approach to racial issues and federal authority. The book gives readers insight into Hayes's leadership style and political philosophy.

4. Rutherford B. Hayes: Warrior and Peacemaker

This biography highlights Hayes's dual legacy as a Civil War general and president. It explores how his military experience influenced his political decisions and his vision for national unity. The narrative also covers his post-presidency years, emphasizing his advocacy for education and civil rights.

5. The Compromise of 1877 and the Presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes

An examination of the controversial election of 1876, this book details the political deal that brought Hayes to power. It analyzes the negotiations behind the Compromise of 1877 and its profound impact on Reconstruction policies. The author also considers the ethical

and political implications of this pivotal moment in American history.

6. *Rutherford B. Hayes: The Man Behind the Badge*

This book offers a comprehensive look at Hayes's life before, during, and after his presidency. It focuses on his personal values, his military service as a Union officer, and his commitment to justice and equality. The narrative provides a balanced view of Hayes as both a private individual and a public figure.

7. *Restoring the Union: Rutherford B. Hayes and Post-Civil War America*

This title explores Hayes's efforts to heal a fractured nation following the Civil War. It discusses his policies aimed at reconciliation between the North and South and his stance on civil rights during a contentious period. The book provides context for understanding the challenges of Reconstruction and Hayes's role in shaping the era.

8. *Rutherford B. Hayes and Civil Service Reform*

Focusing on one of Hayes's most significant domestic policies, this book analyzes his campaign to reform the federal civil service system. It explains the problems of patronage and corruption that Hayes sought to address and how his initiatives laid the groundwork for future reforms. The author also discusses the political resistance Hayes faced during this process.

9. *The Quiet President: Rutherford B. Hayes and His Legacy*

This biography portrays Hayes as a modest and principled leader whose impact has often been overshadowed by more flamboyant presidents. It examines his key decisions, personal integrity, and commitment to national unity. The book reflects on Hayes's legacy and how modern historians view his contributions to American history.

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