

Ransier, Alonzo J. (1834–1882)

South Carolina. Born free. Mulatto. Literate. Clerk, editor.



Born in Charleston, possibly the child of immigrants from Haiti, Ransier worked before the Civil War as a clerk with a leading shipping house. He attended the South Carolina black convention of 1865 and was one of the delegation chosen to present its memorial to Congress. In 1866, he was associate editor of the *South Carolina Leader*. Ransier represented Charleston at the constitutional convention of 1868 and in the state House of Representatives, 1868–70, where he chaired the committee on privileges and elections. He also served as a presidential elector in 1868, and was also a registrar; Charleston County auditor, 1869–70; and a trustee of the state orphan asylum. In 1868, Ransier was chosen to succeed Benjamin F. Randolph as chairman of the state Republican party after Randolph's assassination. In 1869, he obtained a charter for the Amateur Literary and Fraternal Association of Charleston. The following year, Ransier was among those demanding more offices for blacks and was elected lieutenant governor, serving to 1872. In 1872, Ransier was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and served for one term, 1873–75.

Ransier attended the state labor convention of 1869. According to the census of 1870, he owned \$550 in real estate, but in 1872 he paid taxes on real estate valued at \$7,857. He was secretary of the black-owned Enterprise Railroad. In an 1870 speech in predominantly white Spartanburg County, Ransier

described the Republicans as "a progressive poor man's party," which sought an alliance between blacks and poor whites. Speaking of legislation to prevent the seizure of homes and a specified amount of property for debt, he noted: "There was not one perhaps in several thousand colored men who had a homestead while many a white man . . . had a homestead which he owned, and we saved him and his family from being driven out of doors. . . . Colored men and legislation by colored men did it." Ransier was also a critic of railroad subsidies and political corruption.

After leaving Congress, Ransier served as a U.S. internal revenue collector, 1875–77. Thereafter, his fortunes waned. In 1879, he was working as a night watchman at the Charleston custom house. The census of 1880 found him living in a crowded boarding-house in the city. When he died, Ransier was employed as a day laborer for the city of Charleston.

Holt, *Black over White*, 106–07, 165, 219n. Bailey, *Senate*, II, 1336–38. Logan and Winston, *Dictionary*, 511–12. Charleston *Daily Republican*, 8 October 1870. Robert H. Woody, *Republican Newspapers of South Carolina* (Charlottesville, Va., 1936), 11. Williamson, *After Slavery*, 313. Hine, "Black Politicians," 568. Foner and Lewis, *Black Worker*, II, 25.