Revels, Hiram R. (1822–1901)

During the Civil War, Revels helped raise black regiments in Maryland and Missouri and served briefly as an army chaplain. He came to Mississippi in 1865, worked for the Freedmen’s Bureau, and chaired a black meeting in Vicksburg to raise money for schools. After leaving the state for two years because of ill health, he returned to Mississippi, serving as an alderman in Natchez in 1868, and was elected to the state Senate from Adams County in 1869. Soon after taking his seat, Revels was elected to fill the state’s unexpired term in the U.S. Senate, and served from February 1870 to March 1871. Upon the death of James Lynch, Revels served as Mississippi’s secretary of state, December 1872–September 1873.

After leaving the Senate, Revels was appointed the first president of Alcorn Agricultural College, later Alcorn University, the new state college for blacks in Rodney, Mississippi. He was dismissed in 1874, when he defected from the Republican to the Democratic party, but was reappointed in 1876 by the new Democratic administration of the state, serving to 1882. Subsequently, he devoted his attention to the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), which he had joined during the Civil War. Although considered a conservative in Reconstruction politics, Revels in 1876 protested, unsuccessfully, his church’s plans to hold racially segregated annual conferences in the South. In the 1890s, he owned a plantation near Natchez.

Revels’s daughter Susan edited a black newspaper in Seattle. Horace Cayton, the coauthor of the classic study Black Metropolis, and Revels Cayton, a black labor leader, were his grandsons.

See also Figure 4