

# MEET THE STATESMEN IN THE BOOK



**BLANCHE BRUCE (1841–1898)** US Senator from Mississippi (1875–81) and the first Black senator to serve a full term. Born enslaved in Virginia to a Black woman and a White plantation owner. Only former slave to preside over a session of the US Senate. Received eight votes for vice president at the 1880 Republican National Convention. Register of the Treasury (1881–85, 1897–98), making him the first Black person to sign their name to US currency.

**RICHARD CAIN (1825–1887)** South Carolina state senator (1868–72), member of the US House of Representatives (1873–75; 1877–79). Born free in what is now West Virginia to a Cherokee mother and Black father. Attended Wilberforce University and Divinity School. Ordained minister with the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and pastor of Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Founder of *South Carolina Leader* newspaper (later renamed the *Missionary Record*). Co-founder of Lincolnville, South Carolina, a large tract of farmland that was subdivided and sold exclusively to freedmen. President of Paul Quinn College in Texas.



**ROBERT ELLIOTT (1842–1884)** Member of South Carolina House of Representatives (1868–70). Member of US House of Representatives (1870–74). South Carolina Speaker of the House of Representatives (1874–76). South Carolina attorney general (1876–77). Little is known about the early details of his life. He was a trained lawyer who spoke French, Spanish, and English, and frequently quoted the classics. Editor of the *Missionary Record*. Opened the United States' first known Black-owned law firm. Special customs inspector for the Treasury Department (1879–82).

**JOHN MERCER LANGSTON (1829–1897)** One of the first Black elected officials in the United States (elected town clerk in Brownhelm, Ohio, in 1855). Co-drafter of the Civil Rights Act of 1875. First Black congressman from Virginia (1890–1891). Born free in Virginia to a freedwoman and her former master. Graduate of Oberlin College. Attorney. Founder of Howard University School of Law. President of Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (now Virginia State University).



**P.B.S. PINCHBACK (1837–1921)** Louisiana state senator (1868–71). Lieutenant governor of Louisiana (1871–72). Louisiana governor (Dec. 1872–Jan. 1873), making him the first Black US governor. Elected to the US House of Representatives and US Senate, but never seated. Born free in Macon, Georgia, to a freed mulatto woman and a White planter. One of the first Black-commissioned Union officers. Co-founder of Southern University in Louisiana.

**JOSEPH RAINEY (1832–1887)** South Carolina state senator (1870). First and longest serving Black member of the US House of Representatives during Reconstruction (1870–79). Special agent for the US Treasury Department and owner of a brokerage and banking business. Born enslaved in South Carolina, but his father purchased his freedom during his childhood.





**HIRAM REVELS (1827–1901)** Mississippi state senator (1869–1870). US Senator from Mississippi and first Black member of Congress (1870–71). Ordained minister in the AME Church. Chaplain in the Union army and recruiter of Black regiments. President of Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College (now called Alcorn State University). Born free in North Carolina to parents who were free people of color.

**ROBERT SMALLS (1839–1915)** Member of the South Carolina House of Representatives (1868–70). South Carolina state senator (1870–75). Member of the US House of Representatives (1875–79, 1882–87). Collector of Customs for the Port of Beaufort, South Carolina (1890–93, 1897–1913). Born enslaved in South Carolina in the heart of the Sea Islands to an enslaved Gullah woman and a White man thought to be the plantation owner's son. Trained as a seafarer. Successfully commandeered the Confederate states' ship *Planter* and delivered it to the Union Army, gaining freedom for himself, his family, and the crew. His refusal to give up his seat to a White passenger on a Philadelphia streetcar in 1864 led the Pennsylvania legislature to pass a bill outlawing segregation on public transportation. Authored language as a delegate to South Carolina's 1868 Constitutional Convention that made South Carolina the first Southern state with a free and compulsory public education system.

