“The Newspapers Will Invade Their Firesides”: Politics, the Press, and the End of Reconstruction in Alabama

by

Matthew C. O’Neal

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Auburn, Alabama
May 7, 2016

Keywords: politics, Reconstruction, violence, newspapers, news, history

Copyright 2016 by Matthew C. O’Neal

Approved by

Kenneth W. Noe, Chair, Professor of History
Jennifer E. Brooks, Associate Professor of History
Keith S. Hebert, Assistant Professor of History

Abstract

In 1874, Alabama Democrats exploited racial tensions to animate disaffected whites, producing the highest voter turnout in Reconstruction and the end of Republican rule. Throughout the campaign, newspaper editors and demagogues prescribed social ostracism and political violence, which their audience received and acted upon. Murders of Republicans in Sumter County and riots at polling places in November indicated a willingness to resort to the brutal tactics espoused by political leaders. During the last two official years of Reconstruction, Democratic newspaper rhetoric isolated Republicans and championed the conservative crusade.

This research reveals the active print culture that defined Alabama politics at the end of Reconstruction, and demonstrates the power of nineteenth century editors and politicians to influence their constituency through their control of news networks. Testimony from Alabamians, coupled with assertions from party leaders, points to the role played by printed news in state politics. The relationship between rhetoric and action, largely only hinted at by historians, becomes clear as a result.

Acknowledgments

Man is not an island, despite the nature of graduate study that attempts to convince us otherwise. I have benefitted from the support of many people throughout this project, and have incurred many debts. Firstly, I am appreciative of funding from the Auburn History Department, which made pursuing a graduate degree feasible. The idea underlying this thesis developed from conversations with professors and fellow graduate students both inside and outside the seminar room. My advisor provided direction and advice, but also the necessary freedom to pursue a topic of my own choosing. The other members of my committee offered comments and corrections that undoubtedly improved the end product. I also wish to thank the staff at the Ralph B. Draughon Library, the Alabama Department of Archives and History, and the Hoole Special Collections Library in Tuscaloosa, for their willing assistance. Time spent with my roommates yielded new research avenues, outside perspective (sometimes blurred), and much-appreciated distraction. Lastly, my parents have never wavered in their support for me, and for that I am grateful.

Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgments iii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: Rhetoric and Reception: January – July, 1874 14

Chapter 2: Violence and Redemption, August – November, 1874 40

Chapter 3: Retrenchment and the Death Throes of Reconstruction, 1875-1877 62

Conclusion 85

Bibliography 88

Introduction

Tom Ivey sat in a car of the Alabama & Chattanooga Railroad as it lumbered through Sumter County in the late summer of 1874. Ivey, an African-American postal agent for the the railroad, was a leader of the county Republican Party and candidate for the state legislature in the upcoming election. As the train approached a bend outside the small town of York, a man flagged for the conductor to stop. The car ground to a halt, and Ivey left his seat to investigate the commotion. Just as he appeared in the doorway, a group of armed men rose from the brush alongside the railroad bed and riddled his body with bullets. As the assailants mounted their horses, Ivey lay dying, the blood from his head oozing down the side of the track. Several days later, the Republican *Alabama State Journal* declared a "WAR OF RACES" inaugurated in Sumter County. The editor raised the specter of Ku Klux Klan violence and described western Alabama as under the rule of a terroristic regime.[1]

Ivey was the second Sumter County Republican to be killed in the month of August. Masked riders ambushed Walter P. Billings, a white lawyer and chairman of the Sumter County Republican Executive Committee, outside his home on August 1. His death thrust Ivey into the leadership position, and into the crosshairs of the local Democratic newspaper editor. Almost immediately, the *Livingston Journal* published stories that warned white citizens about Ivey's dangerous movements. He allegedly traveled with a posse of armed men, threatening the innocent white citizens of the county. A rival Republican editor predicted that the newspaper

---

[1] House Select Committee on Affairs in Alabama, *Affairs in Alabama*, 43rd Congress, 2d sess., 1875, 503; *Alabama State Journal*, Sept. 2, 1874, Aug. 30, 1874, Sept.11, 1874.

articles had targeted Ivey to be "ku-kluxed." It did not take long for his conjecture to become a reality.[2]

An active print culture marked Alabama politics during the 1874 campaign. Readers, Republican and Democrat alike, learned the latest news through reading and reacting to printed newspapers. Sumter County and a few other areas in the state were epicenters for violence, but a news network assured word reached all quarters. While reading about the arrest of Sumter County gunmen in a Mobile paper, one African American declared that come election day, he would "wade to his boot-tops in democratic blood," and that "if there was one colored man injured on that day thousands of white men would pay the price."[3] On November 3, riots did indeed occur in Mobile, and in Spring Hill and Eufaula in Barbour County. These episodes, almost uniformly perpetrated by white Democrats, ensured that black and white Republicans in those areas failed to cast ballots or stayed away from the polls altogether. By animating whites against a "corrupt," "mongrel" Republican agenda, the Democratic Party triumphed by a large majority, effectively ending Republican reign of the state. Editors were integral to their strategy, creating a tool of ideology that united conservative whites and promised to "invade" the "firesides" of Republicans.[4]

This thesis examines how caustic rhetoric from Democratic newspapers fostered a spirit of hostility in Alabama during the campaign of 1874 and its aftermath. It exposes the reciprocal nature of news, and the potential of rhetoric to result in action. Democratic editors and politicians promoted social and economic ostracism of all Republicans, which their constituents conducted.

---

[2] *Alabama State Journal*, Aug. 18, 1874.
[3] *Affairs in Alabama*, 481.
[4] Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, *Report to Inquire Whether in and of the Elections in the State of Alabama in the Elections of 1874, 1875, and 1876 the Right of Male Inhabitants to Vote Had Been Denied or Abridged*, 44th Cong., 2d sess., 1877, S. Rep. 704, 156.

Eventually, vows from more extreme Democratic spokesmen to carry the election peaceably if possible, but by force if necessary, created a political milieu that tolerated and encouraged violence against Republicans. The press "provided a vernacular – a common language in both words and pictures – for political interests to be expressed and shared."[5]

Media exhibits a power to not only reflect, but create and reinforce the conceptions of a willing audience. Admittedly, the phenomenon of printed and spoken word contributing to human deeds or emotions is difficult to trace. An objective look at the sources, however, bespeaks a correlation. For the most part, historians of Reconstruction have taken newspapers, and the political culture they helped create, for granted.[6] No historian has been able to track the reception of these papers among the populace, even though in an age when print and verbal communication functioned as the primary conduits for news, party organs held tremendous power to shape public opinion.

Observers of nineteenth century culture, however, perceived the authority of newspapers and their impact on public sentiment. One contemporary editor recognized that although other forms of print, such as books, circulated among thousands, newspapers circulated "by tens of thousands." Newspapers were cornerstones of local culture. They documented the highs and lows of the human experience: birth and death; marriage and divorce; bliss and sorrow. "As a photographic impression of the lights and shadows of passing life," newspapers preserved the history of a community. Yet the newspaper did more than passively archive everyday events, it actively participated in them. It formed opinion and also followed it, or as the perceptive editor professed, "It acts and is acted upon… As the water drop wears hollows in the hardest stone, so

[5] Thomas C. Leonard, *The Power of the Press: The Birth of American Political Reporting* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 4.
[6] A notable exception is Mark W. Summers, *The Press Gang: Newspapers and Politics, 1865-1878* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

does the newspaper mould [sic] and shape political opinions of the community." This influence could, and often did, lead to misguided opinions, or was used to buttress unjust political stances. Ultimately, however, this "Fourth Estate" would culminate in a well-informed and politically engaged public. Newspapers thus played a vital role in the development of a democratic society, for although a book might have a longer shelf life than a newspaper, "a newspaper is constantly at work."[7]

Due to a preponderance of source material, historians who study journalism have devoted most of their attention to the North. Before the Civil War, technological improvements facilitated growth of the newspaper industry. Northern meccas such as New York, Chicago, and Washington became hubs for the expanding journalism trade. The formation of the Associated Press by a group of editors in New York City in 1846 signified the status of the city's news distributors. The Civil War and the voracious appetite for news from the battlefields "completed the newspaper revolution in the North."[8] By the 1870s, newspapermen nationwide were producing printed product at rates thought previously impossible. The advent of wood pulp paper reduced the price of newspaper print by more than half, from twenty-two cents in 1863 to just over eight cents in 1874. Increasing demand resulted in a print market boom; by 1870, 4,500 newspapers operated in the United States, causing a British observer to declare a "universality of print."[9]

---

[7] Editorial from the *New York News*, reprinted in the *Columbia Daily Phoenix*, Feb. 24, 1872. For news access contributing to the formation of the public sphere, see Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). The quote deeming the press as the "Fourth Estate" is often attributed to Edmund Burke, but some scholars dispute this. See Slavko Slipchal, *Principles of Publicity and Press Freedom* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 44.

[8] Carl R. Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press: Editorial Spokesmen of the Nineteenth Century* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 9. For Civil War journalism, see Brayton Harris, *Blue & Gray in Black and White: Newspapers in the Civil War* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1999).

[9] Frank L. Mott, *American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States through 250 Years, 1690-1940* (New York: MacMillan, 1941), 479, 388, 402-5.

Southern journalism followed a more indirect path to prominence. The political crisis of secession fueled party enthusiasm, and newspapers contributed to the Democratic Party's claim to sectional supremacy. During the war, southern editors and intellectuals struggled to develop a vibrant print culture as an expression of Confederate nationalism, but found themselves stymied by war's destruction and resulting supply shortages.[10] Many newspapermen joined the armies of the Confederacy, some never to return. Union troops often torched newspaper offices on their jaunt through the South; Montgomery's *Advertiser* is but one example of this occurrence. Hence, postwar Northerners enjoyed more outlets of popular culture, including publishing houses, magazines, and museums, but the South's singular form of mass communication was the newspaper. They were also much fewer in number compared to the North: of the over 4,000 newspapers reported in the 1870 census, only about 1,000 were located in the South. This is not to say that Southern newspapers were less significant. In Alabama, robust printing industries resided in Montgomery, Mobile, and Selma. Almost every sizable town had at least one journal. The total number of newspapers in 1870 totaled eighty-nine, with an estimated circulation of over 90,000.[11] Some scholars suggest that perhaps because Southern newspapers had a "fraction of the circulation" of their Northern counterparts, their operators possessed a greater capacity to shape public opinion.[12]

---

[10] Michael T. Bernath, *Confederate Minds: The Struggle for Intellectual Independence in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Donald E. Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970).

[11] W.W. Screws, "Alabama Journalism, in *Memorial Record of Alabama: A Concise Account of the State's Political, Military, Professional, and Industrial Progress, together with the Personal Memoirs of Many of Its People*, v. 2, (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1921), 234.

[12] Paul H. Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights: Republican Newspapers in the Reconstruction South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 2, 41; Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press*, xiii; For a long-view account of Southern journalism, see Doug E. Cumming, *The Southern Press: Literary Legacies and the Challenge of Modernity* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009)

Southern editors, especially those in smaller towns, occupied an important position at the intersection of politics and culture. Similar to ministers, educators, and politicians, they acted as community leaders who helped direct points of view. When editors of a political bent spoke, their partisans paid attention. According to Carl Osthaus, they served as "narrators (reporting events)…advocates (advancing arguments)," and "weathercocks (indicating the prevailing views of the elite and a relatively small middle class readership)." In response to Reconstruction, Democratic editors in particular reflected an insular white hegemony, concerned with "reinforcing and reiterating community views."[13] As the demise of Reconstruction gave way to the New South, Southern editors were the chief architects of Southern regional distinctiveness, a concept that continues to incite debate amongst historians.

It did not take much capital, intellectual or monetary, to start a newspaper in the rural South. All an aspiring newspaperman needed was a set of type, a printer's stone, inking supplies, a hand press, and a storefront to house them all. Ergo, journalism also offered advancement in a society where the powerful landed aristocracy dominated politics, and attracted an ambitious sort. A single man could write, edit, and print a serviceable paper, which led to an increase in his stature in local matters. Gathering news was usually not a problem for well-connected journalists; townspeople approached them with the latest intelligence, as did their friends in the printing industry. In Alabama, most rural newspapers were attuned to their audience's conservative leanings. Editors had their fingers on the collective pulse of their readership, and mustered them to oppose any viewpoint they deemed as the opposition.[14]

---

[13] Ostahus, *Partisans of the Southern Press*, xiii, 10.
[14] Thomas D. Clark, *The Rural Press and the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948), 4, 10.

Unequivocally, their adversary during Reconstruction was the Republican Party. Southern Republican editors catered to a much smaller audience than their Democratic competitors. A small number of Republican journals existed before the war, but most came south after its conclusion. Although Republicans established a "scattering" of newspapers across the former Confederacy, the charges of "carpetbagging" ensured that they never truly competed at an equal level. For example, Alabama had only two daily Republican newspapers in 1872, a fact that historian Mark Summers views as an indicator of "general weakness." This weakness should not be equated with inconsequence, however. Republican editors presented a challenge to the dominant Deep South conservative creed, and "strove to create a sense of group solidarity and community among Republicans that would help them to cope with ostracism and violence."[15] They too marshalled forces in the battles of the 1870s. A proper evaluation of the end of Reconstruction must include both sides of the political spectrum.

The general historiography of Reconstruction is familiar to historians, but a reexamination at its sesquicentennial proffers important lessons. Initially, scholars viewed the process of reincorporating the former Confederacy as an utter failure. This interpretation first emanated from Columbia University around the turn of the twentieth century, and bore the name of its intellectual architect, William Archibald Dunning. Walter L. Fleming, an Alabama native and student of Dunning, published his seminal account of the state's reconstruction in 1905. True to the Dunning School philosophy, Fleming characterized Republicans as malignant carpetbaggers and scalawags who manipulated an ignorant African-American voting bloc.[16] The tenets of white supremacy, along with nostalgia for the Old South and its plantation power

---

[15] Summers, *The Press Gang*, 213; Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 5.
[16] Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1905); William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction: Political & Economic, 1865-1877* (New York: MacMillan, 1898).

structure, were powerful arguments against the goals of the post-war Republican Party. D.W. Griffith's *Birth of Nation*, an artfully made yet virulently racist film based on Thomas Dixon's successful novel *The Clansman*, popularized these notions through a powerful new medium. President Woodrow Wilson, a former academic, said the film was "like writing history with lightning."[17] Crucial to this thesis, the Dunning School did not critically evaluate the role of journalists in their composition of what W.E.B. DuBois deemed "the propaganda of history."[18]

Only during the "second Reconstruction" of the 1950s and '60s did historians as a whole begin to reconsider the traditional view of a noble South mired in a "tragic era." Kenneth M. Stammp, John Hope Franklin, and John and LaWanda Cox, among other contemporaries, revised Reconstruction scholarship to understand and defend the efforts of Republicans and African-Americans. In the light of calls for political and social equality, these "revisionists" condemned racist rhetoric and violence for restricting the progress of American society.[19] Coeval to the Civil Rights movement, revisionist historians recognized the shortcomings of Republican efforts, but chose instead to lionize abolitionists and African-Americans, highlighting their struggle for progressive ideals. Kenneth Stammp advised future scholars not to trouble themselves over debunking the myths surrounding the Civil War, for that "romantic nonsense" is "essentially harmless." He considered the dismantling the legend of Reconstruction and white supremacy,

---

[17] Mary E. Frederickson, *Looking South: Race, Gender, and the Transformation of Labor from Reconstruction to Globalization* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 73.
[18] W.E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1935),711-29. See also Ted Tunnell, "Creating the 'Propaganda of History': Southern Editors and the Origins of *Carpetbagger and Scalawag*," *Journal of Southern History* 72 (2006): 789-822.
[19] Claude G. Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution after Lincoln* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1920); Kenneth M. Stammp, *The Era of Reconstruction: 1865-1877* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965); Other prominent works of revisionism are John Cox and LaWanda Cox, *Politics, Principle, and Prejudice, 1865-1866: Dilemma of Reconstruction America* (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963); Eric L. McKitrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); See also James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

however, more imperative, "because it has exerted a powerful influence upon the political behavior of many white men, North and South."[20] As for newspapers specifically, Thomas D. Clark's studies of the Southern press perceived how the columns of Southern Democratic newspapers nurtured the philosophy of white supremacy.[21]

Encouraged by the possibilities afforded by the revisionists, a new generation of American historians expanded the borders of Reconstruction. They sustained the emphasis on the radical possibilities of the period, while also taking into account new modes of analysis.[22] An enduring question for the "postrevisionists" has been whether the policy should be considered a complete failure.[23] Others have taken a less teleological route, choosing instead to examine the reasons leading to its demise.[24] In two studies on Southern politics during Reconstruction, published in the same year, Michael Perman and George C. Rable came to vastly different conclusions regarding violence in Southern political culture and its function in bringing about the end of Reconstruction. For Rable, Southerners turned to violence in the face of radical change thrust upon them by the end of the war and the expansion of federal powers. The strength of Southern resistance, rather than waning support in Washington, brought about the end of

[20] Stammp, *Era of Reconstruction*, 23.
[21] Clark, *The Rural Press and the New South*, 24; See also Thomas D. Clark, *The Southern Country Editor* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1948).
[22] Thomas C. Holt, *Black over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
[23] See Michael Les Benedict, *A Compromise of Principle: Congressional Republicans and Reconstruction, 1863-1869* (New York: Norton, 1974), and Michael Perman, *Reunion without Compromise: The South and Reconstruction, 1865-1868* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973). Post-revisionism's gold standard remains Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988). Foner coined the term "postrevisionism" in 1982 in his "Reconstruction Revisited," *Reviews in American History* 10 (1982): 82-100.
[24] Michael W. Ftizgerald has produced a number of impressive studies on Reconstruction. He emphasizes factional conflict among African Americans in Mobile in *Urban Emancipation: Popular Politics in Reconstruction Mobile, 1860-1890* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002). See also *The Union League Movement in the Deep South: Politics and Agricultural Change during Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

Reconstruction. Perman, on the other hand, portrays Reconstruction as a normal episode in the region's political history. Democrats and Republicans both tried to form consensus between fringe and moderate wings. By the mid-1870s, convergence efforts fell apart, and the Bourbon redeemers triumphed. Perman all but ignored the role of violence, however, an interpretation mostly renounced by present scholars.[25] Both historians discuss the influence of Southern newspaper editors on that resistance, but only tangentially.

Several postrevisionists have given newspaper editors and their rhetoric adequate treatment. Mark W. Summers's impressive summation of the rise of professional political reporting galvanized historians to scrutinize the "lords of the linotype" more carefully. "It is well to study the messenger carefully when the message he carries comes in his own handwriting,"[26] Summers admonished. Writing of the Southern press, Carl Osthaus lamented that Reconstruction newspapers were "one of the most important and neglected sources of Southern intellectual history."[27] A decade later, Paul H. Abbott's examination of Southern Republican editors bridged a broad gap in scholarship. Most recently, Elaine Parsons's study of Reconstruction media coverage of the Ku Klux Klan delineates between the actual Klan and the "newspaper Klan" represented in public discourse. The abstract idea of the KKK "was produced by thousands of individuals" who each performed their own version of collective violence.[28] More in-depth

---

[25] George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984); Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); For a comparison of the two works, see James M. McPherson, "Redemption or Counterrevolution? The South in the 1870s," *Reviews in American History* 13 (1985): 545-50; Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[26] Summers, *The Press Gang*, 6.

[27] Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press*, 148.

[28] Elaine F. Parsons, *Ku-lux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 10. For a study of newspaper media and riots, see James Green, *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement, and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age America* (New York: Pantheon, 2006).

studies of local media and politics will only enrich our knowledge of the most unique chapter in American history.

A combination of printed and manuscript sources undergirds this construction of Alabama politics and print culture. Newspapers render documentary information, but also become sources in and of themselves. Their editors assume their rightful place at the top of the state's political power structure. Major organs of both parties are represented here, but due to the reality of the print market in Alabama and the availability of source material, Democratic outlets far outnumber their Republican counterparts. Only two Republican newspapers are useful for research purposes. National newspapers are consulted to offer outside perspective, and to place the events in Alabama in proper context. In terms of manuscripts, the personal correspondence of Robert McKee, a well-connected Democratic editor in Selma, provides a window into the inner workings of the party in 1874. The debate over political tactics is played out in conversations between editors and politicians, who realize their capability to sway public opinion. Letters to and from Governor David Lewis evince the panic felt on the part of black and white Republicans during the campaign, yet frustratingly do not furnish insight on the internal workings of the governor's mansion.

Personal testimony from Alabamians in the reports of Congressional investigations forms the other component of this research. Two reports, a House inquiry in 1875 and a Senate probe in 1877, evince the effect of news and rhetoric in socio-political and economic terms. In the text of these documents, investigators asked witnesses specifically about reading newspapers, and the language contained therein. Excerpts from Democratic and Republican organs were introduced verbatim as a form of testimony. Frequently, interviewees referred explicitly to newspaper coverage when discussing their awareness of an event. In some cases, press clippings alone

informed their familiarity with a subject. Undoubtedly, these testimonies are not without their problems. Accounts often contradict one another, especially those that detail riots or murders, usually aligning with partisan loyalties. Yet to ignore them altogether would be to dismiss the proof of a functioning print culture. Taken together, these sources form complementary halves, demonstrating how ideas from the page translated into political acts.

The organization of this project reveals this conversational relationship as it related to the violent Alabama elections of 1874. Chapter One picks up the story in the first months of 1874. Republicans searched for ways to deal with fallout from the economic crisis of 1873 and attempted to balance appeals to white and black voters to counter the resurgent Democratic Party. Articles from Democratic journals accused Republicans of advocating miscegenation, and recommended their ostracism from social, political, and economic circles. Some of the more vociferous editors prescribed violence as the last resort to repel Republicans from Alabama. Chapter Two evaluates the repercussions of legitimizing violence, which resulted in murders for political purposes and riots at polling places. African Americans, far from the “timid,” “ignorant” characterizations placed upon them by contemporaries, exercised their rights as citizens courageously. They continued to serve as leaders of the Republican Party, and in several places on election day, organized as a group to counteract Democratic thugs. Chapter Three reviews the impact of the election and the death throes of the Republican Party. After their victory, editors urged their fellow Democrats to deny financial aid to Republicans. The conservative majority in the legislature initiated several changes and reforms that, in the aggregate, diminished voting rights and economic opportunity for African Americans. Estrangement and animosity helped Democrats win the 1876 election, which contributed to the official end of Reconstruction

regionally. Throughout the two-year stretch, print culture and rhetoric exerted a remarkable influence on Alabama politics, and were central to Democratic objectives.

Chapter 1: Rhetoric & Reception: January – July, 1874

"Party organship has ceased to be the first and highest aim of journalists," Arthur Bingham, editor of the *Alabama State Journal*, declared in 1874. The days when a Southern newspaper sought primarily to prop up a particular political party had receded, Bingham judged, in favor of a "thoroughly cosmopolitan" outlook. This boded well for Alabamians, considering that becoming "less partisan is necessarily to become less intolerant and more considerate of the wants, rights, and privileges of the great mass of people." There was still some obstinacy in the press, though, primarily among those journals who identified as Democratic. "Nowhere else but in this Democratic-cursed State do political divisions go to the extent of dividing the people in their personal and social, and business relations," Bingham griped. This "despicable spirit" of ostracism originated from the writings of Democratic journalists.[1] Contrary to Bingham's musings in print, party organs were still very much alive in Alabama. Democratic editors not only isolated Republicans with their rhetoric, they proposed their execution.

In the early months of 1874, Republicans still held many of the state's political offices, yet they faced an array of problems. The party had won the election of 1872 largely as a result of impressive party unity, but that solidarity was beginning to crumble. The Panic of 1873 disrupted markets throughout the country, and uneasy voters in Alabama and the nation at large focused on monetary issues. Notably, the debt incurred from the construction of the Alabama & Chattanooga Railroad had left Alabama on the verge of bankruptcy. Republicans once had levied criticism at former Governor Robert Lindsay for his mismanagement of the Democratically-

[1] *Alabama State Journal*, April 11, 1874.

controlled South & North railroad, yet now they faced similar problems with their own dealings.[2] The brief appearance of Horace Greely and the Liberal Republicans in 1872, meanwhile, threatened to splinter the party for different reasons. Rather than succumb to infighting, Republican factions agreed to compromise amongst themselves, and nominated almost no controversial candidates in 1872. While whites composed the leadership of the party, however, the base consisted of primarily African-American voters, with the Black Belt forming the locus of the its power. That disparity began to manifest itself even more during the new administration of Governor David Lewis, when a civil rights bill advocated by many black legislators failed to gain administration support.[3]

Republicans also faced a disparity in the print market. Nearly all of the local newspapers throughout the state remained Democratic, with major organs in Mobile, Selma, and Montgomery. Far less prevalent, Republican papers were concentrated primarily in Montgomery and Huntsville. Republicans sought to utilize an expanded news network to reach potential voters.[4] Unfortunately for them, as the state approached the election of 1874, Republicans divided over the dispersal of the federal printing patronage. In February, the state's Republican congressmen took it upon themselves to move the party's printing contract from the state capital to Huntsville and Selma. They believed that North Alabama, with its traditional unionist leanings, and the Black Belt's primarily African-American electorate held the keys to continued success. Arthur Bingham of the Montgomery-based *Alabama State Journal*, expressed outrage at the decision, and demanded an explanation from the delegation. Congressman Alexander White,

---

[2] Sarah W. Wiggins, *The Scalawag in Alabama Politics, 1865-1881* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1977), 75.
[3] Ibid., 80-88.
[4] *Alabama State Journal*, Feb. 1, 1874; Gerald Lee Roush, "Aftermath of Reconstruction: Race, Violence, and Politics in Alabama, 1874-1884" (master's thesis, Auburn University, 1973), 83.

from the state's at-large fourth district, explained to Bingham the need to strengthen Republican papers in the north and south portions of the state. Senator George Spencer further described the "needy" papers as in need of the funds afforded by the federal patronage contract. Bingham took no comfort in the assurances of the delegation, and accused the politicians with seeking to incite division within the party.

By this time, Bingham was a key figure in Alabama's Republican party, as he commanded the most authoritative Republican mouthpiece during the Reconstruction period. He was from New York, to which his parents had emigrated in the late 1700s. After receiving an education and working for a period of time as a cabinet maker, he moved south to Talladega, Alabama in the 1840s. He operated a small newspaper there, the *Talladega Sun*, until Democrats burned the office to the ground in 1872. Originally a conspicuous member of the Whig Party, he remained a staunch Unionist before and during the war. President Andrew Johnson appointed him assistant assessor of internal revenue in 1866. Most notably, he served as the state treasurer from 1868 to 1870, and then for another two years in the Lewis administration. In 1870, meanwhile, Bingham had purchased the *Alabama State Journal* from C.T. Thewatt & Company, and assumed the role of its proprietor and editor. He won the state printing contract, producing content for the government for two years, until 1874. The *State Journal* operated as the bastion of Republican sentiment in the state capital, and quickly became a target for the more ubiquitous Democratic newspapers.[5]

To encourage new voters to join the party, Bingham and other Republican newspapers routinely carried messages promising economic prosperity. In much the same vein as Democratic New South ideology, the party encouraged northern capital to venture south and revitalize the

---

[5] Thomas M. Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography* v. 3, 150-1; W.W. Screws, "Alabama Journalism, in *Memorial Record of Alabama*, v. 2, 198-99.

region's economy. The *Alabama State Journal* repeatedly issued calls for interested investors that emphasized the South's ability to sustain business interests. The Deep South offered northern businessman fertile soil, long crop seasons, abundant supplies of water and wood, and an absence of epidemics. Cotton remained king in this scenario, as it presented the greatest opportunity for the return of investment. But prosperity could only be enjoyed under Republican governance, they asserted, as Democrats were prone to graft and corruption. The policies of Republicans thus facilitated growth and opportunity, while the "wicked, extravagant, disloyal, government-hating" Democrats only produced dereliction. Indeed Republicans preached, as one historian of Reconstruction has considered it, "the gospel of prosperity" to a region in dire need of economic stimulus.[6]

A willingness to accept immigration from the North comprised another major component of the prosperity gospel. Not only did the South need capital, it needed willing workers. Bingham depicted a region of open, unimproved pastureland due to the lack of labor. "Our prairies will compare with those of Illinois," the *State Journal* declared, "and are cheap because the present labor system is so imperfect as to throw the large proportion of them out into commons for cattle to graze over." Republicans in the industrial city of Prattville near Montgomery meanwhile sought to address its shortage of workers with a land grant system. Every immigrant would receive eighty acres that neighbored the farmland of a current citizen.

Bingham quieted certain fears about the nationality of these immigrants by assuring readers they would come from the North, not from Europe. The *State Journal* extolled the efforts of Autauga County in this regard. He praised the open-minded, liberal citizens of Autauga,

---

[6] *Alabama State Journal*, May 15, 1874, Oct. 28, 1874; Mark W. Summers, *Railroads, Reconstruction, and the Gospel of Prosperity: Railroad Aid under the Republicans, 1865-1877* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

whom he thought would surely welcome the new arrivals. Often, intelligent, hardworking laborers from the North did not venture south due to the likelihood that they would be ostracized upon arriving. Being labeled "carpetbaggers" branded Northerners as unwelcome outsiders in Alabama and other southern states. In Autauga, however, no partisanship or bitter feelings could be detected. Perhaps most importantly, no newspaper existed there that desired to animate public opinion. The outlets that did exist were strictly reporters of the news, which led to a content and prosperous population.[7]

Democratic organs also claimed to want to draw immigrants and their money to Alabama, but they turned Bingham's logic on its head. What would attract white immigrants, was white rule. In February, responding to complaints of social and business ostracism from Northerners, *Montgomery Advertiser* editor W. W. Screws put it plainly:

> Disguise the fact under as many specious pleas and sophisms as you may, it is none the less apparent that the great struggle in the South is the race struggle of White against Black, for political supremacy. Those who assert, and contend for the supremacy of the white race are arrayed under the banner of Democratic and Conservative party…

Whites who sided with the "negro and his allies," Screws continued, would suffer the consequences, regardless of their place of origin. The desire of Republicans to elevate blacks to a higher social position actually deterred immigration. There could be no racial harmony, no middle ground on which the two races could meet. "Negro rule" would necessitate an exodus of whites from the states, while a "white man's government" would precipitate a similar reaction from blacks. No immigrant would consider Alabama as a home under the former, and the state's economic situation would continue to wallow as a result. Screws labeled the Republican Party as "the party of the negro" and described white Republicans as "obedient as slaves" to the interests

[7] *Alabama State Journal*, May 15, 1874; *Autauga Citizen*, in *Alabama State Journal*, May 21, 1874.

of blacks. A political movement constituted in such a manner party could not be trusted with the future of a state as promising as Alabama.[8]

Republicans in turn reacted to the article in the *Advertiser* with their own vision of how race relations impacted the state's prospects. Bingham, writing in the *State Journal*, warned that Screws' fantasy of blacks leaving Alabama *en masse* would lead to the absolute ruin of the state. Social and business ostracism of blacks and their Republican supporters meanwhile discouraged northern capital from journeying southward. Upon observing the treatment of African-Americans in the state, Bingham opined, enlightened immigrants would return to their "more tolerant, liberal communities" in the North.[9] The South had to adjust to allow differences in political opinion as the North had done. Then, and only then, would the "vacant fields" of the state be filled with industrious, intelligent men and women.[10]

In late February, the first instance of political violence in the 1874 campaign erupted in Eufaula. Around midmorning, a hearing and speaking impaired African-American man attempted to cast his vote in a municipal election, but a Democratic challenger blocked him. Supporters rushed to the sides of both parties, and tensions eventually resulted in an estimated fifty gunshots, most coming from the pistols of Democratic sympathizers. When the local militia arrived on the scene, they arrested the would-be voter's brother for instigating the riot and marched him triumphantly through the streets. To the *Alabama State Journal*, the flare-up in Eufaula only served to confirm the move of the Democratic Party towards virulent racism as the official party platform. The neglect of the town officials to fulfill their constitutional duties, which included the protection of citizens at the polls, also demonstrated the incapability of

[8] *Montgomery Advertiser*, Feb. 19, 1874, March 13, 1874.
[9] *Alabama State Journal*, May 15, 1874.
[10] Ibid., Feb. 20, 1874.

Democratic governance. Pointedly echoing the language of the *Montgomery Advertiser* editorial less than a week prior, the *Journal* observed curtly, "Verily in considering the facts and circumstances of this riot, it does look as if the great struggle in this State is the struggle of white against black."[11]

Congressional consideration of Senator Charles Sumner's Civil Rights Bill provided Alabama Democrats with more ammunition throughout the spring and summer. The liberal senator from Massachusetts had introduced the measure in 1873 as an addendum to the Civil Rights Act of 1866, but it had stalled in the judiciary committee. The legislation aimed to facilitate equal access to public facilities, including railroad cars, hotels, churches, and schools. On his deathbed, Sumner confided in Senator Frederick Freylinghusen his desire to see the bill pass. Whether arrested by sentimentalism or genuine resolve, the Senate finally acted. A month after Sumner's death, the Judiciary Committee reported their version of the bill, sending it to the Senate floor for a vote.[12] While it would languish in the House and fail to become law until the following year, the ongoing debate in Congress immediately prompted backlash from racial conservatives.[13]

The subsequent debate in the House of Representatives resembled a clash of old versus new, white versus black. "Like a ghost of some earlier time," Alexander Stephens, the frail former Vice President of the Confederacy, assailed the bill as unconstitutional. In contrast, Representative Robert Brown Elliot of South Carolina, the state's first African American in Congress, reminded the body that Stephens had infamously justified white supremacy in his "Cornerstone" speech of 1861. The rights desired by African Americans did not require an

[11] *Alabama State Journal*, Feb. 25, 1874.
[12] Kirt H.Wilson, *The Reconstruction Desegregation Debate: The Politics of Equality and the Rhetoric of Place* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002), 33.
[13] Wiggins, *Scalawag*, 91.

expansion of federal power, he reasoned, as they were already guaranteed by the three Reconstruction Amendments. Alabama's James T. Rapier went even further, denouncing segregation as a way to avoid the truth that white and black were actually quite equal. "If the negro were allowed the same opportunities, the same rights of locomotion, the same rights to comfort in travel," apprehensive whites would lose the basis of their argument.[14]

The common Democratic rallying cry soon became the claim that the bill endeavored to create mixed schools and ultimately miscegenation. Republicans throughout Alabama quickly sought to dispel that assertion. The *State Journal* led the scramble towards the center on integration, taking every opportunity to claim that neither white nor black Republicans desired mixed schools. In reply to the *Greensboro Beacon*, Bingham proclaimed that "no Republican (white or black) wants civil equality," and shamed the Democrats for running a campaign based on lies designed to excite the populace. Under the headline "Race Issue Repudiated," the *State Journal* included an editorial that outlined how civil rights laws in Mississippi and Tennessee had not led to miscegenation, and had in fact "checked the supply of mulattoes."[15]

The *State Journal* published another editorial from a "Southern gentleman of culture and taste," in an effort to quiet some of the more tremulous members of their party. The author addressed the perceived threat of racial mixing, which he viewed as an issue best understood through the lenses of history and philosophy, not partisan politics. He postulated that the major races of the world had remained mostly self-contained through history, save for a few examples of interracial sex. The only examples to the contrary were those that demonstrated "masculine lust," a privilege enjoyed almost exclusively by the Caucasian race. In the case of Caucasian and African interaction, "relations have been patriarchal, kind, and often mutually affectionate, but

---

[14] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 533; Smith, *Reconstruction Desegregation* Debate, 468, 484.
[15] *Alabama State Journal*, April 25, 1874, May 29, 1874, June 11, 1874.

such a thing as intermarriage has never entered the minds of either." Yet the circumstances of slavery did lead to increase opportunities for miscegenation. White slave masters took command over the bodies of their female slaves as much as they did their labor in the fields.[16] A comparison between "mulattoes" and those who qualified as "pure blacks," the author asserted, revealed the relatively miniscule threat social mixing posed. African women in slavery were subjected to the "transient lusts" of their white overseers. Surely, the writer postulated, now that slavery had been abolished, the possibility for interracial intercourse would as well.[17]

In closing, the columnist admonished Democrats to stop campaigning on the controversial issue. Civil and political quality stood completely apart from social equality in his purview. The Republican Party advocated for the latter, never the former. Building off the historical argument constructed in the preceding paragraphs, the author declared that inequality always had existed in human history, and would continue to do so. "As long as individuals and families differ in wealth, intellect, culture, or refinement," social equality would be impossible to achieve. The idea of racial solidarity, "deeply rooted in nature," would prevent the white race from experiencing dilution at the hands of the former slave population. These assertions sought to assuage the fears of skeptical Republicans, by reaffirming conceptions of white superiority. Indeed, the divisions between the races had been ordained by God, who constructed "inseparable, natural and artificial barriers," for that very purpose. The belief that any political party desired to muddle what had been divinely decreed was falsely propagated by demagogues to excite the easily-swayed portions of the population.[18]

---

[16] For a discussion of these concepts in an earlier period, see Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001).
[17] *Alabama State Journal*, April 23, 1874.
[18] Ibid.

Caught on their heels by the poor timing of the Civil Rights Bill, white Alabama Republicans thus abandoned any semblance of support for civil equality. Republican papers claimed the revival of talk regarding integrated schools was "a democratic trick," and advised members of the party to resist the temptation in engage in the debate.[19] In essence, the *Journal* now occupied a position similar to that of the Democratic *Advertiser*. Screws had penned an article in March that pondered the nature of civil rights, arguing that Thomas Jefferson's edict of "all men are created equal" did not apply uniformly, but instead contained caveats along class and racial lines. "We can see one man born (created) to wealth and social position – another to poverty and even penury… one born to command, another to be commanded," he theorized. Screws also pointed to the divine will of God, who doubtless wished for the human race to be organized into a racial hierarchy. "If the Creator had contemplated a perfect equality of the various races," he would have surely created a more homogenized humanity, instead of "stamping each with some distinctive and dissimilar physical and mental feature." Therefore, civil rights were not applicable to all, but only those that society as a whole deemed worthy. Since white and black Alabamians inhabited different realms of society, the rights of either could not be uniformly applied. "The negro has his civil rights with his kind – we have ours with ours," Screws contended. Furthermore, the inclusion of African-Americans to theatres, hotels, railroad cars, and churches offered no perceivable benefits to white Alabamians. Ultimately, the "white man's party movement" viewed racial prejudice, and therefore segregation, as an "irreplaceable law of nature."[20]

---

[19] *East Alabamian* in *Alabama State Journal*, May 31, 1874.

[20] *Montgomery Advertiser*, March 20, 1874; *Reconstruction Era Political Scrapbooks*, 1865-1886, 213-14, ADAH. [last quotation]. On the construction of race in America, see Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 143-78.

John Forsyth, editor of the prominent Democratic *Mobile Register*, added his influential voice to that of Screws. Forsyth had been active in Alabama politics since before the Civil War, serving as attorney general, mayor of Mobile, and in the state legislature. His "peculiarly fresh, bold, and trenchant" style of writing distinguished him from other editors in the state.[21] With respect to equality for African Americans, he believed "negro suffrage is a crime against republican government and a libel on liberty." He refuted the Republican assertion that the Civil Rights Bill would not mean mixed schools, and plainly labeled the piece of legislation as one that "means miscegenation."[22] He also cautioned his readers against the possibilities of the new law. Exploiting racist caricatures of male and female African Americans, he reported that "Sambo and Dinah are already taking on airs in view of the passage of the social equality bill," by seeking admission into schools.[23] In another instance, he claimed, a white man had entered a street car only to find a black man sitting so close to his wife "that he was actually sitting on her dress." When pressured, the offending man responded that the Civil Rights bill gave him as much a right to the seat as anyone else. The woman's husband, according to Forsyth, "very properly" evicted the black man from the street car. Forsyth finally copied a story from a Nashville newspaper which told of a train that had just arrived from Louisville. Five African-American women were found in the Pullman sleeper car, "snugly stowed away between the snow-white sheets of the Pullman sleeper."[24] By raising these concerns in language dripping with racial imagery, Forsyth, like Screws, sought to raise animus against the bill.

---

[21] Willis Brewer, *Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men from 1540 to 1872* (Montgomery, AL: Barrett & Brown, 1872), 408-9; Screws, "Alabama Journalism," in *Memorial Record of Alabama*, 167-68. See also Lonnie A. Burnett, *The Pen Makes a Good Sword: John Forsyth of the Mobile Register* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006).
[22] *Affairs in Alabama*, 588; *Mobile Daily Register*, May 31, 1874.
[23] *Mobile Daily Register*, May 30, 1874.
[24] Ibid., June 3, 1874, June 4, 1874

Alabamians read and received the discussion of race and miscegenation through the pages of the state's newspapers. These newspaper debates clearly impacted at least some of them. Paul Strobach, a farmer from Montgomery, later testified that he had read "two or three" the Democratic papers that attempted to draw a line based on race. He also intimated that he was aware that the platform stated the party desired a government for, and by, white men. William Betts, a Republican candidate for Congress, attested to the excitement on the campaign trail due to the effect of acrimonious print rhetoric. "The leading articles of that part of the country were calling upon the white people to sustain themselves" against the potential of intermarriage and miscegenation brought forth by the Republican Party. Betts continued:

> I was glad to get the newspaper with the article in it, because it was positive proof that they could not deny. That was a long editorial in a newspaper talking of the intermarriage, and the negro having a right to come to a man's house and call upon him for his child: that in ten years from now, our daughters in that country would be dangling their mixed offsprings on their knees.

In canvassing the area around Opelika, Betts further observed that those who identified as the "white people of the State of Alabama" badgered Republicans and labored to dissuade both blacks and whites from voting the Republican ticket.[25]

Democratic politicians and editors circulated their papers and pamphlets widely in 1874. Driven by the chairman of the state committee, Walter Bragg, speakers traveled to even the most remote of areas to promote the white man's cause. Bragg distrusted the federal mail service, and thus relied on close cooperation with private companies.[26] John J. Moulton, a resident of Mobile and veteran of the Confederate army, described the campaign as "anything but a temperate and reasonable campaign on the part of the democrats." The race issue, according to Molton,

---

[25] *Affairs in Alabama*, 273, 998.

[26] Allen J. Going, *Bourbon Democracy in Alabama, 1874-1890* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1951), 14.

permeated "every newspaper in the State." As a consequence, many Republicans in Mobile, as well as other areas throughout Alabama, concluded that the coming election would precipitate violent confrontation.[27]

To hammer home their point, Democratic newspapers in fact openly instructed their constituents to engage in economic and social ostracism of blacks as well as white Republicans. The *Troy Messenger,* for example, published a list of resolutions from the Pike County Democratic Party which declared, "that nothing is left to the white man's party but social ostracism of all those who act, sympathize, or side with the negro party." In Tuskegee, meanwhile, Democrats considered Republicans "forever cursed… branded with a black and damning stigma which time cannot obliterate." Lee County Democrats echoed the sentiment, regarding any persons, white or black, in league with the Republican Party to be enemies of the white race.[28] After all, these were "men who sneak about in the night attending negro leagues… who whisper to their ignorant, deluded victims… of not letting the white folks run over them and make slaves of them again." These duplicitous men deserved their fate of ostracism.[29] The forthcoming election would decide whether to allow blacks and their Republican allies to "sit with us in our church pews," or reify the superiority of white society.[30]

This rhetoric had a negative effect on the lives and economic efforts of Republicans. Dallas Smith stated that the tone of the Democratic press in Opelika conjured up hostility between whites and blacks, which had ramifications for his business. Smith's trading post usually prospered late in the growing season due to the harvest of cotton and corn, but in 1874,

[27] *Affairs in Alabama*, 273, 998, 1250-52.
[28] Ibid., VIII, 1131, 100.
[29] *Mobile Daily Register*, June 4, 1874.
[30] *Opelika Times*, Oct. 8, 1874; For a discussion of Opelika media during Reconstruction, see Samuel Thorne Hooper, "A Study of Reconstruction-Era Media in the South: Opelika, Alabama, 1874" (Master's Thesis: Auburn University, 1998).

the “newspaper articles, or rather the political influence of the country,” kept many of his customers away. F.M. Dunbar, another merchant in the area, imparted that while he used to cater to both whites and blacks, he now dealt almost exclusively with African Americans. The white population considered his goods as unworthy due to his known association with the Republican Party.[31] J. K. Hubbard, the sheriff of Opelika, also contended that the Democratic papers of the state instructed their audience to cut Republicans off from certain aspects of society. “I hold the party responsible for what their organs say,” he testified, which he recognized to be the tactic of excluding Republicans. In Mobile, Democrats formed clubs opposed to all forms of black businesses.[32]

According to Judge E.M. Keils of Eufaula, Republican sympathizers faced difficulties in conducting business in Barbour County as well. Under the program of what came to be known as “Barbour County Fever,” Democrats in the county would go out of their way to humiliate and terrorize Republicans. He related the story of a John C. Harron, an Irish merchant in the county. At the outset of the campaign, a group of Democrats approached him and demanded that he sign on to the platform of the “White Man’s Club of Eufaula.” The document urged Barbour County whites to “discriminate in the employment of laborers” against black Republicans and “white-skinned miscreants.” Through effective organization the club planned to overthrow the corrupt Republicans and reclaim their country from the “black-and-tan element.” Harron declined, citing his dependence on black patronage. One of the men then drew his knife and threatened to cut Harron’s throat. Several days later, the men returned, and Harron finally agreed to sign the

[31] *Affairs in Alabama*, 209.
[32] Ibid., 135-36, 156; *Alabama State Journal*, July 12, 1874.

platform. In Keils's assesment, the group took their cues from political managers in the Democratic Party.[33]

P. J. Kaufman, a German immigrant living in Huntsville, lost most of his business after he voted Republican in a local election. On his walk home, a fellow businessman pulled Kaufman aside. "It it true that you vote the dirty Republican ticket?" the man asked. After he responded affirmatively, the man replied, "You had better close up your business and leave, because we don't like to patronize this dirty republican party." Kaufman lost almost all of his white customers after the exchange, which plunged his shop into the red. Another of Huntsville's German transplants, many of whom voted Republican, compared state politics to his military experience in the Civil War. He would, "rather take my chances in the Army fighting the enemy in the field than to go through a political campaign in Alabama."[34]

In some cases, switching loyalties meant that businessmen forfeited economic opportunity. Frederick Wolffe, who up until the summer of 1874 had been in the employ of the cotton brokerage firm Lehman, Durr & Co., published a notice of his intention to run as a Republican in the *Montgomery Advertiser*. He did so at the behest of his employers, who had received letters from customers threatening to take their business elsewhere. Sumter County Republicans encountered a similar situation. P. J. Gloser, a farmer from near-by Demopolis, lamented the fact that his political sentiments outweighed all else when men made business decisions. Gloser purported himself to be a gentleman in all things. He and his family had two signers of the Declaration of Independence in their ancestry, and were well-known throughout

---

[33] Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 709; *Affairs in Alabama*, 9, 857-58.
[34] *Report to Inquire*, 379-80.

the county and the surrounding area. Nevertheless, because Gloser had converted to the Republican Party, men declined to do business with him.[35]

Republicans in Alabama experienced many forms of social ostracism due to their politics. Benjamin Gardner, the state Attorney General, described how social relations hinged on political affiliation. Identifying as a Republican, according to Gardner, could relegate a man of importance, along with his family, to a lower caste in society. William Brooks, a Selma lawyer and member of the Democratic Party, corroborated these allegations. "When a man joins the republican party in our midst," he explained, "it has an effect upon his social position. And when he joins that he must feel or realize that he is giving up his social position in a great measure." Isaac Heyman recognized the impact of editorials in the *Opelika Times* on Republicans' lives. The *Times* "belches forth its anathemas on the heads of the few poor republicans… It has been said generally that their speeches were perfectly in accordance with the press."[36] Joseph Sloss of North Alabama likewise emphasized the role of the press in instructing ostracism. "They [Democrats] threaten to ostracize socially any man who acts in opposition to the democratic organization. That threat was made not only in speeches but in the papers."[37]

Women and children became targets of anti-Republican sentiment. Judge Keils testified that the families of Republican politicians suffered insults on account of their familial ties to Republicanism. On one occasion, a Democratic orator pledged "to make the place a hell for his wife and children."[38] Charles Smith, an African-American member of the state legislature from Bullock County, recounted that white Republicans and their families endured "a fire of social

---

[35] *Affairs in Alabama*, 267, 882; *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, "Lehman, Durr & Co., ca. 1874," http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/m-6591 (accessed Feb. 27, 2016).
[36] *Affairs in Alabama*, 300-301, 520, 55.
[37] *Report to Inquire*, 156.
[38] *Affairs in Alabama*., ix; *Report to Inquire*, 608.

ostracism." Women were excluded from social circles dominated by the wives of Democrats. "It was understood among the white ladies that they would not speak to the wives nor to the families any men who supported the members of the republican party," Smith recalled.[39] At schools, children of Democratic parents taunted their Republican classmates. F.M. Dunbar's seven-year-old daughter was teased and labeled a "Rad" because of her father's alliance with the Republicans. Benjamin Gardener's son also experienced taunting and jeering from schoolmates, and confided to his father that he wished they were Democrats.

Ostracism extended to churches as well. Members of the Methodist Church that the Gardners attended shut them out from social events due to Benjamin's association with the Republican Party. In another example, an itinerant Methodist minister who was campaigning for tax collector as an independent but who sympathized with the Republicans, complained of how his congregation shunned him for his politics. When word circulated that he would be preaching that Sunday, the Democratically-inclined members of the church "never got out of their carriages" and refused to enter the service. The social pressure became so great that he eventually dropped out of the race. Additionally, he "was so harassed by the churchmen as to his political sentiments" that he left the church altogether. According to the minister's nephew, published tracts and pamphlets encouraged the church members to politic on behalf of the Democratic Party.[40]

Blacks bore the brunt of conservative prejudice, however. Democrats promised jobs for those who voted for their candidates, and penury for those who did not. In Eufaula, Democratic politicians circulated pledges that promised jobs for blacks who faithfully voted the entire ticket. Isaac Campbell of the Wacoochee Valley in eastern Alabama attested that he could not

[39] *Affairs in Alabama*., 701-2.
[40]Ibid., 209-10, 300-1.

remember all of the white landowners who had denied him work based upon his political leanings, strictly because of the sheer number of them. Campbell gave up his search for work in the area, as did many other African Americans. In Russell County, those that did find jobs still struggled to get by. The region's poor soil yielded paltry harvests of cotton and corn. An army officer stationed in Opelika estimated that "nine-tenths of them are now living on cow-peas boiled in water, without even meat to cook with."[41]

Democrats even tried to restrict blacks' access to newspapers. George Sharp, an orator and political leader, was one of the few African Americans in the Wacooche Valley who subscribed to newspapers. After he spurned an offer to join the local Democratic Party, the postmasters denied him access to news. "They knew I could I read and write and they cut off my papers," he later recalled. "If I went up to get the papers, they would get me, and I never got any more papers." Recognizing the importance of printed news to their political fortune, Democrats included it in their plan of ostracism.[42]

The state's black population did not remain idle in the face of increasingly threatening rhetoric, however. In March, the Convention of the Colored People of the State of Alabama issued a statement regarding the tone of debate. The convention credited the race issue with fueling tension in the state, and placed the blame for its revival squarely on the shoulders of ex-slaveholders, aided by the Democratic press. To combat this development, the convention decreed that an emigration association be formed to investigate the establishment of an emigrant colony in the western United States. In closing, the committee requested that the state's Republican newspapers disseminate the address.[43]

---

[41] *Affairs in Alabama*., 213, 48, 29.
[42] Ibid., 72-74.
[43] Ibid., 1116-17.

Increasingly as the spring of 1874 drew near, Democratic newspapers joined one another in a cavalcade of bigotry, calling for the party to incorporate the race issue openly in the official party platform. In early March, an editorial in the *Birmingham News* insisted, "Let us put the election fairly and squarely upon white or black supremacy – in other words, whether the white man or negro shall govern the noble State of Alabama." The *Selma Times* followed suit shortly thereafter. The growing chorus joined the *Advertiser*, which had long promoted the validity of a campaign based solely on race. Newspapers in Eufaula and Eutaw threw their support behind the race platform as well, which continued to gain support as the time for official conventions drew nigh.[44]

The Democratic Executive Committee tacitly endorsed a white versus black contest at their meeting in April of 1874. The committee somewhat deftly embedded the proposition in the official address, stating that white the Democratic and Conservative Party stood for the rights of all Alabamians, the "Radical" party only represented "a controlling negro constituency."[45] In the pages of the *State Journal*, Bingham tied this tepid statement to the more forceful ones made by the *Advertiser* and other fellow Democratic papers.[46] National newspapers began to pick up on the developments in the state as well. In April the *New York World*, well-known as one of the leading Democratic papers in the nation, chastised the Democratic Committee for embracing the race issue, and predicted that the course would not result produce positive results.[47]

Not all Democrats expressed a willingness to draw a distinct color line, however. The race platform issue faced strong opposition in the Black Belt. Democrats there believed that

---

[44] *Birmingham News* in *Alabama State Journal*, March 7, 1874; *Selma Times* in *Alabama State Journal*, March 13, 1874; *Affairs in Alabama*, 860.
[45] Alabama Democrats used the labels "Democrat," and "Democrat & Conservative" interchangeably, as did Democrats in other Southern states, to contrast with "radical" Republicans. Consult C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 2-3.
[46] *Alabama State Journal*, March 18, 1874.
[47] Ibid., April 11, 1874.

victory would require some African-American support. Drawing blacks away from the Republicans also would erode the opposition's base and open up a promising avenue, they maintained. The Democrats accordingly should emphasize economic issues, such as the repudiation of the state's railroad debt. The leaders of this "New Departure" wing included Robert McKee, editor of the *Southern Argus* in Selma, and Benjamin F. Herr, editor of the *Livingston Journal*.[48]

Robert McKee acted as a bellwether of moderate Democratic sentiment. He hailed from Kentucky, where he had gained experience editing various newspapers. As chief editor of the *Louisville Journal*, the state's most conspicuous paper, he aligned himself with the secession movement. He served as secretary of the Kentucky secession convention in November 1861, and later fought at the battle of Shiloh. He briefly remained in Kentucky after the conclusion of the war, but then moved to Alabama to continue his career in journalism. He established the *Argus* in Selma in 1869. McKee's reputation among Democrats, and journalists at large, was impeccable. In 1872, one commentator observed that "no journalist in Alabama wields a more decided influence upon public questions."[49] McKee would debate the relevance of the race issue with other politicians and journalists throughout the spring.[50]

Northern Alabama Democrats recognized the powerful pull of racial politics. Early in the campaign, an editor from Florence wrote McKee for his advice. While he recognized the salience of the railroad debt controversy, he also believed that "every negro that leaves the state improves our prospects…. Let us have a general movement this summer," he pleaded with McKee. "When we can make the people believe they can carry the state, they will turn out." He also expressed

[48] Perman, *Road to Redemption*, 156-57.
[49] Screws, "Alabama Journalism," in *Memorial Record*, v. 2, 179-80; Brewer, *Alabama: Her History*, 230-31.
[50] See also Samuel L. Webb, "A Jacksonian Democrat in Postbellum Alabama: The Ideology and Influence of Journalist Robert McKee, 1869-1896," *The Journal of Southern History* 62 (1996): 239-74.

his support for gubernatorial candidate George Houston, who would secure the vote of the northern hill country and therefore ensure that Alabama became a white man's government.[51] Rufus K. Boyd, a Democratic legislator from Blount County and candidate for secretary of state, likewise assured McKee of the potential of a racial appeal. "There is considerable feeling here over the passage of the Civil Rights Bill," he wrote. He felt that the people were "more sensitive upon this question than all others," and that the party could guarantee a strong turnout come election day by emphasizing the issue.[52]

Protests from the New Departure camp over the race question also flooded McKee's correspondence, however. Charles Carter Langdon wrote McKee in advance of the convention to lend his support for Houston, who he considered to be solid on "the great question of the day," the railroad bond issue.[53] B. B. Lewis thought that if the party acceded to the demands to adopt the slogan, "Alabama is a white man's state," they would surely suffer defeat.[54] These dissenters reiterated their belief that the Black Belt should serve as the "point of assault" for the party in the election.[55] The *Greensboro Beacon* added its voice to this camp in early March. In justifying its position, it elucidated the primary concern of other Black Belt Democrats: "The race issue would not only deprive our State ticket of the entire colored vote, but it would cause the negroes in the "Black Belt" to vote entirely for men of their own color, or for white men in political affiliation with them." One unspoken consequence of this polarization along racial lines would be the possibility of increased violence.[56]

---

[51] H.C. Jones to Robert McKee, Jan. 26, 1874 Robert McKee Papers, Alabama State Department of Archives and History (cited hereafter as ADAH).
[52] Rufus K. Boyd to Robert McKee, June 1, 1874, Robert McKee Papers, ADAH; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 552.
[53] Charles C. Langdon to Robert McKee, May 16, 1874, Robert McKee Papers, ADAH.
[54] Rufus K. Boyd to Robert McKee, May 14, 1874, Robert McKee Papers, ADAH.
[55] Willis Brewer to Robert McKee, May 10, 1874, in Robert McKee Papers, ADAH.
[56] *Alabama State Journal*, March 5, 1874.

Ultimately, these dissenting voices held little sway. Indeed, the tide moved in the opposite direction. Some Democratic newspapers went beyond merely discussing race, and began to recommended actual violence as the surest way to guarantee a Republican defeat. John Forsyth's *Mobile Register* did not hold back in this regard. In April, he published a desperate, frightening call to action. The bayonet rule of Reconstruction had diminished the ability of Southerners to oppose it any constructive way, Forsyth argued. The only method left to noble Southerners, then, was assassination. "Because there is no power to which an appeal can be made for redress, either executive, legislative, or judicial," he wrote, "… there is nothing but the Italian or Mexican remedy, the stiletto or the cuchillo." Forsyth demanded white Alabamians take bold action and finally deliver the state from Republican rule, and considered those who did not as cowards and traitors. White Mobilians enjoyed a monopoly on violence as a result of this attitude. In the case of a violent crime in which a white man was accused, lawyer George Turner explained, it was almost impossible to obtain a conviction, regardless of the race of the victim. A "general feeling" allowed such crimes to be permissible.[57] In effect, the Democratic press created an atmosphere that allowed whites to coalesce as a united entity.

Republicans felt the pressure. A.E. Williams, an African-American member of the state legislature who later obtained a post as assistant postmaster, continued to give speeches across the state even when directly threatened by white Democrats. Before giving a scheduled speech in Eufaula, Williams a group of black Republicans warned him of an assassination plot if he proceeded with his address. As night fell, a crowd gathered and demanded that Williams be allowed to speak. Williams then confronted a group of about dozen white men, who told him that they did not care to hear him make "inflammatory speeches." There had been a group of African-

[57] *Affairs in Alabama*, 475, 479, 482.

Americans gathered there for some time, the group explained, and they did not intend for the meeting to go on much longer. "I told them I thought this was a free country, and had come to the conclusion that I was going to speak anyway," Williams responded defiantly. Williams made a "satisfactory speech," and then returned home to Eufaula under the protection of a posse of twenty armed men. While Williams tempered the tone of his speech to avoid a sure confrontation with the agitated white mob, his defiance doubtless inspired confidence in his fellow Republicans.[58]

In June, an Equal Rights Convention met in Montgomery to formally declare the position of African Americans opposed to Democratic utterances regarding race. Their grievances included the lack of access to proper facilities while traveling and the utter disregard of public officials for both the federal and Alabama constitutions, which provided rights to all citizens regardless of color. The convention then aimed directly at the political party that operated in contradiction of their sworn oaths:

> The Democratic party are [sic] engaged in a ruthless crusade against us as a race, with the avowed purpose of not only preventing us from exercising the constitutional rights which have been afforded to us, but of abridging these rights to the fullest extent of their ability, should they obtain power in the State. To this end they are engaged in exciting the baser prejudices and passions of the white men against us as a race, and are openly threatening us with a civil and relentless war of extermination.[59]

In closing, the group endorsed the pending Civil Rights bill, yet distanced themselves from calling for mixed schools. As long as their children attended schools of equal quality, the spirit of the legislation would be considered to have been honored. The convention no doubt realized that any other course of action risked further agitation of tensions within the state. One month later, the "Colored People of Randolph" took a similar stand.

---

[58] *Affairs in Alabama*, 978.
[59] *Alabama State Journal*, June 27, 1874.

As the issue continued to smolder throughout the summer, hesitant members of the Democratic Party nonetheless continued to counsel against the continued use of race for political purposes. On June 9, the *Montgomery Ledger* warned that pitting whites against blacks "is destructive to the happiness and prosperity of every class and color." Those who sought to initiate the controversy sought to "redden the soil of the state with the blood of its own inhabitants." The *Ledger* registered its criticism alongside that of the *Greensboro Beacon*, the *Livingston Journal*, and the *Demopolis News-Journal*, other newspapers in the Black Belt. The Republican *State Journal* jumped at the opportunity to play up dissension within the Democratic ranks, and printed the *Ledger* opinion piece in its columns for several weeks in a row.[60] The *Greensboro Beacon* also highlighted the fact that the official platform of the Democratic National Convention in 1872 embraced efforts to secure justice across racial and ethnic lines, and opposed any position that contradicted it. Regardless of the reservations of some within the party, however, the issue continued to excite the populace. In a letter to George Williams, the United States Attorney General, Judge J.A. Minnis observed the potential that Civil Rights legislation afforded Democratic journals to fan the flames of racial tension.[61]

By summer, Republicans feared for their safety in light of racial violence instigated by Democrats. In early July, A.E. Williams wrote to Governor David Lewis to inform him of a bloody riot in the city that was only just averted. Judge Keils attempted to obtain a writ of habeas corpus for a black man imprisoned in the county jail on false charges. In response, a posse of nearly fifty men formed in the town, surrounded the armory, and came close to stealing guns intended for federal use. "If those guns stay here," the man wrote Governor Lewis, "I can assure that we are – and will be – intimidated…. So for God's sake," he pleaded, "take [them] away,

[60] For example, see *Alabama State Journal*, June 26, 1874.
[61] *Affairs in Alabama*, 1232.

and let us carry the county." Attorney General Gardner agreed with the petitioner's appraisal of the situation. He wrote, "the Republicans in Barbour are surely intimidated and very much discouraged, because they say that their lives are in danger."[62].

At the end of July, meanwhile, the Democratic Convention put their final stamp on the claim as the party of the white man. George Houston secured the nomination for governor, a moderate move considering he had supported Stephen Douglas in 1860 and opposed secession. The *State Journal* reported that the "race issue was prominent" throughout the convention meetings at the state capitol in Montgomery. President James L. Pugh remarked that the upcoming contest was no ordinary election, but instead one that would solidify the supremacy of the white race. Pugh reminded the audience of the dangers of amalgamation the "black sea" threatened to inaugurate. He had faith, however, that the "white peaks of the Caucasian race" would rise up in successful resistance. The convention passed a resolution barring any Republican editors from reporting from the floor of the caucus, and came close to narrowing that distinction to include only white members of the press. At the close of the assembly, the Democrats officially adopted several resolutions pertaining to race and the opposing Republican Party. They blamed the Republican Party for inflaming the "passions and prejudices of the negroes… against the white people," thereby necessitating the formation of a whites-only party in response. Other resolutions rejected the Civil Rights bill, which the convention viewed as a violation of conservative principles as well as the Constitution. The white race had achieved their place in society with the help of God, and any measure that sought to upset that order by forcing social interaction with "an ignorant and barbarous race" was against divine providence. The Democrats then invited all members of their race to join them under the party banner. The

[62]A.E. Williams to David Lewis, July 3, 1874, E.M. Keils to David Lewis, July 6, 1874, Governor David Lewis Papers, ADAH.

controversy over whether to present themselves as a party arrayed against the interests of racial equality was settled. What had been apparent in the pages of the press now became the sanctioned position of the Democratic Party.[63]

[63] *Alabama State Journal*, July 30, 1874; *New York Times*, August 1, 1874; *Reconstruction Era Political Scrapbooks, 1865-1886*, Book 3, 260-62, ADAH.

Chapter 2: Violence and Redemption, August – November, 1874

As July turned to August, prescriptions for violence issued by Democratic papers and politicians finally manifested in actual bloodletting. The murders of Sumter County Republicans jarred party members, who, in desperation called on higher authorities for aid. The state's press kept citizens aware of the developments as the state hurtled towards the election. Far from being subdued, African Americans banded together and exercised their voting rights as citizens, which, in several locations, resulted in grisly confrontations at the polls.

While the state and national press digested the resolutions of the July Democratic convention, political and racial violence descended upon Sumter County. The county and the western region of Alabama in general already had gained infamy as a hotbed of Ku Klux Klan activity during the terrorist group's heyday. Heinous examples of violence abound from the period of Congressional Reconstruction. In 1868, Ben Brown, African American president of the Sumter County Grant and Colfax Club, was killed by a Klan posse of over twenty men. After the sustained violence of the 1868 presidential campaign, a state committee found that the Klan engaged in systematic terrorization of black and white Republicans in the county. Sumter and surrounding counties on the border with Mississippi continued to witness a sustained campaign of violence. Much of the violence bled over into the neighboring state, especially the city of Meridian. The Congressional Enforcement Acts of 1870 and 1871 ended official Klan activity in the South, but could do little to prevent more freelance forms of violence. Former Klan members

reassembled as "White Leagues," "Red Shirts," or unnamed bands of marauders. In Sumter, open season on Republicans persisted well past its expected expiration date.[1]

On the evening of Saturday, August 1, Walter P. Billings left a meeting of the Republican Party in Livingston to travel the twelve miles back to his plantation in Ramsey Station. Billings, a local attorney and chairman of the county's Republican Executive Committee, had addressed a crowd of black and white Republicans in anticipation of the upcoming election. As he neared his home, a band of men ambushed him, shooting him five times. Rumors proliferated throughout the night regarding the origin of the shots and Billings's as-yet unknown fate. The next morning, passers-by discovered his bullet-riddled body on one side of the road and his dead horse on the other. The disturbing news led Arthur Bingham to believe that the "Ku Klux Democracy" had risen yet again in Sumter.[2]

Republicans in the county reacted to Billings's murder with justifiable trepidation. Henry J. Greata, Billings's law partner, penned a frantic letter to Governor Lewis after hearing of the killing. "My partner was murdered last evening on his way home about a half a mile from his plantation… both he and his horse were shot dead," he reported, before concluding, "Our lives are not safe here."[3] The county's circuit court judge submitted that Billings had no personal enemies, and therefore must have been assassinated "on political grounds alone."[4] Thomas Ivey, an African American postal agent active in politics, petitioned the governor on August 5 to inform him of the true state of affairs in the county. He voiced the fear that both black and white Republicans felt in the wake of yet another political murder. Now that Billings was dead, Ivey

[1] Alan W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 121, 246-47, 303.
[2] *Alabama State Journal*, Aug. 9, Aug. 5, 1874.
[3] Henry J. Greata to David Lewis, Aug. 2, 1874, Governor David Lewis Papers, ADAH.
[4] Indiscernible to David Lewis, Aug. 3, 1874, Governor David Lewis Papers, ADAH.

assumed a greater leadership role in the county's Republican organization. In light of the recent event, he began traveling with a posse of about twenty armed men.[5]

A group of black citizens in Choctaw County, just to the south of Sumter, compiled a list of similar grievances. African American men had taken active roles in the Republican Party, and suffered violence and intimidation from Democrats in return. In one instance, a former slave-owner rode by the home of a black Republican and threatened to kill him and his family if they voted Republican. Conditions deteriorated to the point that some blacks began seeking safety in the swamps of the Tombigbee River. They petitioned for the right to exercise their religion, grow their own crops, and own firearms; rights they considered foundational as Americans. In closing, however, they recognized that the governor could do little to render them adequate protection.[6]

For his part, Governor Lewis expressed a sense of exasperation and sheer powerlessness upon hearing of Billings's death. Shortly thereafter, he met with Congressman Charles Hays, the region's representative, to explore the possibility of prosecuting Billings's killers under the Congressional Enforcement Acts. In a letter to Congressman Alexander White, Alabama's at-large representative, Lewis groused: "What can we do, and what ought we do, in respect to the assassination of Billings?" He planned to offer the highest reward allowed by law in exchange for the arrest of the perpetrators, but lamented the fact that he could not do more to combat the "infernal scheme." Indeed, to Lewis, it seemed as if "democrats intend to carry this election by assassination."[7]

Reaction from the press to the murder broke, predictably, across partisan lines. The editor of the *Meridian Mercury*, writing from Mississippi, looked no further than Billings's political

[5] Thomas Ivey to David Lewis, Aug. 5, 1874, Governor David Lewis Papers, ADAH.
[6] Colored Citizens of Choctaw County to David Lewis, Aug. 21, 1874, Governor David Lewis Papers, ADAH.
[7] David Lewis to Alexander White, Aug. 13, 1874, Governor David Lewis Papers, ADAH. Until 1875, Alabama' congressional delegation included representatives from two at-large districts.

activism to explain his death. His mission had been to "stir up the negroes of Sumter and prepare them for the fall election." The killing was therefore justified. "It was a horrible thing to shoot a man down," he wrote, "but we fail to see how shooting a mischief-making carpetbagger demands such a hella-baloo any more than the shooting of any other man."[8] The Sumter County Democratic Party also fingered the Republicans. Meeting a few days after the news broke, the body alleged that the radical press "sought to inflame the public mind against the democratic and conservative party." Republican newspapers had wrongly accused them for the murders and other crimes in the county. The committee repudiated any sympathy towards those who violated the law, and decried all forms of lawlessness. Benjamin Herr, the editor of the *Livingston Journal* in Sumter County, attributed the disturbances in the county solely to the Republican Party, for the purpose of winning the election.[9]

Arthur Bingham saw the latest flare-up as a direct consequence of the Democratic effort to conjure up rancor. "Down with the nigger is now the one distinctive badge of Alabama Democracy," he asserted. He hypothesized that the Democratic press spread false reports of black citizens arming with the intention of murdering whites. Whites retaliated against the false threat, which ended in the slaying of Republicans. There was no truth in the original information, the *Journal* accused, except in the mind of the peddlers of false information. As if to confirm his allegation, the *Livingston Journal* published a report about blacks in Sumter County. Thomas Ivey and his fellow African Americans had organized a "semi-military organization," and paraded "through the neighborhood under arms, in squads of 15 to 40." In reality, this armed posse was probably for Ivey's protection, as he alluded to in his letter to Governor Lewis. The Democratic press portrayed this action as aggressive rather than defensive, and in Bingham's

[8] *Alabama State Journal*, Aug. 9, 1874.
[9] Ibid., Aug. 18, 1874, Aug. 26, 1874; *Affairs in Alabama*, 676-77.

justification, had marked Ivey as a target.[10] Ivey would not remain a passive recipient of violent threats, which paradoxically only agitated his conundrum.

Alabama Republicans condemned the tactics of race-baiting and violence employed by Democrats at their state convention in mid-August. With Governor Lewis heading the ticket, the party restated its commitment to political and civil equality implied in the Civil Rights Bill, yet denied that it supported social equality. In reference to rhetoric often used by Democrats, the convention denounced "the assertions that we have made it necessary for a whole people to unite and act together in self-defense and for the preservation of white civilization." They characterized the current Democratic Party to be in ideological lockstep with the secession movement and the Ku Klux Klan, both equally lawless and illegitimate. Apparently referring to the recent murder in Sumter, one resolution declared, "Murder by ambush, whether by one or by many, must be put an end to." Republicans placed the onus on Governor Lewis to do all in his power to bring the offending parties to justice. Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* praised the platform for clearly repudiating the race issue, and condemned the state's justice system for allowing Billings's killers to remain at-large.[11]

Despite the admonitions on behalf of Republicans, or perhaps in spite of them, another violent episode rocked the western part of the state in late August. Thomas Ivey, now in command of the Sumter County Republican Party – and recently targeted in the pages of Democratic newspapers – finally fell prey to an ambush on the Alabama and Chattanooga railroad outside the town of York. One witness recalled that twelve men flanked the railroad car, drew their weapons, and waited for Ivey to appear. After they killed him, they reportedly also mutilated his face to send a message. His bullet-riddled body arrived back in Livingston with

[10] *Alabama State Journal*, Aug. 9, 1874, Aug. 18, 1874.
[11] *New York Tribune*, Aug. 24, 1874, page 4.

large slashes on his cheeks and his tongue cut out, a symbolic act to discourage further blacks from future political participation. Ivey's wife Maria was not notified of her husband's death until his body had been laying on the railroad platform for nearly an hour. Ivey's friends commented that his body was so mangled that the only party of him that resembled a human being "was his forehead."[12] The "war of races" had officially begun according to Arthur Bingham.[13] To the *Meridian Mercury*, however, Ivey's death was just another example of a well-deserved slaying of a Republican.[14]

John Forsyth's *Mobile Register* meanwhile accused Ivey of threatening whites, and promised to combat any further Republican politicking with similar violence. Ivey had been "riding through a peaceful village, armed with a double-barreled shotgun," with large numbers of militaristic blacks. His behavior was met in turn by similar incendiary actions from whites. Forsyth proclaimed that the white people of Alabama had endured enough of the state-sanctioned violence enjoyed by black Republicans. Declaring that the "sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," Forsyth promised that white violence would keep pace with black violence. "The white people do not mean to be threatened or intimidated, as they have been before. They have eaten dirt enough to last them a century," he vented. No longer would ballot boxes be peacefully controlled by "negro mobs" and "carpetbag bullies." A Republican victory in November was certainly possible, Forsyth conceded, but only through the most intense fight Alabama had ever seen. In closing, he offered a clear endorsement of violence as a political tactic. "If out of this the *Selma Republican*, or any other radical sheet can show the *Mobile Register* counsels violence, let

[12] *Affairs in Alabama*, 503; *Alabama State Journal*, Sept. 5, 1874; *Report to Inquire*, 510-11.
[13] *Alabama State Journal*, Sept. 23, 1874.
[14] *Mobile Daily Register*, Sept. 2, 1874; Alan Trelease observed that official Klan operations were frequently directed against black and Republican railroad workers in Sumter and Greene counties, including railway mail agents. They presented an enticing target due to their status as benefactors of federal patronage. See Trelease, *White Terror*, 303. For the intersection of railroads, violence, and race, see Scott. R. Nelson, *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

them make the most of it," he stated defiantly.[15] For Forsyth and other Democrats, black participation in a corrupt political system subverted regular order, forcing them to resort to such drastic measures.

Ivey's killers continued to patrol Sumter County in search of their political enemies. They targeted Bob Reed, a black leader, and Judge James Abraham, one of the few white Republicans left in the county. On a train car just south of Livingston, Abraham overheard armed men discussing their plans to kill Reed. Jeremiah Haralson, an African American candidate for the first Congressional District, traveled on the Alabama & Chattanooga Railroad en route to Mobile for a scheduled speech soon after Ivey's slaying. When the train reached York, a gang once again flagged it and forced it stop. Two men, one armed with a double-barreled shotgun and the other with a large cane, roamed the cars, "hunting around for radicals." "They had heard that they were traveling around," and "wanted to know what they were going to do." The conductor shooed Haralson into the mail car where he would not be discovered. Haralson evaded capture, and probably death, to be successfully elected in November.[16]

Charles Hays, congressman for the Fourth District encompassing western Alabama, felt compelled to highlight the barbarity of west Alabama politics on the national stage. Before the war, Hays had owned a plantation with a large number of slaves, and had also fought for the Confederacy. He joined the Republican Party after the end of the war, however, and became a reviled scalawag. Outraged at the violence emanating from his district, Hays had a frank and revealing conversation with fellow Republican congressman Joseph Hawley of Connecticut. The details of the atrocities intrigued Hawley, owner of the *Hartford Daily Courant*. Hawley requested that Hays pen a letter expounding on all of the instances of violence in order to silence

---

[15] *Affairs in Alabama*, 477-78.
[16] Ibid., 763-64; *Report to Inquire*, 158.

the Democratic charge that Republicans had manufactured the controversy for political gain. Hawley printed the correspondence in the *Courant*, and it soon garnered attention from national newspapers from both sides of the aisle.

Congressman Hays crafted a picture of terror. He included a description of a placard found at a crossroads in Sumter County. Alongside a picture of a coffin, an inscription read: “All ‘niggers,’ white and black will take warning from the fate of Billings and Ivey. They were killed by unknown hands, which will never be known. These hands will destroy again.” All those who wanted to avoid death needed to sign the pact of the white men. The threatening message came complete with the signature of “the invisible monarch,” who governed all matters in the county. Hays informed Hawley of violence and ostracism practiced by Democrats in Hale, Pickens, Choctaw, and Sumter counties. The *Hartford Courant* found the “tone of the southern newspapers in their comments about the killings” to be indicative of their embrace of this strategy.[17]

Hays took some artistic liberties, however, in what would come to be known as the “Hays-Hawley letter.” While he did accurately render the circumstances surrounding the Billings and Ivey murders, he exaggerated his claims on other matters. A rumored massacre of African Americans in Choctaw County later proved to be nothing more than speculation. Walter Lipscomb, a Marengo County man whom Hays alleged had been assassinated, turned up very much alive after the letter was disseminated. Additionally, Hays contended that five more blacks were killed in Sumter County on account of their politics, which was eventually dispelled by the press. He incited a great deal of criticism as a result, mostly from Democrats. W.W. Screws issued an exhaustive rebuttal in the *Advertiser*, as did several other west Alabama editors. The

[17] *Affairs in Alabama*, 1257, 1261.

controversy reached New York City, where Charles Dana of the conservative *New York Sun* chided Hays for fear mongering. A correspondent from the *New York Tribune* conducted his own investigation, and found Sumter County to be relatively peaceful, devoid of the alarm that Hays had chronicled.[18]

Alabamians learned about the brutality in Sumter through various printings of the correspondence, as well as through newspapers in general. Benjamin Thomas of nearby Marengo County remembered that the campaign was relatively quiet until the killings of Billings and Ivey. He also recalled that newspapers talked of a spirit of "terror and alarm" in Sumter County. Henry Clayton, a circuit court judge, cited newspapers explicitly when discussing his awareness of the strife in Sumter County. William G. Little, a state senator from Sumter, only learned about the intimidation of James Bliss by reading the Hays letter. James Bliss, a Republican candidate for the legislature, had been visited at his home by a group of masked men, who demanded that he drop out of the race. Little read the report in the *Montgomery Advertiser*, which had published the Hays-Hawley dispatch.[19] The much-maligned letter spread through the state's active print culture, raising awareness of the situation in west Alabama.

In Mobile, one African American reacted to the news with special anger, inciting quite a stir in the pages of the *Register*. William H. Curran, the operator of the city's animal pound, spoke to a crowd of Republicans on a street corner late one night. Curran swore that if any blacks were harmed on election day, he would "wade up to this boot-tops in democratic blood." He also encouraged blacks to organize in order to defeat the Democrats at the polls. The owner of the local grocery at the intersection described Curran as clutching a newspaper, reading an article

[18] This discussion of the Hays-Hawley letter draws heavily upon William W. Rogers, *Black Belt Scalawag: Charles Hays and the Southern Republicans in the Era of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 108-9, 112-15.
[19] *Affairs in Alabama*, 243-45, 842, 1177.

that discussed the recent killings. He grew increasingly agitated and demonstrative as he read aloud from the paper.[20] In retaliation, John Forsyth pointed to the speech as exactly the type that exacerbated tensions. Curran's speech inflamed the "ignorant minds" of his audience and goaded them to unify against whites. Forsyth saw this as just the latest incarnation of a "systematic plan" to "excite the negro to deeds of violence all over the South." He counseled the white men of Mobile to be ready for any possibility. "To avoid danger," he exclaimed, "you must be ready to meet it!"[21] While the account of Curran's speech could have been tainted by attempts to smear Republicans, it is no doubt apparent that blacks in Mobile planned to meet the possible threat head-on.

Democratic rhetoric continued to escalate. Dallas County Democrats held a meeting in Selma in mid-September where former Confederate governor Thomas Watts delivered an acerbic lecture. The ex-rebel longed for the days before the war when he owned over 200 slaves. He mocked Republican politicians and figureheads, and quoted from the infamous Dred Scott decision. Watts then condoned the actions of white Democrats in Louisiana, where the notorious Battle of Liberty Place had taken place in New Orleans. He claimed to not wish harm for blacks in the state, only the carpetbaggers and scalawags in party leadership positions. "At New Orleans," he explained, "they picked out and killed these white rascals who lead the poor black dupes, and so we will do here." The crowd erupted in adulation after these remarks, per the reporter from the *State Journal*. "White men, you must wake up," he continued, "We cannot and will not take everything." The *Selma Times* wished that every man in Alabama could have been privy to Watts's address.[22]

---

[20] *Affairs in Alabama*, 481.
[21] Ibid., 476.
[22] *Alabama State Journal*, Sept. 19, 1874.

The arrest of Billings's alleged killers in October triggered another discussion of the history of organized violence in Alabama. U.S. Marshals stormed into a Sumter County Democratic meeting and apprehended Steve Renfro and Charlie Bullock for violation of the Enforcement Acts. Renfro was leader of the Klan in the Sumter County area who had fled to Texas after the federal crackdown in the early 1870s. Now he had returned, the *State Journal* averred, to assume command of the new White League. Federal marshals moved the prisoners from Livingston to Mobile, where they awaited trial before the U.S. Commissioner of that district. The accused found the citizens of Mobile to be most hospitable, however. Late one evening, a group of Mobilians lingered outside the jail, serenading the prisoners that sat inside with. The *Mobile Register* insisted that the men were of good character, and would no doubt be vindicated by the jury.[23]

Victims of the Sumter County Klan leapt at the chance to share their evidence. Arthur Bingham obtained correspondence from Dr. Jerard Chotteau, a former resident of Sumter, who identified Renfro as the mastermind of local terrorism. Chotteau added that Renfro had been arrested after reading about his trial in the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*. Breathing a sigh of relief from Illinois, he wrote to U.S. Marshal Robert Healy in Montgomery to give his knowledge of Renfro's past. The Ku-Klux captain and a posse of his followers had endeavored to kill Chotteau and his family several times. A German immigrant fell victim to a stray bullet on one such occasion. Renfo "was the head man who shot, in broad daylight, two negroes close to Livingston." In August of 1868, Klan members set fire to Chotteau's house while his family cowered inside. A black woman in Chotteau's employ managed to rescue them from the burning structure. After the attack, Chotteau fled the state and settled near Chicago.

[23] *Alabama State Journal*, Oct. 4, 1874, Oct. 6, 1874; *Affairs in Alabama*, 1124.

The possibility of the Ku Klux Klan reincarnating as the White League unnerved Republicans. The cryptic organization shared many similarities with the Ku Klux Klan and the Knights of the White Camelia. Emanating from neighboring Louisiana, White Leagues cropped up throughout Alabama from 1872 to 1874.[24] Bingham used the *State Journal* to lead his readers to connect the Klan and the White Leagues. "The Ku-Klux Order, established by the Rebellious Democracy in 1865," he announced, "are now the real veritable White League organization. The latter have the same grips, signs, etc., of the Old Kuklux Order, and the same objects and aims." The constitution of the White League, which Bingham had received from a former member, painted the picture of a vicious, clandestine society. Members swore to "follow upon the track of the scalawag's blood," and to keep secret, upon pain of death, the "plans and movements of this society." They pledged to regard opponents of "the white man's race and of the white man's government" as perpetual enemies. Bingham prompted his audience to associate the language of the White League oaths with the "utterances of many Democratic organs in this campaign." In the same issue, he revealed that he had been personally targeted by the Sumter County White League. One member purportedly said "it would afford him more pleasure to kill the *Journal* editor than to kill the negro Tom Ivy [sic]."[25]

Other information about the White League circulated throughout the state press. Phillip Joseph, an African American journalist and editor of both the *Montgomery Watchman* and *Mobile Herald*, acquired a constitution from Mobile's Eighth Ward. It read "that they would give no employment to any one who voted the radical ticket, as they term the republican ticket down there, or negro ticket." Joseph clarified that these sentiments were embraced by the Democratic

[24] Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 708.
[25] *Alabama State Journal*, Oct. 14, 1874, Oct. 18, 1874; *Affairs in Alabama*, 238. The Alabama White League was nowhere near as organized as similar groups in Louisiana, which makes diagnosing official activity all the more difficult. See Rable, *But There Was No* Peace, 132-43.

Party in Mobile as well. Bingham attested especially to a permeation of White League sentiment in Democratic newspapers. The oaths that he printed in the *Journal* mirrored others that demanded white solidarity and denunciation of African Americans. About six weeks before the election, "nearly every day the papers were teeming with such things."[26] This active print culture led to what one Alabamian called "a very exciting and warm campaign."[27]

Responding to threats both real and imagined, Republicans throughout the state appealed to Governor Lewis to dispatch federal troops to protect their lives and political prospects. W. B. Franklin of Escambia County implored Lewis to declare martial law in his county and others to counteract "Ku-Klux" activity. Civil law had no bearing in Escambia, he claimed. If no action was taken, Republicans would not be able to cast their votes at public polls come November. He also outlined several instances of violence orchestrated by whites against blacks for the purpose of intimidation. The lives of "true white Republicans" depended on decisive action from Governor Lewis; the presence of federal troops would do much to dissuade further Democratic disturbances. Franklin implied that the governor's reelection depended on these votes as well. He was proud to see Lewis's leading the Republican ticket in the *State Journal*, and claimed to be a close friend of Arthur Bingham.[28]

In Eufaula, Judge Keils described his county as "under a perfect reign of terror" inaugurated by mob violence. The judge had received a warning to not return to Eufaula from Union Springs, lest he risk a bloody confrontation. He and his party decided to defy the threat, and arrived to find a raucous crowd of Democrats waiting for them at the train depot. Only the appearance of 150 African Americans managed to keep the peace. Democrats, professing to be

[26] *Affairs in Alabama*, 12, 238.
[27] *Report to Inquire,* 98.
[28] W.B. Franklin to David Lewis, Sept. 12, 1874, Governor David Lewis Papers, ADAH.

the “best citizens” of Barbour County, refused to curtail their use of violence. Keils notified the governor that another black man, known to be “earnest in his politics” had been killed in the county. A group of over ten Democrats had surrounded his house and murdered him while he was unarmed. Keils requested that an additional platoon of troops to be stationed in Eufaula, which he thought would help quell the disorder. “Mob law has prevailed here long enough,” he stressed. Frustrated, he resolved to “take the bull by the horns,” and personally ensure that the law protected innocent black citizens. Demonstrating the volatile condition of politics in Barbour, Keils received a message of yet another possible homicide even as he composed his letter to the governor. A mob had absconded with the main witness in the recent killing, he wrote, retreating into the countryside to punish him for his testimony. “For the sake of life, liberty, and law,” Keils asked, “will Gov. Lewis declare martial law in this county?” No other response would do, for the the justice system in Barbour was broken and the county sheriff was, in Keils’s words, “worthless.”[29]

Alabama’s representatives in Washington girded for a violent election day, and tried to ensure that their constituency would be protected. Senator George Spencer informed Marshal Robert Healy of the increased federal troop presence that he had secured. One company of cavalry would be stationed in the hotbed of Livingston in Sumter County, while another would be nearby in Hale County. Other infantry units departed for Tuscaloosa, Opelika, and Mobile, while the unit in Eufaula stayed put. The total number of troops escalated to 679, spread across thirty-two polling sites.[30] Healy took command of these forces, which in the words of Spencer were to be used to “secure, order, peace, and protection at the polls for all people and good citizens, to avail themselves of the elective franchise, without intimidation or hindrance.”

---

[29] E. M. Keils to David Lewis, August 25, 1874, Governor David Lewis Papers, ADAH.
[30] Wiggins, *Scalawag*, 101. For troop presence in early Reconstruction periods, see Downs, *After Appomattox*.

Spencer underscored the importance of the election and Healy's role specifically. He hoped that Alabama would be spared the "horrors of revolution and bloodshed," and expressed confidence that Healy would deliver a peaceful election, and by association, a Republican victory.[31]

While they felt threatened, Republicans nonetheless remained confident that they would emerge victorious in November. Less than a week from election day, the *State Journal* revived its promises of prosperity and predicted the continuance of "good times under Republican rule." According to Bingham, "Lawlessness and laziness combined is the cause of all the 'hard times' that afflict Alabama." This was chiefly due to Democrats, who opted to harass black and white Republicans, neglecting their crops and other activities that might improve the economic fortunes of the state. A reversal of fortune would be impossible under a Democratic administration, for the new governor would have benefitted from the mischief of the "Democratic oath-bound outlaws in Alabama." In order to secure the endurance of economic growth and opportunity, the "wicked, extravagant, disloyal, government-hating" Democratic party had to be defeated at the polls. Furthermore, the Republican Party enjoyed a sheer demographic advantage, assuming no electoral foul play plagued the polling places.[32]

Yet Democrats had other plans in mind. In Mobile, electioneerers encouraged whites to carry the election by force. One candidate for the legislature guaranteed to lead the crowd in the fight if necessary. Joseph Hodsen, a co-editor of Forsyth's *Mobile Register*, counseled voters to not fear the additional federal troops in the city, for they were only there to bolster the chances of the "negro party." Hodsen proclaimed that Democrats had encountered the army before and were not afraid to do so again. Other candidates advised vandalism of police stations and municipal

---

[31] George Spencer to Robert W. Healy, Oct. 3, 1874, Robert W. Healy Papers, Auburn University Ralph B. Draughon Library, Special Collections.
[32] *Alabama State Journal*, Oct. 27 1874, Oct. 28, 1874.

buildings, daring federal authorities to arrest them. The Saturday before the election, a procession of the "white man's government" paraded through the city streets, arrayed with banners proscribing that "white men shall control this country," and demanding a "free election and free fight." Emboldened by the rhetoric of their party leaders, white Democrats prepared for combat.[33]

Mobilians thus voted under the shadow of conflict. Rumors of a potential riot percolated throughout the city. In an attempt to curtail any disturbances, Mayor C.F. Moulton authorized a volunteer militia force and placed it under the command of the Democratic Party campaign treasurer. Mobile's county sheriff deputized scores of whites, many of whom patrolled polling places on horseback. These squads took advantage of every opportunity to arrest black voters. For much of the day, affairs remained peaceful, absent the killing of a black repeater voter by the Democratic deputies.[34]

Late in the afternoon, however, Allen Alexander, a noted black leader in the city, upended the relative tranquility. Alexander, a former slave, had entered politics shortly after the beginning of Reconstruction. He was considered by Mayor Moulton to be an intelligent man, who could also be a "reckless, bold, daring fellow" when it came to asserting his political rights.[35] Mobile police arrested Alexander on a number of occasions, but never convicted him of any crime. He decamped to Baldwin County, serving as a justice of the peace for a short time. He later obtained a position as inspector of the customhouse in Mobile thanks to his connections in the Republican Party. Factional disputes resulted in Alexander losing his post, however, which embittered him towards certain members of the party. Demonstrating the complex nature of

---

[33] *Affairs in Alabama*, 10.
[34] Fitzgerald, *Urban Emancipation*, 212-13; *Report to Inquire*, 38.
[35] *Affairs in Alabama*, 454.

Mobile politics, Alexander opposed civil rights legislation, perhaps out of loyalty to powerful white allies.[36]

Alexander led a column of several hundred African Americans marching across town to the Seventh Ward on election day. The group approached from the Fourth Ward, where they found the polling place blocked by Democratic challengers. They marched down Government Street toward the courthouse, armed with little more than sticks. Democratic couriers on horseback spread the word of their movements, and a mob soon formed in anticipation of a confrontation. Mayor Moulton rushed from his position at the post office to arrest Alexander before any fighting could occur, but did not beat the arrival of a squad of Democratic deputies. When the procession reached the steps of the courthouse, the county sheriff ordered him arrested. Members of the posse of deputies shouted, “Shoot him; kill him; the damned son of a bitch.” A scuffle commenced as the deputies forced Alexander into a carriage. One black man attempted to free Alexander from their grasp, only to be punched in the face and shot. A bevy of shots then erupted from the deputies’ guns, killing another black man in the crowd and wounding many others. The deputies “hallooed and yelled,” firing their pistols in the air to disperse the crowd.[37]

The riot had the effect of eliminating the black vote in the Seventh Ward. After Alexander’s arrest and the ensuing ruckus, Republican organizers attempted to persuade the crowd to stay and cast their ballots, but to no avail. According to Phillip Joseph, the men refused to go anywhere near the polling place. Joseph returned to the scene by himself, and witnessed the beating of a white Republican at the hands of the deputies. Over 200 Democrats surrounded him, yelling, “Give him hell, give him hell, the damned radical.” As a consequence, Attorney General

---

[36] Fitzgerald, *Urban Emancipation*, 234.
[37] *Affairs in Alabama*, 346, 451, 587; Fitzgerald, *Urban Emancipation*, 213.

George Turner estimated that Republicans lost over one thousand votes in Mobile, most of those coming from the largest bloc of black voters in the city, the Seventh Ward.[38]

African American solidarity elicited a similar response from whites in Eufaula. On the eve of the election, Henry Frazier gathered 500 fellow black Republicans five miles from town. Frazier had been canvassing with the men throughout the campaign, and now organized for a victory. At eight o'clock the next morning, Frazier led the men into Eufaula. He counseled them not to bring any firearms, but a few men brandished large sticks for their protection. Judge Keils had told the men that the Democrats in Eufaula "would not shoot a frog." They were met at the outskirts of town by a Eufaula policeman, who upon seeing that they had no weapons, allowed them to proceed to the ballot box. The black men voted systematically throughout the morning, filing forward in an orderly line. By noon, one third of the men had voted. At that time, a white man threatened Frazier's group, predicting, "In about an hour's time we will have a frolic."

Shortly after the ominous utterance, hostilities roiled the calm. As was customary, those who had already voted, both white and black, continued to linger about the polling place. Shortly after noon, a young black man and his father attempted to enter and cast their votes, when they were stopped by members of Frazier's camp. They felt that the young man, whom Frazier described as a "boy," was not old enough to vote. His father took umbrage, and replied, "If he is old enough to vote the democratic ticket, he is old enough to vote the republican ticket." A band of Democrats grabbed the boy and pushed him into the alley, where they guaranteed to pay him for his vote. Black Republicans followed them, crowding into the alley. The competing parties spilled into the street, "yelling and whooping." Milas Lawrence, a black Republican, badgered the boy, incredulous that he would even think of voting Democratic. In the middle of the fracas,

[38] *Report to Inquire*, 39.

a white man pulled out his bowie knife and stabbed Lawrence in the shoulder. Bleeding, he staggered down the street away from the mob. “Shoot him!” rang the cries from the whites. One Democrat drew his pistol and fired, and “in a twinkling of an eye,” the street was filled with smoke and hot lead.[39]

The well-organized Democratic force fired for nearly a half hour using rifles commandeered from the city armory, which had been sent there on orders from Governor Lewis. Snipers perched on the armory’s second story platform trained their guns down on the fleeing voters. Other shooters positioned themselves across the street from the polling place. The black voters broke and ran in different directions, pursued by the Democratic aggressors. In the chaos and confusion, whites and blacks suffered casualties regardless of their political party. A single white Democrat was killed, along with a black Democrat and a black Republican, while many more were wounded. One wounded man died in the woods outside of Eufaula, his body discovered days later by those “observing the buzzards.”[40] Marshal Robert Healy tallied nine dead early the next morning, all but one of whom were black. The federal troops, about whose presence the Democrats were much incensed, proved to be ineffectual. Deputy marshals prodded the company commander to take action to prevent the riot, but he stalled, opting to study the nature of subpoenas in a law dictionary. He wired the commander of a detachment in Spring Hill, eighteen miles from Eufaula, to keep his troops far away from any possible disturbance.[41]

Judge Keils supervised the election in Spring Hill by appointment of the U.S. circuit court. Probably the most visible Republican figure in Barbour County, he had become a particular target for the militant wing of the Democratic Party. A week before the election, Keils

---

[39] *Affairs in Alabama*, 214, 979.
[40] Ibid., 215.
[41] Ibid. 1278; Wiggins, *Scalawag*, 100-1.

gave a speech in Spring Hill as a candidate for city judge. Green Burch, an African American, told Keils that a large cache of weapons was hidden next to a general store close by. Burch confronted the store owner about the purpose behind the acquisition of the guns, to which the man responded that they were to maintain the peace. Around eleven in the morning of November 4, Keils heard the distinct sound of gunfire. A cadre of around one hundred Democrats did as well, and hastened to the makeshift armory to retrieve their firearms. They patrolled the streets of Spring Hill until nightfall, some brandishing a gun in each hand. Black voters refused to be intimidated, however, and "stood their ground well that day."

Keils closed the door of the polling place at five in the evening, per state law. He and two clerks stayed inside, tallying votes and completing the necessary paperwork. Keils's teenage son William was also in the room, as he had accompanied his father for the purpose of protecting him. The boisterous crowd made several attempts to barge in, so Keils barricaded the door with heavy planks. When one of the clerks opened the door to leave, however, the mob finally broke through. They knocked over a lantern, enveloping the room in darkness, and "commenced a promiscuous firing." Three shots peppered the wall above Keils's head as he and his son frantically sought cover. For several minutes, the Democratic attackers fired into the room, and screamed their intentions to kill the judge. The teenage boy's hand gripped his father's shoulder when three bullets entered his thigh and one punctured his stomach. He told his father that he was "shot to pieces." Once the shooting slackened, Keils escaped. Four black men found his son's body and carried him to the town doctor, where he died two days later. The next morning, Keils returned to find the ballot box emptied on the floor, its contents scattered and burned. He lashed out at the commander of federal troops in Barbour, considering his refusal to intervene responsible for his son's death and the eradication of Spring Hill ballots. Keils opted to move to

Washington, D.C. a month later, in hopes of securing a semblance of justice for the people of Barbour County.[42]

Irregularities of a less violent nature plagued other voting places throughout the state. In Opelika, Republicans and Democrats placed their ballots in separate boxes. When the time came to tally them, the Democratic election supervisors discarded the Republican box entirely. Polls in Russell County closed early or opened not at all. In Bullock County, supervisors rejected over 700 ballots due to an alleged paperwork discrepancy. Meanwhile, Democrats from Georgia crossed the state line to vote in eastern Alabama precincts. Democratic repeaters rode a train from Montgomery to Columbus, stopping at each successive town to vote. In Girard, across the Chattahooche River from Columbus, Georgia, the repeaters triggered a scuffle. Students from the college at Auburn, clad in school attire, traveled to Girard to repeat. "They were very drunk, and voted repeatedly," until the polls closed.[43]

Democratic organs rejoiced upon hearing the reports from polls. The *Eufaula Morning News* remarked, "Several killed and many others hurt – some badly – but none of our friends among them. The white man's goose hangs high. Three cheers for Eufaula."[44] The *Eufaula Times* regretted that Keils's son was dead, "but would say, what all must know, that the shot that struck him was intended for his father, and that no one intended to harm little Willie." The *Mobile Register* heralded, "White Supremacy Sustained." White men had acted as one, and had swept the competition. Jeremiah Haralson read about the riot in Barbour County in the newspapers, and professed sadness over the killing of the judge's son. In his mind, the brutality kept would-be voters away, and handed the Democrats the majority.[45]

---

[42] *Affairs in Alabama*, 3-7; *Report to Inquire*, 588.
[43] Wiggins, *Scalawag*, 97; *Report to Inquire*, 516-18.
[44] *Affairs in Alabama*, 1278.
[45] *Mobile Daily Register*, Nov. 4, 1874; *Report to Inquire*, 156.

The goal that Democrats set out in February to accomplish, to foment a government based firmly in white supremacy, had been met. George Houston won the contest for governor, besting incumbent David Lewis by 13,000 votes. Lewis managed to retain a majority of counties in the Black Belt, including Sumter, Montgomery, and Russell, while Mobile and Barbour counties went for Houston. In the "white counties," however, Houston outpaced Lewis by over 20,000. As one historian has observed, the total number of voters in 1874 increased by 33,000 from the total in 1872. Most of these were whites whom the Democratic messages of anti-miscegenation and white superiority managed to animate. Indeed, the first vote during Reconstruction for many white men was to bring about its demise.[46]

When turnout was high and well-organized, as in Mobile and Eufaula, Democrats resorted to violence. The aggressive, racist tone adopted by Democratic newspapers encouraged their constituency's willingness to resort to violence in order to disenfranchise blacks and initiate a white man's government. Fears of mixed schools and intermarriage proved to be effective motivation for the Democratic Party. The party's political leaders and newspaper editors construed the upcoming election as one between the white and black races, one that carried more importance than simply the possession of political office. In the end, the ability of the Democrats to animate angry whites against the Republicans proved decisive. The end of Republican Reconstruction in the state ushered in an era of Democratic rule that would last for the better part of the next century.

[46] Wiggins, *Scalawag*, 97-98.

Chapter 3: Retrenchment and the Death Throes of Reconstruction, 1875-1877

The concerted effort put forth in the campaign of 1874 clinched Democratic majorities in the legislature and secured the governor's mansion, but guaranteed little else. Republicans, anxious about the path the Democratic Party would choose, attempted to assign blame to those within the party for the reversal. They turned to the federal government for help, which eventually arrived in the form of a congressional committee. Undaunted, Democrats proceeded to enact their program to restore Alabama to their ideal of its former glory, before the days of radical Republicanism. Economic retrenchment, tightening of voting laws and gerrymandering, along with a new state constitution, highlighted their agenda. Throughout the political battles of 1875 and 1876, the press remained a principal player in enacting conservative ends.

A parade in Montgomery shortly after the election exemplified the sheer joy Democrats felt after redeeming the state from the "rule and ruin of Radicalism." The procession filled the streets of the capital for much of the evening. The lights from countless windows and thousands of Chinese lanterns "shed their mild halo over the scene." Banners from various clubs and local organizations displayed slogans ranging from the triumphant: "White Supremacy Forever," "Alabama Has Broken Her Chains;" to the macabre: "The glorious old *Montgomery Advertiser*: It un-Screwed the handcuffs," "Too smart for that forty acres and a mule." Speeches from Democratic organizers rang through the city for much of the night. W.W. Screws guessed that if there had been more speakers, the crowd would have "listened and cheered all night." The day

should be remembered by the people of Montgomery, Screws announced, "for never before in her eventful history was a such a magnificent demonstration witnessed on her streets."[1]

In the wake of the Democratic landslide, national newspapers viewed the results as a repudiation of President U.S. Grant and Republican rule. Democrats gained control of the House of Representatives for the first time during Reconstruction, and chipped away at the Republican majority in the Senate. In the nation's capital, the *Washington Republican* decided that the party had been beaten not only by the opposition, but by its allies. The paper suggested that the leadership of the party rid itself of those who used the Republican banner to prop up their financial endeavors. Chicago's *Inter-Ocean*, which had faithfully covered the trial of Billings's accused murderers, saw the situation more gravely. The Republicans' loss of the House was "calamitous beyond estimate." Its editor believed that Democratic victories throughout the nation would "serve to embolden the rebel outlaws of the South to fresh acts of barbarity upon Union blacks and whites alike." The *New York Tribune* meanwhile seemed to blame the loss on Republicans who voted Democratic out of spite toward President Grant, while the *New York Times* predicted a "stormy era" ahead for national politics. Republican initiatives "on questions of finance, reconstruction, and the negro, and the constitutional amendments of the same period, are not beyond the reach of a Democratic majority in Congress and the country," the *Times* cautioned. If the Republican Party did not reverse course and revise their appeal to voters, Samuel Tilden would be the most likely successor to Grant.[2]

In Alabama, some Republicans rejoiced in the fact that the election had not been a complete capitulation. Both Charles Hays and James T. Rapier won reelection to the House of Representatives. On the state level, thirty-three new black legislators constituted the largest

---

[1] *Montgomery Advertiser*, Nov. 11, 1874.
[2] *Alabama State Journal*, Nov. 10, 1874.

number of African Americans in the state house at any point during Reconstruction. The party also retained crucial judicial positions at county courthouses.[3] Arthur Bingham viewed the election optimistically, hoping that it would allow the party to jettison members that did not truly ascribe to Republican principles. One Republican styled carpetbagging entrepreneurs as dead wood, ready to be unloaded. Animus against alleged northern opportunists was palpable, and many in the state looked to native Republicans to take the policymaking initiative away from congressman and Washington bureaucrats. The rift between scalawags and carpetbaggers thus widened, contributing to the feeling that one historian has stylized as a feeling of "total shipwreck" within the party.[4]

The change of hands in governance more practically meant that the state printing contract was again up for grabs. As state printer, one of the state's major newspapers took on the added duty of publishing government materials: acts passed by the legislature, Alabama state laws, and reports from the Supreme Court. Bingham's *State Journal* had enjoyed the post for the past two years, a position that printers considered more of a badge of distinction than a lucrative business venture. John Forsyth felt that four printing offices were large enough to take on the contract, including his *Register* and Screws's *Montgomery Advertiser*. The *Selma Times* also joined the competition. Democratic editors hurried to Montgomery in the wake of the election to make their case as the most well-suited operation. Bingham scoffed at the "great scramble over the sugar plum." The *State Journal* would support one of its fellow newspapermen for the "the glory, and honor, and immorality of the Public Printer of Alabama," but declined to reveal its choice.

---

[3]William W. Rogers, Robert D. Ward, Leah R. Atkins, and Wayne Flynt, *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), 264.
[4] Wiggins, *Scalawag*, 102.

Disagreements over economic issues nonetheless continued to divide the Democratic Party, especially when efforts at retrenchment aimed at the printing contract. Robert McKee, who heavily emphasized the debt issue in the previous campaign, led his cohort once again in a push to eliminate government spending. Early in December, the *Argus* called for the legislature to abolish the office of state printer. The *Greensboro Beacon* agreed, stating, "Retrenchment and reform should be our party watchwords." John Forsyth disagreed with the New Departure stance, and felt that the current rate paid to the official printer was wholly insufficient. The contract still held true to monetary rates from 1865, which Forsyth felt left the printer shortchanged in comparison to other government contracts. He called for a repeal of the law, and hoped that the legislature would grant the job to the lowest bidder. In the end, a provision mandating that the printing be completed in Montgomery eliminated the *Register* from contention, and granted it to W.W. Screws. Democrats may have "redeemed" the state, but as the fight over the contract demonstrated, they were by no means completely unified.[5]

Republicans remained divided as well, however, particularly along racial lines. The *State Journal* advised African American members of the party to examine their own rhetoric, which might have supplied eager Democrats with fodder for the race issue. In North Alabama, Bingham alleged, Democratic orators cast the election along the color line, but only because, "The utterances of the foolish slangwhangers in the Equal Rights Association held in this city last July furnished them with their stock and trade." Bingham characterized the resolutions from the association as "foolish talk" that only led to the kindling of "race-antipathies." Uneducated whites, who composed the majority of the northern hill country, were easily swayed by Democratic papers and speeches that appealed to their aversion to racial equality. Now,

[5] *Alabama State Journal*, Nov. 14, 1874; *Mobile Daily Register*, Dec. 4, 1874.

Democrats proposed to "keep the negro a negro," returning the black man "to the field where he belongs." Bingham discerned that the ruling interests of the Democratic Party needed the labor of African Americans, and proposed to keep them in the state for that purpose. In closing, he beseeched, "Let the Negro think, and think with painful interest and earnestness, over the perilous situation in which he finds himself and all his race!"[6]

Bingham's advice, while harsh, was pertinent, for Democrats followed up on their pre-election promises to suppress black Republicans. Willis Perry, an African-American sharecropper in Lee County, described how Jim Williams, his employer, withheld his wages due to his political leanings. Williams initially promised Perry "half a hog and half a cow" if he voted Democratic. After learning that he supported the "radical ticket," Williams refused to pay him the $250 prescribed by his contract. He then expelled Perry and his three children from his farm. Perry testified that he heard of other similar situations that transpired on other farms nearby. Benjamin Cole, a Wacooche Valley sharecropper, heard that his plot had been rented out to another farmer, and thought it best to seek employment elsewhere. His employer told him that "radicals and democrats couldn't agree together." Dallas B. Smith, a merchant in Opelika, indicated that he had heard of "at least one hundred" black Republicans who had lost their jobs since casting their ballots.[7] Vindictive Democrats used their economic leverage in an attempt to manipulate the politics of African-Americans. A good number of people, such as Willis Perry, resisted only to run up against the harsh reality of the post-war economy in Alabama.

Alabama blacks realized the dire straits a Democratic victory left them in, and began to explore all available options. On December 1, a "Convention of the Colored People of Alabama" met in Montgomery to evaluate a future course of action. Philip Joseph of Mobile acted as

---

[6] *Alabama State Journal*, Nov. 8, 1874.
[7] *Affairs in Alabama*, 130, 180, 135

president of the committee, which consisted of delegates from forty of the state's most populous African American counties. A memorial to President Grant pleaded for federal intervention, as they had "never enjoyed, except partially, imperfectly, and locally," their rights as citizens. The main address of the body, written by Joseph, condemned White League groups for killing or intimidating both blacks and their white Republican allies. They also recognized the power of the press to impact the public's perception of their plight. Some national newspapers had "reiterated through their influential journals all the falsehoods that had been coined and retailed by the democratic press of Alabama." Joseph commended the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* and the *New York Republic* as exceptions to the rule. Finally, the organization of an emigration association ventured to create a colony in the west, which would exist as a "nucleus" around which the African Americans of Alabama could live. Joseph asked President Grant if the constitutional rights of blacks were real or "a mockery," if they were "to be freemen in fact or only in name."[8] Announcements of black emigration from west and north Alabama populated the pages of the *State Journal* for the duration of the spring.[9]

Democrats meanwhile extended their policy of economic proscription to public offices. Local party elements aimed to block entry to the relatively small number of new Republican officials. To accomplish this, they denied elected Republicans their bonds, amounts of money or statements of property required to enter public office. The Democratic legislature passed a measure requiring all "sureties," or guarantors, of bonds to reside in the county of the elected officer, and to be valued well above the amount of the actual bond itself. Additionally, any property outside the county boundaries would not count towards any calculation of wealth.

---

[8] *Affairs in Alabama*, 1114-17; House of Representatives, *Civil Rights in Alabama. Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting a Memorial of a Convention of Colored Citizens Assembled in the City of Montgomery, Ala., on December 2, 1874,* 43d C., 2d sess., Ex. Doc. 46.
[9] *Alabama State Journal*, Feb. 5, 1875.

County grand juries, often Democratic, inspected the veracity of both the guarantors and the candidates, but ultimately, the decision to approve the bond rested in the office of judge probate. Some county courts muddled the details of the bond, secretly mandating it to be paid in a two-week time period. Unaware Republicans often were not informed of this arbitrary limit, and were disqualified from taking office. The overarching intent was to force Republicans to forfeit their offices, which would then be occupied by Democrats.

Democrats wielded this power in an openly partisan manner. A Wilcox County grand jury set the Republican sheriff-elect's bond at $40,000, over twice the amount required of his predecessor. After he managed to pay the sum, the grand jury levied an additional bond of $50,000. When he failed to meet the added demand, the Democrats nominated their candidate, and set his bond at only $15,000. In Pike County, five men from the Democratic Executive Committee attempted to deter sureties from vouching for the Republican probate judge. They succeeding in convincing all but one man, whose vouching was sufficient to confirm the new judge. In Bullock County, meanwhile, one judge probate single handedly stonewalled a bevy of qualified Republicans. The county's twenty white Republicans struggled to raise money to aid one another. The several thousand black Republicans were not able to help, for a provision of the bond bill set forth regulations regarding minimum property ownership and personal wealth of sureties.[10]

Once again, the Democratic press led the charge. The *Montgomery Advertiser* still held black Republicans, whom Screws styled "ignorant dupes," and their white "masters" in contempt. Victorious Democrats should treat blacks with "justice and kindness," but dissuade them from following Republican edicts by refusing to employ them, or by more severe means if

[10] *Report to Inquire*, VI, 106, 225; *Affairs in Alabama*, 701.

necessary. For the scalawags and carpetbaggers, the *Advertiser* encouraged white men of the state to deny them help on their official bonds. Nine out of ten Republicans could not make their bonds without Democratic help, the *Advertiser* claimed, and thus Democrats could enact some form of revenge. Those who chose to help Republicans only provided them "with financial capacity with which to carry out their plans of plunder and wrong against our people."[11]

Other exhortations from newspapers and party figureheads pressured Democrats to deny Republicans bonds. The Montgomery Workingmen's Association, populated expressly by Democrats, held public meetings in which they scolded members who went on Republican bonds. They made their resolutions public in the *Journal* and the *Advertiser*. Frederick Wolffe, formerly of the cotton brokering firm Lehman, Durr & Co., faced a $60,000 bond after being elected Montgomery county treasurer. Several of his business associates and co-workers agreed to act as his sureties ahead of November. Following the election, however, newspaper articles and cajoling from Democratic Executive Committee members convinced them to renege. They had seen "several articles in the newspaper in reference to it, that no democrat should go on the bond of republicans." Those that did would be considered "just as good as a negro." Democrats paid a visit to one of Wolffe's former colleagues, vowing to ruin his firm and drive him out of town if he supported a Republican. James T. Holtzclaw, a Montgomery lawyer, admitted that he advised his fellow Democrats to shun requests from men like Wolffe. He thought them "unfit to hold office, and was satisfied that they would steal the public money."[12] Hence, Wolffe and many other Republicans were forced to rely upon their Republican friends for funding, or accede to the Democratic ploy.

---

[11] *Montgomery Advertiser*, Nov. 17, 1874.
[12] *Affairs in Alabama*, 291, 268, 699-700.

Additionally, racial conservatives jumped at the chance to bar elected Montgomery African Americans from office. After an African American won the election of clerk for the city court of Montgomery, several men refused to sign onto his bond due to his race. Per one Montgomery lawyer, the press contributed towards feelings of hostility towards blacks and the Republican Party in the city which, he sensed, ramified through "every class, degree, and shade of society." The prejudice "existing between masters and slaves" carried over into political battles. The mere fact of being black, or being labeled a supporter of "negro equality, rendered Republicans social and political outcasts both before and after the election.[13]

Malicious newspaper articles also deterred Republicans from supporting their party associates. The *Livingston Journal* advertised names of sureties for Republicans in the county. A concerned businessman from Mobile wrote to Judge Abraham of Sumter County, who also appeared in the list of guarantors: "I am surprised to thus see our name in print, for, above all things, I dislike to have my name made conspicuous." He feared reprisal from Democrats within the county and elsewhere throughout Alabama, who had made their position on the bond issue public knowledge. He had also received a letter from a prominent citizen of Sumter County, inquiring whether he had agreed to go on Judge Abraham's bond. To this, he "unhesitatingly answered, 'no.'" He preferred to keep politics and business separate, which the *Livingston Journal*'s printed notice succeeded in wedding.[14]

One Republican member of the legislature actually turned to the newspapers to affect change. Seeing that the bill would effectively deny Republicans their positions, he wrote a subversive letter to the editor of the *Montgomery Morning News*, a short-lived but noteworthy journal. Posing as an "Old-line Democrat," he conveyed annoyance on behalf of Alabama

---

[13] *Affairs in Alabama*, 312.
[14] Ibid., 767-68.

farmers and working people. The people grew tired of the bond question, he claimed, and desired the Democratic legislature to work on matters that would directly benefit them. The next day, the article found its way onto the desks of Democrats in the state house. Republicans seized upon it to demonstrate popular opposition to the measure. As a result, a Democratic subcommittee reported a slightly tempered version of the bond bill, with less stringent requirements for county officers.[15]

Still, many Republicans failed to meet the standards, eliciting revelry from Democratic newspaper editors. In Selma, a grand jury denied bonds for the several county officials. "We were of the opinion all along that it would be impossible for the radicals of Dallas to make good bonds, if the democrats kept off," the *Selma Times* bragged. Possessing the office of probate judge was key to this strategy, for he could operate independent of the grand jury, should they deem Republican bonds acceptable. Only two African Americans sat on the jury, a fact much esteemed by the editor. "Let us get rid of men and straw and bonds of straw now and forever," he announced, and thanked the grand jury for performing their duties better than any other since the beginning of Reconstruction.[16] While some disaffected Republicans appealed the decisions of county courts, many were unable to muster the support to do so. Probate judges appointed men in their stead, often those who sympathized with their conservative views.

In Sumter County, militant Democrats did not terminate their pursuit of Republicans. Despite their drastic efforts, the county had remained Republican. Again, they planned to resort to other means to enact political change. They focused their attention on Judge Abraham, one of the few white Republicans still active in the county. The day after the election, Abraham received an anonymous letter that forewarned additional violence at his inauguration: "Renfoe

---

[15] *Report to Inquire*, 105.
[16] *Affairs in Alabama*, 703-4.

[sic] and others will be at liberty before the 12th of January, and him and other determined men in Sumter are sworn and banded together to kill you, Abraham." The avengers swore to pursue Abraham, Congressman Hays, and other Republicans "to the ends of the earth."[17] Several assassins tried their hand at killing Abraham, but none were able to actually finish the task. Jeremiah Haralson read vows to murder Abraham in the *Selma Times*: "I saw in one democratic paper, published at Selma, that somebody went to kill Abrams [sic], a white republican over in Sumter, but they had missed it, and they were very sorry.[18]" Republicans in west Alabama remained targets of Democrats and their newspaper organs far after the election of 1874.

Election and post-election intimidation and violence in Alabama soon became a national issue. Congressman Charles Hays brought complaints of Alabama Republicans before Congress on December 22. His referred to "intimidation and threats, violence, murder, and assassination" resorted to by Democrats to carry the contest. Information had been distorted by "the press of Alabama and correspondents of northern newspapers," who denied political motives and believed U.S. troops to be an arm of the Republican Party. Hays proposed that a bipartisan committee of five investigate the campaign and election. The committee would have the power to summon citizens to testify, as well as to subpoena official party documents and newspaper publications. Within two days, Speaker of the House James G. Blaine appointed three Republicans and two Democrats to the committee, with Representative John Coburn from Indiana as chair. The committee departed from Washington shortly thereafter, with plans to stop at Opelika, Montgomery, Eufaula, Mobile, and Livingston. The *State Journal* pleaded with all who had information to come forward, regardless of possible retaliation.[19]

---

[17] *Affairs in Alabama,* 765-66.
[18] *Report to Inquire*, 157.
[19] *Affairs in Alabama*, 289, I.

Democrats assumed ulterior motives to the Republican inquiry. By forming the committee quickly, Hays intended to force Congress to confront whether or not Alabama was truly "reconstructed." If the southern states could not enforce their laws adequately, Democrats warned ominously, they would be remitted to territorial status, and placed under martial law. The results from the election in Alabama and other "unreconstructed states" would be dismissed as well, and Republicans would retain their majority in the House of Representatives. The 1876 presidential election was the ultimate goal, however. Control of the state houses would give the Republicans possession of the much-needed Southern electoral votes. The committee had until March 4, inauguration day, to enact their plan.

The alleged prospects of a third attempt at Reconstruction disgusted Alabama Democrats. John Forsyth tarred the committee as a "last ditch" effort to save the corrupt Republican rule. "We have had a hard struggle for the past six years to undo the infamous governments imposed upon us at the point of the bayonet," Forsyth explained. The South had finally "stood by the cause of intelligent and honest government," instead of the "dominion of Sambo" propped up by the federal government. Forsyth called for the impeachment of President Grant should he allow the Republican scheme to come to fruition. The *Montgomery Advertiser*, meanwhile, reposted an editorial from the *New York Tribune* raising doubts about Hays's intentions. Hays had a great deal at stake on the outcome of the investigation. The *Tribune* suggested that the committee scrutinize his infamous letter carefully. If they called witnesses named in the Hays-Hawley letter, the body would find "a greater number of dead men willing to testify than they ever met with before."[20]

---

[20] *Mobile Daily Register*, Dec. 17, 1874; *Montgomery Advertiser*, Dec. 27, 1874.

Democrats persisted in their protests throughout the investigation process. The *Register* complained that when the committee visited Mobile, the Republican majority only called military officers, carpetbaggers, and "a large number of ignorant and degraded negroes." Congressmen Buckner and Luttrell of the Democratic minority, on the other hand, summoned the "most intelligent citizens." "This whole business is to bolster up Hays' claim to a seat in Congress," Rep. Luttrell averred. Both Democrats on the committee alleged that the Republican majority steered the committee away from any evidence detrimental to their cause. The *Advertiser* claimed that the investigation tried to "white wash every sign of corruption" on the part of Republicans. The only positive outcome the enterprise furnished was business for the government printing office.[21]

After interviewing hundreds of witness in Alabama and Washington, the "Alabama Outrage Committee" issued a deeply divided report. Two distinct visions of Alabama political culture emerged. One, espoused by the Republican majority, held that the state was gripped by terror. Murder and disorder ran rampant thanks to the aggressive strategy enacted by white Democrats. Disingenuous accounts from the press deceived many observers, the majority asserted. The minority view, on the other hand, claimed that Republicans trumped up the charges to gain more federal troops. If the army, sympathetic to the Republican cause, controlled the polls, so too would the Republicans. "Ignorant, credulous, and superstitious" blacks thought of the Army as an extension of the Freedmen's Bureau, and manufactured tales of night-riding and church burning to invoke their support. The minority condemned the Hays-Hawley letter, which it felt contributed to the false image of Alabama under siege. Political animus against Reconstruction distorted their account even further. In closing, the minority called for a change

[21] *Alabama State Journal*, Jan. 9, 1875; *Montgomery Advertiser*, Jan. 26, 1875.

in federal-state relations. Alabama, with "no means of resistance," was a "skeleton of her former self." Some remedy other than "Federal interference" and "United States bayonets" was needed. Arthur Bingham articulated his vexation with Alabama Democrats, who were doubtless "laughing in their sleeves as they read the falsehoods they have imposed upon Messrs. Buckner and Luttrell."[22]

Republican conduct during the campaign was not altogether faultless, however. The investigators delved into the transportation of thousands of pounds of bacon into the state by the federal government. The bacon came as a form of aid after flooding devastated communities along the Tombigbee, Warrior, and Alabama rivers in the spring of 1874. Congress allocated over 200,000 pounds of pork, to be distributed at the discretion of Governor Lewis. He and his Republican appointees proceeded to use the bacon as a form of patronage. The governor expanded eligible regions to include those around the Tennessee and Chattahooche rivers, which, according to one historian, "had not been underwater since the days of Noah's ark." In some areas, Republicans told recipients that voting their ticket was a prerequisite for accepting the provisions. Some African Americans heard that the bacon was available for all, not just those that were affected by flooding. Other administrators sold the pork for personal profit. Republicans brought home the bacon for their own political gain, a fact illuminated by the investigation despite their best efforts.[23]

Congress ultimately took no real action on the Alabama election question, aside from ordering the report to be printed, much to the chagrin of Republicans. Hand-wringing from party leaders percolated throughout the press. They feared that Democrats in the South were determined to disfranchise blacks and eliminate the two party system in the region. "The Time in

---

[22] *Affairs*, LXXII; *Alabama State Journal*, Feb. 25, 1875.
[23] *Affairs in Alabama*, 1283, 36, 51, 54, 65; Wiggins, *Scalawag*, 96-7.

Which We Are is Pregnant With More Evil than Any Hour Since March, 1861," read a headline the *State Journal*. The *Chicago Inter-Ocean* forewarned that the Southern representatives in Congress would roll back Reconstruction legislation and, through White League terrorism, control Southern politics.[24] Appeals to President Grant to invoke martial law likewise fell on deaf ears.

The 44th Congress arrived in Washington on time, ending the plot to nullify the results of November. By 1875, the president and the Republican caucus had tired of the Reconstruction quagmire; their inaction sentenced it to failure. Finally free of the threat of additional federal intervention, Alabama Democrats set about their legislative program to consolidate their power. Drafting a new state constitution headlined the Democratic post-election agenda. The *Advertiser* called for a new governing infrastructure that reduced unnecessary spending. Screws explained that this was not meant to restrict voting, eliminate public schools, or deny African Americans their rights in any way, but in fact to assure that all Alabamians would prosper. One Black Belt editor felt that the campaign would fail, for reform was not a "solitary strong plank that will arouse and bring out the people to the polls." By February, however, most Democratic journalists endorsed the idea. Arthur Bingham disagreed, anticipating that the new constitution would empower the wealthiest landowners in the state, while "effectually enslaving" blacks and poor whites. Since they could not discriminate based on race for fear of federal interference, Bingham opined, they would do so along class lines instead.[25]

The Democratic legislature passed a bill setting an election for constitutional delegates in August. The election for delegates to the Constitutional Convention transpired with less

---

[24] *Alabama State Journal*, Feb. 28, 1875, Feb. 17, 1875.
[25] *Montgomery Advertiser*, Jan. 16, 1875; Willis Brewer to Robert McKee, Feb. 14, 1875, Robert McKee Papers, ADAH; *Alabama State Journal*, March 4, 1875; Going, *Bourbon Democracy*, 21.

excitement than the contest of 1874, but produced an equally troubling result for Republicans. Alabamians chose to replace the 1868 Reconstruction Constitution by a margin of 17,000. The law regulating the apportionment of delegates afforded only one delegate from each county and senatorial district, diminishing the political capital of the heavily populated Black Belt. Republican counties, with a total population of 509,000, received only twenty-three representatives. Meanwhile, Democratic counties, with a smaller population of 482,000, garnered forty-three. The convention's finished product of reflected the goals of retrenchment and reform desired by the New Departure element a year earlier. The 1875 Constitution also eliminated the office of lieutenant governor, disbanded the board of education, and reduced legislative sessions from one per year to one every two years. Other initiatives set limits on taxation and curtailed private companies' access to state financial aid. Republicans protested the decreased funding to public schools, but could muster little popular support to oppose the movement. Many leading Republicans actually endorsed the document in a public sign of capitulation. Some Democrats felt that the spending cuts did not go far enough, but supported it out of party loyalty. In November, a sufficient number of voters ratified the new constitution, which went into effect one month later.[26]

Next, the Democrats set voting rights on the chopping block. The legislature redrew the state's congressional districts in what the *State Journal* tarred as the "Great Gerrymander." The new apportionment eliminated the two at-large districts in favor of one new district, bringing the total to eight districts. Of these, seven had sizable Democratic majorities. Additionally, the assembly tightened up state voting laws. Instead of being able to vote at any precinct in the county, citizens had to cast their ballots in the precinct of his residence, which were supervised

[26] *Report to Inquire*, VII-VIII; Going, *Bourbon Democracy*, 24-25.

only by inhabitants of the precinct. These supervisors would undoubtedly be Democrats. Once at the polling place, any challenger could dispute the legality of a voter's residence. The challenged voter was then obliged to prove his residence to the supervisor. If the supervisor claimed to have no knowledge of the voter's residence, and was not satisfied by his retort, he could deem the disputed vote invalid. Ostensibly introduced to avoid repeating voters and other forms of fraud, the statute granted Democratic authorities complete authority to deny any person the right to vote. Republicans as a whole, and African Americans specifically, were negatively affected by these restrictions.[27]

Moreover, modifications to the state penal code unfairly targeted blacks. Penalties for larceny increased to anywhere from two to twenty years, a sentence "without parallel or precedent upon the penal code of civilized countries," according to Republicans. The definition of burglary expanded to include "inclosed [sic] lots and gardens," and carried the same possible jail sentence. Other bills sought to limit blacks' ability to trade agricultural products in the open market, effectively shackling them to wealthy white landowners. In cases where defendants could not afford to pay the fines levied by the court system, the Democratic legislature proposed a system of convict labor. Under the agreement, convicted persons would work at the discretion of the municipal and county judiciary at a rate of two days per every dollar. The *Eufaula Times* reported that Barbour County adjudicators leased convicts to planters for the price of two dollars per month. Aggrieved Republicans recognized that these changes proposed to establish a labor system akin to slavery, opposed to the "genius and spirit of free-labor States and institutions." In Alabama, as in other states, redemption commenced the Democratic Jim Crow dynasty.[28]

---

[27] *Alabama State Journal*, Feb. 13, 1875; *Report to Inquire*, X-XI.

[28] U.S. Congress, House, *Memorial of the Republican Members of the Legislature of Alabama, Asking the Enactment of Stringent Laws for the Protection of All Citizens of the United States*. 43rd Cong., 2d sess., 1875, Mis. Doc. 107, 2-3. In recent years, labor historians have turned their attention to convict labor in Reconstruction and the

In March, blacks did win a mostly symbolic victory when President Grant signed the Civil Rights Bill into law. The much-maligned act was revived in December by Congressman Alexander White of Alabama. Acknowledging that the backlash to the original language contributed to a Republican defeat in November, the new statute made no requirements for integrated schools or public places. Schools, public transportation, theatres, and other services "shall be equal in facilities and equipments for both races," but still separate. The *Mobile Register* boasted that the change in tone indicated the Republicans' recognizance of "the separateness of races… at last." Arthur Bingham counted the bill's passage as sign that "this great Democratic mountain will dwindle down to a very small mole hill."[29] In retrospect, the Civil Rights Bill of 1875 accomplished little. The legislation lacked teeth, as it came with only modest enforcement procedures. The watering down of the public school matter disappointed many Republicans, but the reality was the appetite for legislative battles over racial equality had diminished. Segregation proceeded unabated in many Southern states, and the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1883 ruled the 1875 act unconstitutional.[30] Much as in the overall project of Reconstruction, the redemption impulse proved stronger than the wavering support of Northern liberals.

The 1876 presidential election represented the last obstacle to a complete Democratic overthrow of Reconstruction. Nationally, Democrats settled early upon Samuel J. Tilden of New York, a reform-minded politician who gained renown in his takedown of the Tweed ring. Tilden went on to form a cozy relationship with many industry magnates, however, and quickly became

---

New South to find the origins of mass incarceration. See Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), Talithla LeFlouria, *Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

[29] *Mobile Daily Register*, Dec. 19, 1874; *Alabama State Journal*, March 5, 1875.

[30] Wilson, *Reconstruction Desegregation Debate*, 42-45.

their favorite to lead the party into the Gilded Age. Republicans, on the other hand, quarreled amongst themselves as to who should combat Tilden. Controversy in the waning days of the Grant administration did not help their cause. Illumination of the Whiskey Ring scandal exposed several of Grant's close confidants as principal orchestrators of the fraud that siphoned millions of dollars from the nation's tax coffers. Furthermore, the candidacy of Speaker James G. Blaine foundered once allegations of his involvement in illegal transactions with the Union Pacific Railroad went public. The watchword of reform governed national politics, and so Republicans chose Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio as their nominee. The selection of the passionless Hayes did little to excite Northern Republicans, and left those in the South with a sense of hopelessness. Republicans "waved the bloody shirt" to rally their supporters, but practically conceded the Southern vote to Tilden.[31]

The Alabama Republican Party splintered into two factions ahead of the 1876 contest. Senator George Spencer had proved to be a polarizing figure among the leadership, who resented his capacity to build a loyal following through dispersal of patronage. U.S. Marshal Robert Healy described a "general dissatisfaction… with the present management which is completely subservient to the will of one man." Opposition to Spencer coalesced around former Republican governor William H. Smith and former state supreme court justice Samuel F. Rice. The Smith-Rice faction called a meeting in Montgomery in December of 1875 to reorganize the state convention. Members of the reform coalition appealed to Alabama's congressional delegation to support their cause. Healy entreated with Congressman Charles Hays to join their movement, which would yield him considerably more power to dictate affairs instead of being "second

---

[31] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 565-69.

fiddle" to Spencer's clique.[32] Two black Republicans, Jeremiah Haralson and James T. Rapier, opposed one another for the newly redrawn fourth district seat in Congress. Haralson, the incumbent, sided with the Smith-Rice group, while Rapier received the endorsement of Senator Spencer. The *State Journal* supported Spencer, but implored the disparate interests to agree on a compromise.

Spencer eventually strong-armed his way to victory over the rival caucus. He punished Marshal Healy for his support of the opposition, and replaced him with George Turner of Mobile. In a letter to the chairman of the judiciary committee, Spencer produced Healy's confidential letter to Hays as evidence of a "deliberately predetermined" plan to divide the party. Healy entreated with Spencer to plead his ignorance in the matter, but the senator had somehow obtained the correspondence intended for Congressman Hays. Hays disavowed his collaboration with Spencer; such a betrayal of confidence would be considered an "unworthy… act of a gentleman."[33] This party infighting condemned the party to collapse in 1876. In order to secure campaign funds from a wealthy donor, the feuding blocs agreed to nominate a compromise ticket, full of men almost unknown in Alabama politics. Democrats meanwhile appeared to be the antithesis of chaos. They nominated Governor Houston for reelection in a comparatively routine convention.[34]

Republicans may have been weakened by discord, but Democrats did not take the canvass of 1876 lightly. Throughout the state, they again engaged in the methods of violence and intimidation that had commenced in 1874. Publicly, the Democratic Executive Committee

---

[32] Robert W. Healy to Charles Hays, Dec. 11, 1875 in Robert W. Healy Papers, Auburn University Ralph B. Draughon Library, Special Collections.
[33] George Spencer to Chairman of Senate Judiciary Committee, March 1, 1876, Charles Hays to Robert W. Healy, 24, 1876, Robert W. Healy Papers, Auburn University Ralph B. Draughon Library, Special Collections.
[34] Wiggins, *Scalawag*, 108-15.

recommended that its supporters refrain from violence, "to avoid even the possible appearance of evil." Privately, local officials reaffirmed their charge to carry win political office at all costs, which conservatives heeded. At a Fourth of July rally near Huntsville, a German immigrant drew the ire of an armed white Democrat. The man displayed a pistol underneath his coat, and yelled, "This is a white man's country, and we don't want none of these radical Dutchmen to talk here." Many Germans in northern Alabama stayed away from the polls out of fear of Democratic reprisals. On election day in Hale County, an intoxicated Democratic supporter made his allegiance clear to all. "I hope Tilden will be elected today," he slurred, "and then there will be more hanging done of these infernal… radical sons of bitches than the State of Alabama has ever seen." The feeling against Republicans became so tense in the polling place that the deputy marshal on duty felt compelled to leave.[35]

Democrats manipulated newspapers and other forms of print to defeat Republicans in the court of public opinion. Jeremiah Haralson confronted stiff opposition from his Democratic challenger, General Charles Shelley, the Dallas County sheriff. Shelley, with the help of his allies in the county Democratic headquarters, composed a letter of withdrawal for Haralson to sign. Deputies apprehended Haralson, and transported him to a secret meeting with Shelley. Once in the room, Shelley pointed a loaded Derringer at Haralson's head, demanding that he sign the circular. Haralson complied begrudgingly. When asked later by a Republican legislator why he autographed the card, Haralson replied, "I think you would have signed papers of any kind to have gotten out of that fix." Shelley sent the document to area newspapers, including the *Selma Times*, who then dispersed it among its readers. The *Times* also circulated rumors that Haralson was guilty of disturbing the public peace, and recommended his assassination. The night before

[35] *Report to Inquire*, 461, 457-58, 380, 430-32.

the election, Democrats flashed newspapers and placards displaying Haralson's forced concession to Shelley. The party sent copies of the *Times* and single printings of the resignation "all over the district." Haralson knew that "a good many of them had gone out in the country on horses" to convince blacks not to vote for him.[36]

Election day in 1876 was fraught with familiar occurrences of voter fraud and browbeating. Democratic election supervisors in the Black Belt neglected to open polling places, or did so only for a very short period of time. Republicans in Barbour, Bullock, and Russell complained to E.M. Keils of White League intimidation and unlawful election practices. Thanks to the stringent new election laws, Democrats challenged the residency of many black voters, which halted balloting for hours. The Collirene precinct in Lowndes County remained closed the entire day. Willis Brewer's *Hayneville Examiner* extolled the "true and good men of Collirene," who "not wishing to be servants of the radical party by sitting down all day just to receive the votes 300 or 400 negroes were anxious to cast," opted to not fulfill their duties. Republicans still outnumbered Democrats in Lowndes, but the loyal conservatives had done their part. "A vote of thanks is due to the sterling and sensible patriots there… we only wish the same course had been taken in every black beat in the state," Brewer proclaimed.[37]

The outcome of the 1876 election sealed the fate of Alabama's Republican Party. The compromise ticket lost to Governor Houston by a count of 95, 837 to 55, 586. Republican numbers in the legislature were reduced by half, leaving a select few judgeships as their only sphere of influence. The state's total voters overall declined by 50,000 from the 1874 election two years, prior, a decrease felt most profoundly in the Black Belt. Cries of foul play from Senator Spencer produced yet another investigation which accused Democrats of terrorizing

[36] *Report to Inquire*, 170-74.
[37] Ibid., 605, 363-64,

Republicans and subjugating African Americans. These complaints accomplished nothing, for the Compromise of 1877 official ended the Reconstruction experiment. Federal troops left the South for good, as the old Confederacy returned to Democratic rule. Truthfully, in Alabama, the venture had been over since 1874, when the newspapers and spokesmen of the state conjured an atmosphere of hostility and sanctioned violence that engendered a Democratic victory.[38]

---

[38] Wiggins, *Scalawag*, 114-16; See Vincent P. DeSantis, "Rutherford B. Hayes and the Removal of the Troops," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 417-50.

Conclusion

Arthur Bingham relinquished his control of the *Alabama State Journal* well before the Republican fracture of 1876. In April of 1875, Bingham announced that he was returning home to Talladega, and had “reluctantly consented to sever the pleasant relations I have held, for the past five years, with the good people of Montgomery, and especially the readers of the *Journal*.” He thanked the readers for their patronage, and his friends for their support, on which he had relied frequently since embarking “on the stormy sea of journalism.” Bingham also defended his tenure as editor, in which he “tried to build up the Republican party upon a basis of respectable and high toned sentiment.” Time after time, he refused to stoop to the level of his detractors, who by threatening his life had degraded the profession of journalism in Alabama. Bingham assured readers that the new owners of the newspaper would “strive to make it the leading newspaper of the State.” As he left Montgomery for Talladega, he felt that he done nothing to exacerbate the civil tensions in the state, and believed that they were slowly fading away.[1]

Perhaps Bingham spoke out of blind optimism, for all signs pointed toward a grim outlook for his fellow Republicans. One hundred years would pass before a Republican occupied the governor’s mansion again. African Americans confronted a century of Jim Crow and voter disenfranchisement. Rights dearly won in the Civil War and Reconstruction were disregarded, as segregation became codified law. The Civil Rights movement, culminating in the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts of the 1960s, upended state-sanctioned discrimination, but not without violent episodes of its own. Bloody Sunday at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma held uncanny

[1] *Alabama State Journal*, April 1, 1875.

similarities to scenes in Eufaula and Mobile in 1874. At present, the nation as a whole continues to grapple with some of the same questions that gripped Reconstruction America. Although party labels have switched and coalitions have shifted, race endures as one of the most salient issues in politics and culture.

In an era dominated by near-constant media bombardment, Americans would be wise to recall the negative repercussions of acerbic rhetoric. Democrats in Alabama applied it to great effect in 1874 to achieve their conservative restoration. Exploiting an active newspaper network, editors instructed their readers to expel Republicans from all aspects of public life. White Men's organizations and Democratic and Conservative clubs popped up in a great many counties, while the White League resurrected the strategy of the Ku Klux Klan. John Forsyth and other firebrand politicians mobilized their audience towards a more extreme end. The discourse of violence, resorted to in a time of perceived desperation, governed the campaign of 1874. Through couched aspersions and actual calls for bloodshed, Democrats directed the forces that destroyed Reconstruction.

In hindsight, it is clear that the entire state of Alabama was not engulfed in a race war in 1874. Certain areas of the state, predominantly in the Black Belt, were the focal points of vitriol and violence. Sumter County, Barbour County, and Mobile are indicative examples. The fact that word of the Sumter County killings and the riots on election day saturated political discourse is a testament to the activity surrounding newspapers and print culture. To foment a sense of fear, Democrats only needed the threat of violence, backed up with occasional action. Rhetoric reached more people with greater ease through newspapers than even the most prolific orators. To be sure, they were not altogether empty promises. The slain Republicans in Sumter, and the

orchestrated defiance at polling places are proof to the contrary. By informing and reflecting their constituency, Democratic editors forged a self-fulfilling philosophy of resistance.

Post-election, editors convinced their readers to shun Republicans' appeals for bond guarantors. The same tactics of ostracism were applied to deny legitimate election results. Evincing a robust print culture, one Republican circulated a false letter through the newspapers in an attempt to influence his Democratic colleagues. Yet even the shrewdest back channeling could not halt the advance of conservative reforms. Democrats utilized their majority to pass laws that restricted voting rights and hamper the economic outlook of African Americans. Much like their supporters, Democrats followed through on pledges made before November. In 1876, the press played the aggressor in pursuing Republican politicians. Disagreements within the party stemming from 1874 destined Republicans to lose two years later. The current of reaction to Reconstruction proved too great for the Republican coalition to repel.

Periodically, political parties, and their demagogues are able to strike a chord with a segment of the American population. Often, it is the rhetoric of anger and disillusionment that unites them. In Reconstruction Alabama, Democratic politicians executed the strategy to great effect. Newspaper editors were able to affect the daily lives of their readers, which brought about their desired result at the polls. While it was not the sole arbiter of change in 1870s Alabama, newspaper rhetoric wielded more power than historians have recognized. Indeed, it appears that the adage from Oscar Wilde around the end of the nineteenth century rings true. The president may reign for four years, the satirist discerned, but in America, "Journalism governs for ever and ever."[2]

[2] Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1900), 57-58.

Bibliography

<u>Newspapers</u>

Chicago Inter-Ocean
Columbia (SC) *Daily Phoenix*
Eufaula Times
Greensboro (AL) *Beacon*
Hayneville (AL) *Examiner*
Livingston Journal
Mobile Daily Register
Montgomery Daily Alabama State Journal
Montgomery Daily Advertiser
New York Times
New York Tribune
Opelika Daily Times
Selma Southern Argus
Troy Messenger

<u>Manuscript Collections</u>

Alabama Governor (1872-1874: Lewis) Administrative Files, 1871-1874, Government Records Collections, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

Robert McKee Papers, LPR26, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.
Wesley S. Thompson Papers, SPR446, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

Robert W. Healy Papers, Auburn University Ralph Brown Draughon Library, Auburn, AL.

Reconstruction era political materials, 1868-1878, LPR101, Alabama Dept. of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

Reconstruction era political scrapbooks, 1865-1886, PR578, Alabama Dept. of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

<u>Congressional Documents</u>

U.S. Congress. House. *Civil Rights in Alabama. Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting a Memorial of a Convention of Colored Citizens Assembled in the City of Montgomery, Ala., on December 2, 1874. December 22, 1874*. 43rd Cong., 2d sess., 1874, Ex. Doc. 46.

U.S. Congress. House. *Memorial of the Republican Members of the Legislature of Alabama, Asking the Enactment of Stringent Laws for the Protection of All Citizens of the United States*. 43rd Cong., 2d sess., 1875, Mis. Doc. 107.

U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee on Affairs in Alabama. *Affairs in Alabama*. 43rd Cong., 2d sess., 1875, H. Rep. 262.

U.S. Congress. Senate. Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. *Report to Inquire Whether in and of the Elections in the State of Alabama in the Elections of 1874, 1875, and 1876 the Right of Male Inhabitants to Vote Had Been Denied or Abridged*. 44th Cong., 2d sess., 1877, S. Rep. 704.

Books and Articles

Abbott, Richard H. *For Free Press and Equal Rights: Republican Newspapers in the Reconstruction South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004.

Alexander, Thomas B. “Persistent Whiggery in the Confederate South, 1860-1877.” *Journal of Southern History* 27 (1961): 305–29.

Bailey, Richard. *Neither Carpetbaggers nor Scalawags: Black Officeholders during the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1874*. Montgomery: R. Bailey Publishers, 1991.

Bernath, Michael T. *Confederate Minds: The Struggle for Intellectual Independence in the Confederate South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Blackmon, Douglas A. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Anchor Books, 2009.

Bowers, Claude G. *The Tragic Era: The Revolution after Lincoln*. Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1920.

Brewer, Willis. *Alabama, Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men from 1540 to 1872*. Montgomery, AL: Barrett & Brown, 1872.

Burnett, Lonnie A. *The Pen Makes a Good Sword: John Forsyth of the Mobile Register*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006.

Cash, William M. *Alabama Republicans during Reconstruction: Personal Characteristics, Motivations, and Political Activity of Party Activists, 1867-1880*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1973.

Clark, Thomas D. *The Rural Press and the New South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948.

———. *The Southern Country Editor*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1948.

Cox, John and LaWanda. *Politics, Principle, and Prejudice, 1865-1866: Dilemma of Reconstruction America*. London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963.

Cumming, Doug. *The Southern Press: Literary Legacies and the Challenge of Modernity*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009.

Downs, Gregory P. *After Appomattox: Military Occupations and the Ends of War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.

DuBois, W.E.B. *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*. New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1935.

Ellison, Rhoda Coleman. *History and Bibliography of Alabama Newspapers in the Nineteenth Century*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1954.

Fitzgerald, Michael W. *Urban Emancipation: Popular Politics in Reconstruction Mobile, 1860-1890*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.

Fleming, Walter L. *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*. New York: Peter Smith, 1949.

Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

———. "Reconstruction Revisited." *Reviews in American History* 10 (1982): 82-100.

Frederickson, Mary E. *Looking South: Race, Gender, and the Transformation of Labor from Reconstruction to Globalization*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011.

Gallagher, Gary W., and Rachel A. Shelden, eds. *A Political Nation: New Directions in Nineteenth-Century American Political History*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012.

Garvey, Ellen G. *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Going, Allen J.. *Bourbon Democracy in Alabama, 1874-1890*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992–1951.

Green, James. *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement, and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age* America. New York: Pantheon Books, 2006.

Habermas, Jurgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.

Holt, Thomas C. *Black over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977.

Kousser, J. Morgan, and James McPherson, eds. *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

LeFlouria, Talthla L. *Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

Leonard, Thomas C. *The Power of the Press: The Birth of American Political Reporting*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Mott, Frank Luther. *American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States through 250 Years, 1690-1940*. New York: MacMillan, 1941.

McCurry, Stephanie M. *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

McKitrick, Eric L. *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

McPherson, James M. "Redemption or Counterrevolution? The South in the 1870s." *Reviews in American History* 13 (1985): 545-50.

Nelson, Scott R. *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction*. Chapel: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Osthaus, Carl R. *Partisans of the Southern Press: Editorial Spokesmen of the Nineteenth Century*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994.

Owen, Thomas M. *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*. 4 vols. Spartanburg, SC: Reprint, 1921.

Parsons, Elaine F. *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

Perman, Michael. *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1877*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

Rabinowitz, Howard N., ed. *Southern Black Leaders of the Reconstruction Era*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982.

Rable, George C. *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984.

Reynolds, Donald E. *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970.

Rogers, William W. *Black Belt Scalawag: Charles Hays and the Southern Republicans in the Era of Reconstruction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993.

Rogers, William W., Robert D. Ward, Leah R. Atkins, and Wayne Flynt. *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994.

Smith, John D., ed. *A Just and Lasting Peace: A Documentary History of Reconstruction*. New York: Penguin Group, 2013.

Stammp, Kenneth M. *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877*. New York: Vintage Books, 1965.

Summers, Mark W. *Railroads, Reconstruction, and the Gospel of Prosperity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

———. *The Press Gang: Newspapers and Politics, 1865-1878*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

———. *The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Taylor, Hannis, Joseph Wheeler, Willis G. Clark, Thomas Harvey Clark, Hilary A. Herbert, Jerome Cochran, and William Wallace Screws. *Memorial Record of Alabama: A Concise History of the State's Political, Military, Professional and Industrial Progress, Together with the Personal Memoirs of Many of Its People*. 2 vols. Madison: Brant & Fuller, 1893.

Thornton, J. Mills. *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978.

Tilly, Charles. *The Politics of Collective Violence*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Trelease, Allen W. *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995.

Tunnell, Ted. "Creating 'The Propaganda of History': Southern Editors and the Origins of "Carpetbagger and Scalawag." *Journal of Southern History* 72 (2006): 789–822.

Webb, Samuel J. "A Jacksonian Democrat in Postbellum Alabama: The Ideology and Influence of Journalist Robert McKee, 1869-1896." *Journal of Southern History* 62 (1996): 239–74.

Wiggins, Sarah W. *The Scalawag in Alabama Politics, 1865-1881*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1977.

Williamson, Edward C. "The Alabama Election of 1874." *Alabama Review* 17 (1967): 210–18.

Wilson, Kirt H. *The Reconstruction Desegregation Debate: The Politics of Equality and the Rhetoric of Place, 1870-1875*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002.

Woodward, C. Vann. *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951.

Theses and Dissertations

Hooper, Samuel Thorne. "A Study of Reconstruction-Era Media in the South: Opelika, Alabama, 1874." Master's thesis, Auburn University, 1998.

Roush, Gerald Lee. "Aftermath of Reconstruction: Race, Violence, and Politics in Alabama, 1874-1884." Master's thesis, Auburn University, 1973.