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Radicalism and Rebellion: Presidential Reconstruction in South Carolina April 1865 to May 1866

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RADICALSIM AND REBELLION: PRESIDENTIAL RECONSTRUCTION
IN SOUTH CAROLINA APRIL 1865 TO MAY 1866

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
Walter Steven Bright
May 2008

Accepted by:
Dr. Rod Andrew Jr., Committee Chair
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Dr. Abel A. Bartley

ABSTRACT

The focus of this thesis deals primarily with the white elite of South Carolina during Presidential Reconstruction. Historians have noted South Carolina radicalism before the Civil War, but I propose that this radicalism did not simply fade away when the war ended. I argue that the Civil War did not destroy white South Carolinians' will to fight; a sense of nationalism still flourished as they continued to rebel against the federal government, despite the devastating effects of the war on the Palmetto State. This work will show that these white elites continued this fight because they were enraged over the total devastation left in the wake of Sherman's march through the state and the failure of the federal government to institute an acceptable Reconstruction plan. The radicalism of South Carolina's white elites started the Civil War, and they did not believe that all of the devastation was for nothing as they continued to defy the Radical Republicans at every opportunity.

Continuing their radical nature, the same men who led the state into secession before the war were placed back into their public duties after the war. These radical leaders rejected the few prominent measures during Presidential Reconstruction that may have brought them into the Union much sooner. Provisional Governor Benjamin F. Perry, a staunch Unionist before the war, placed these radical leaders back into power because they were popularly elected by the people. Like the more radical element of the state, pre-war moderate leaders such as Perry and Wade Hampton III were irate over the total devastation inflicted upon their precious state even though initially they did almost everything necessary to comply with the President's demands during Presidential

Reconstruction. As the process dragged out, these leaders became more incensed, and their rage was reflected publicly in their rhetoric, which was based on their personal experiences through secession, the Civil War, and Reconstruction.

With the onset of Radical Reconstruction, the leaders of the Palmetto State realized that the process of being readmitted into the Union would drag out indefinitely, making it a secondary concern. Now they had to worry about keeping power within their own state against the unrepresented sanctions of the federal government, and this further enraged these radical leaders. Many of these leaders such as Perry and Hampton would vent their rage by becoming proponents of “Lost Cause” rhetoric. This instigated negative reactions from their Northern opposition, making many of them targets for personal criticism aimed at discrediting them in the eyes of the public. Still, they espoused their rage publicly—even when their power within the state was taken away by Radical Republican legislation—all the while defying the federal government until reaching “Redemption” over a decade later.

DEDICATION

This work is for my adoring wife, Amanda, and my beautiful daughters, Megan, Madison, Mekenzie, and Mikaela, for their love and support.

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There are numerous people who have been instrumental to my educational career since I decided to go back to school six years ago. Dr. Rod Andrew Jr. has been a tremendous help, always directing me in the right direction as my thesis advisor and I may not have finished this project without his guidance. For his professionalism and inspiration I simply say, “Semper Fidelis.” I would also like to thank Dr. Roger Grant and Dr. Abel Bartley for their input and criticism of this work; they are both great professors and a joy to work with. Special thanks are also in order to Dr. Alan Grubb who took the time to read through this work in its roughest form and for providing much valued and appreciated insight. I am also indebted to Dr. Steven Marks who was always available for any reason during his tenure as the graduate coordinator; his dedication to the history graduate students has always been greatly appreciated.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with answering a question occasioned by the collision of two historiographical themes. Historians have noted South Carolina radicalism before the Civil War; more recent historians have examined what they perceive to be the collapse of Confederate nationalism during the War. However, an examination of South Carolina in Presidential Reconstruction suggests otherwise. Examining South Carolina after the Civil War there is evidence to suggest that the radical nature of the white elite in the state remained intact and a sense of separate nationalism still flourished. While the radical nature of South Carolina before the Civil War is without dispute, the supposed loss of this radical nature and the will to fight during the War is disputable.

This study will involve a chronological look at the uniqueness of South Carolina from secession to May 1866, but will pay particular attention to Presidential and early Radical Reconstruction. Central to this study is answering questions pertaining to the white elites of the state. If white South Carolinians believed that they were wrong, then why did they put the same men into political power who voted them out of the Union? If South Carolina lost the will to fight, then why did the white residents resist every measure proposed during Presidential Reconstruction that would have brought them back into the Union if they had complied? This thesis will focus on these questions by examining newspapers, memoirs, diaries, and other historical literature of the period.

I will argue that the Civil War did not destroy the will of white South Carolinians to fight and their rebellious nature remained despite the devastating effects of the War.

They were fueled by rage; the rage over all that was lost in the war, and the rage over the never-ending process of Reconstruction. Many of these elites within the state gave everything they had for the South during the Civil War and now they were left with a state that was totally devastated by the actions of that war and occupied by federal troops to remind them of their defeat. They felt that all of the devastation could not have been for nothing; there must be some type of redemption for them in this process. To get their redemption, they continued to fight against what they perceived to be Northern tyranny—with words. They did not raise arms again, but they espoused the same radical rhetoric that brought them to secession and venerated their heroes that so gallantly led them into the great conflict that ensued.

My thesis will make a contribution to the historical thought of this period in South Carolina by explaining why the white elites were still radical in the Palmetto State and why they still believed in the constitutionality of the states' rights doctrine. This study will do this by recognizing the bitterness coming out of their personal experiences. Many prominent leaders in South Carolina did everything in their power to keep the Union intact. They were Unionists, the minority by far in South Carolina, yet this thesis will demonstrate that they were really not that much different from those in the majority. It is their personal experiences that I use to make my argument, because it is these prominent leaders that experienced a complete transformation through what they perceived to be Northern vengeance against their home state. These influential men were personally affected in more ways than one by the total experience of secession, war, and Reconstruction, and it is their rage that fills the pages of this work.

Although this thesis will mention many of the elite men who led South Carolina during its early history and their contributions, it will primarily focus on two prominent individuals who were leaders before, during, and after the Civil War, Benjamin F. Perry and Wade Hampton III. Both men were prominent Unionists before the Civil War who still played pivotal roles in the Confederacy. They both also contributed immensely to the state following the Civil War in its quest to be readmitted to the Union. Perry was the consummate politician, a Unionist Democrat who opposed nullification and secession; he was highly respected in South Carolina despite his minority views and was appointed provisional governor by President Andrew Johnson during Presidential Reconstruction. Hampton was one of the wealthiest men in the South, the descendent of prominence in American history as his grandfather was of Revolutionary War fame and his father served during the War of 1812; he became a hero of the Civil War and a proponent of the Lost Cause after the War and he eventually led the state to Redemption as Reconstruction came to an end.

The state of South Carolina has enjoyed a wonderful and exciting history that predates the founding of the United States. South Carolina declared its independence from Great Britain on March 15, 1776, and named John Rutledge Governor, many months before the Continental Congress's Declaration of Independence. The Palmetto State produced many heroes during the Revolutionary War, including William Moultrie, Francis Marion, and Thomas Sumter. Edward Rutledge, Arthur Middleton, Thomas Lynch Jr., and Thomas Heyward Jr. were South Carolinians who signed the Declaration of Independence. President Andrew Jackson stated frequently that he was born in South

Carolina, but the most important South Carolinian in its history is none other than John C. Calhoun: a former Vice-President, Congressman, Secretary of War, Secretary of State, and U.S. Senator whose influence was long-lasting in the Palmetto State leading up to secession.

As the United States was in its infancy and factionalism flourished with the ratification of the Constitution, South Carolina almost immediately established itself as unique compared to the rest of the young nation. The Palmetto State rejected the two-party political system and slowly evolved into an unchecked one-party political structure. South Carolina progressed toward a one-party system because of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, which were deemed unconstitutional and oppressive by state leaders who had fought against such tyranny only decades before in the Revolution. In *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840*,

Richard Hofstadter states:

The Federalists and [Democratic] Republicans did not think of each other as alternating parties in a two-party system. Each side hoped to eliminate party conflict by persuading and absorbing the more acceptable and “innocent” members of the other; each side hoped to attach the stigma of foreign allegiance and disloyalty to the intractable leaders of the other, and to put them out of business as a party. The high point in Federalists efforts in this direction came with the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. The high point in [Democratic] Republican efforts came after the Treaty of Ghent in 1814. Where the Federalists had failed, the [Democratic] Republicans succeeded: the one-party period that came with the withering away of Federalism was seen by the [Democratic] Republicans not as an anomalous or temporary, much less as an undesirable eventuality, but as evidence of the correctness of their views and of the success of the American system.¹

¹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 8.

Eventually though, a second party, the Whigs, would take the place of the Federalists and have success everywhere except in South Carolina, where the one-party system prevailed and continued to evolve for decades despite sporadic attempts by opposing parties to infiltrate the state. This allowed men such as South Carolina College President Thomas Cooper and John C. Calhoun to indoctrinate the next generation of state leaders in the Palmetto State, and these future leaders would use their rhetoric to eventually lead the nation into civil war.

Historians have long discussed the radical nature of South Carolina during the Antebellum period, mainly focusing on the states' rights issue. This debate dates back to 1798 when Thomas Jefferson penned the Kentucky Resolution in response to the same Alien and Sedition Acts that prompted the Palmetto State to move toward a one-party system. South Carolina lingered over the next few decades with only minor problems, but they all revolved around the tariff and how it affected Palmetto State planters. Thomas Cooper was a devout states' rights advocate during this period and used his collegiate position to espouse his rhetoric to the next generation of South Carolina leaders. The real turning point came in 1828 when John C. Calhoun wrote the *South Carolina Exposition and Protest* in response to the Tariff of 1828, popularly referred to as the "Tariff of Abominations." Up to this point Calhoun had been a nationalist serving as Secretary of War in the Monroe Administration and as Vice President during the Adams Administration, and he would soon be Vice President in the Jackson Administration.

The Nullification Crisis ensued and Calhoun's *Exposition and Protest* would become South Carolina doctrine and eventually evolve into Southern doctrine. Following the lead of Jefferson so many years before, Calhoun would state:

If it be conceded, as it must be by every one who is the least conversant with our institutions, that the sovereign powers delegated are divided between the General and State Governments, and that the latter hold their portion by the same tenure as the former, it would seem impossible to deny to the States the right of deciding on the infractions of their powers, and the proper remedy to be applied for their correction. The right of judging, in such cases, is an essential attribute of sovereignty, of which the States cannot be divested without losing their sovereignty itself, and being reduced to a subordinate corporate condition. In fact, to divide power, and to give to one of the parties the exclusive right of judging of the portion allotted to each, is, in reality, not to divide it at all; and to reserve such exclusive right to the General Government (it matters not by what department to be exercised), is to convert it, in fact, into a great consolidated government, with unlimited powers, and to divest the States, in reality, of all their rights. It is impossible to understand the force of terms, and to deny so plain a conclusion.²

These words would resonate in the minds of South Carolina's leaders for decades, so much so that historian William J. Freehling called the Nullification Crisis a "Prelude to Civil War."³ Although Calhoun would die on March 31, 1850, warning against disunion, his words from the *Exposition and Protest* would echo throughout the South during the decade of the 1850s as constant controversy over the issue of slavery continuously dominated federal politics. As the nation expanded and as the 1850s ended, the leaders of South Carolina finally followed through on their threats from decades past using these very same words to legitimize secession.

² John C. Calhoun, *The Papers of John C. Calhoun Volume X, 1825-1829*, Ed. By Clyde N. Wilson and W. Edwin Hemphill, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 506.

³ William J. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

In *The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience*, Emory M. Thomas details why Calhoun, who had always loved and wanted to lead the Union, wrote the *Exposition and Protest* and his relationship to the generation of Southern leaders who led the nation into civil war: “He had sought to preserve the Union by threatening to destroy it and succeeded—at least for the moment. Ironically, Southern political leadership in the decade after Calhoun’s death succeeded where Calhoun had failed and failed where Calhoun had succeeded.”⁴ In the 1850s, Southern politicians used Calhoun’s sectional rhetoric but they did not embrace his Unionist emotion.

The more radical politicians who followed Calhoun followed his logic to its ultimate conclusion. They added nothing significant to states rights Calhounism. And because many of the Southern leaders who matured in the 1850s had not experienced Calhoun’s nationalist enthusiasm, they were willing, even conditioned, to accept secession as a reality rather than as a threat. They raised state rights to the level of political gospel, and as such it may be considered an important part of the antebellum Southern way of life.⁵

By this time most Southern leaders had been raised on the words of Calhoun, especially in South Carolina where “Calhounism” had dominated for decades. Secession was not a threat but a physical reality and they were not afraid after decades of failed attempts to finally bring that reality to fruition.

In his book *Nationalism and Sectionalism in South 1852-1860: A Study of the Movement for Southern Independence*, Harold S. Shultz summed up the mindset of white South Carolinians best when he opened the book by stating:

⁴ Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 7.

⁵ *Ibid*, 7.

Political leadership in ante-bellum South Carolina was a patriotic duty. The citizens of the state, sensitive to internal decline and eternal danger, sought the best men the state could offer to conduct their political affairs. Any man who had extraordinary abilities for political leadership was solicited to take part in public life.⁶

Since South Carolina was at the center of most of the sectional strife from the Nullification Crisis up to the Civil War, strong political leadership was a necessity in order to press the states' rights doctrine throughout the South and to thwart the work of Northern abolitionists, but ultimately these extraordinary men led the nation to war.

Along with strong political leadership South Carolinians also realized a need for strong military leadership, especially as the state continued to oppose the federal government. Thus, in the wake of the Nullification Crisis came the Palmetto State's first military schools. In *Long Gray Lines: The Southern Military School Tradition, 1839-1915*, historian Rod Andrew Jr. explains how these military schools came about and why they would eventually be perceived to be so important in South Carolina and the South:

In 1842 Governor Richardson induced the general assembly to consider a bill to convert Columbia's Arsenal and Charleston's Citadel into military schools. South Carolina's nullification battle with the federal government was a recent memory, and Richardson stressed in his annual message to the legislature that the state must ultimately rely on military readiness, not the justice of its cause, if it hoped to resist federal encroachments on state authority. It was therefore necessary to protect and preserve the state's arsenals and arms. [...]. While North-South tension provided only a vague and often unspoken justification for the original founding of the first military schools, it soon became far more important. The three original state military academies had been in existence less than a decade before some southerners began to regard them as potential bulwarks against assaults on slavery.⁷

⁶ Harold S. Shultz, *Nationalism and Sectionalism in South Carolina 1852-1860: A Study of the Movement for Southern Independence*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 3.

⁷ Rod Andrew Jr., *Long Gray Lines: The Southern Military School Tradition, 1839-1915*, (Chapel Hill:

Initially these military schools did provide an advantage to the South in the War, but ultimately the military schools were not enough of an advantage to offset the overwhelming odds that favored the North as both the political leadership that pushed the nation into the Civil War and the students of the military schools met defeat on the battlefield.

Historians have also described how white Southerners easily bonded to form a notion of Confederate nationalism that would serve as their driving force during the Civil War. In *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South*, historian Drew Gilpin Faust stated, “religion provided a transcendent framework for southern nationalism. During the antebellum period, southerners had portrayed themselves as the most godly of Americans, and independence and civil war only reinforced this identification.”⁸ While religion did play a pivotal role in the uniformity of all Southern citizens, it could hardly be identified as the sole instigator of Confederate nationalism or the building block by which it progressed. Years of sectional strife that had Southern leaders coming together for the protection of slavery against Northern abolitionists provided the framework for Confederate nationalism and the subsequent blatant racism in the post-war South kept it alive as the “Lost Cause” movement prevailed over the next century.

In *A Shattered Nation: The Rise & Fall of the Confederacy 1861-1868*, historian Anne Sarah Rubin argues that Confederate nationalism did not end with the collapse of

The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 20.

⁸ Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 22.

the Confederate States. “Southern whites wanted to have their cake and eat it, too: they self-consciously held onto aspects of their Confederate past, in the process transforming Southern identity.”⁹ This seems to be a reverse from the transformation that they experienced during the war, in which they transformed from an agrarian lifestyle to an industrial lifestyle in order to achieve victory. Now they glorified the “Lost Cause” and venerated the ideology that they held dear before the war. Southerners were now more distinct than ever; they could play the part of good Americans while at the same time displaying Southern nationalism and glorifying those who gave all for the South.

Yet the leaders of South Carolina, in tune with their radical nature, seemed to take Southern nationalism further than the entire region in general. Leaders of the Palmetto State were South Carolinians first and foremost. Although they played an integral role concerning Confederate nationalism immediately leading up to and during the War, their South Carolina nationalism during the antebellum period and immediately following the Civil War throughout Reconstruction demonstrated that the Palmetto State’s radical nature was still intact. Many historians have written about Reconstruction in the South and some have written about it in South Carolina, but they have not provided enough in-depth analysis pertaining to the ruling class of the Palmetto State. To fully understand the mindset of the white elite of South Carolina is to comprehend their actions during the first year of Presidential Reconstruction in which they frightened and alarmed the Radical

⁹ Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise & Fall of the Confederacy 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 141.

Republicans of the North by basically going about business as usual as if the conflict had never happened.

There are many insightful works on Reconstruction as a whole, but none better than historian Eric Foner's over the last few decades. In *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877*, Foner best sums up what Reconstruction has meant to the United States by stating: "Reconstruction was not merely a specific time period, but the beginning of an extended historical process: the adjustment of American society to the end of slavery."¹⁰ He explains that the destruction of slavery created many more questions than it answered and that many of these questions continue to haunt the United States to this day. Foner is correct in his assessment that slavery was the "central institution" of the antebellum South and in his assertion that the ghosts of Reconstruction are still part of the racial problems that exist in the United States to this day. Although his work is an excellent all encompassing view of Reconstruction as a whole, he does not provide enough depth to fully appreciate the uniqueness of South Carolinians during this pivotal time in American history.

There are also many other historians who encompass the Civil War and Reconstruction as if it is one period, yet these works usually focus more on the War and Radical Reconstruction than on Presidential Reconstruction. One such work is *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* by James M. McPherson. Although this is a great work, it represents more of a generalization of the Reconstruction period as

¹⁰ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1988), xxv.

McPherson basically mentions only the larger issues during the period rather than provide in-depth analysis. Like many studies before it, the book seems redundant as it lumps together the whole South in unison as if each state was experiencing the same form of issues during Reconstruction, especially during Presidential Reconstruction in which most Reconstruction works are really brief.¹¹

Still, there are some historians, such as Dan T. Carter, who have focused predominantly on Presidential Reconstruction. In *When the War was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867*, Carter makes many generalizations about Presidential Reconstruction which he calls “self-Reconstruction,” but like most other historical works of the period he encompasses the whole South with his thesis and many of his assertions do not necessarily pertain to South Carolina. Carter reasons that most of the conservative leadership during this fragile period were former “Whigs” and that the “black codes” were nothing more than a form of appeasement meant to satisfy Northern whites and reactionary Southern whites. However, South Carolina was a state dominated during the antebellum period by one party, and its black codes were nothing more than the old slave codes in which they replaced the word slave with the word black. His premise that Southern whites were basically confused, not having any stern expectations from Northern leaders concerning African-Americans and their rights is simply not true for South Carolina. In the Palmetto State the men who had led the nation down the path

¹¹ James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982).

to war in the first place were simply not that ignorant, as they knew exactly what they were doing.¹²

These historians make their respective arguments by generalizing the entire South as a distinct region, yet the foundation of this thesis hinges on the premise that the ruling class in South Carolina were distinct even within their region, and their radical nature never wavered during Presidential Reconstruction despite the devastating effects of the Civil War. That is why they placed the same people in public office who so readily seceded from the Union in the first place. They never thought that they were wrong and they essentially held no regrets about their actions. For these reasons, these radical leaders never hesitated after the Civil War when they ratified their new state constitution, enacted the black codes, and gave African-Americans only limited freedoms. They were the leadership of South Carolina and they vehemently defied Northern leaders' desires, costing them a decade of Radical Reconstruction in which they still plotted and schemed until Redemption.

Despite the broad nature of these previously mentioned works, they have still been invaluable inspirations to this work, but there are also many studies that have provided much more valuable influence for their focus on South Carolina. Lillian A. Kibler's *Benjamin F. Perry: South Carolina Unionist* provides the most in-depth analysis of Governor Perry's life, added with his own published works it offers a clear picture of his political positions, status, and love for the state. Likewise, Walter B.

¹² Dan T. Carter, *When the War was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 3-4.

Cisco's *Wade Hampton: Confederate Warrior, Conservative Statesman* provided invaluable information on Wade Hampton III and along with his personal papers at the South Caroliniana Library in Columbia, provides a clearer picture of Hampton's thinking before, during, and after the Civil War. These sources are the foundations that make this examination possible, as both Perry and Hampton evolved during this revolutionary period in the history of South Carolina.

There are also many other works including Lacy K. Ford's *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, Manisha Sinha's *The Counterrevolution of Slavery*, Steven A. Channing's *Crisis of Fear*, and W. Scott Poole's *South Carolina's Civil War*, that have provided invaluable information for this thesis. Ford and Sinha's works establish the radical nature that was established in South Carolina as the one-party system prevailed. Channing's work is an in-depth analysis of secession in South Carolina and it demonstrates exactly how radical the Palmetto State's leaders had become as they led the state out of the Union. Poole's work is a narrative account of South Carolina's participation in the Civil War and the devastating effects that followed.

Then there are other significant studies. Walter Edgar's *South Carolina: A History* is useful for the general information it provides for the narrow focus of this thesis, but the most important work besides the primary source material is Richard Zuczek's *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina*. Zuczek's work covers the entire Reconstruction period in South Carolina, but it gives the most detailed account of Presidential Reconstruction in the Palmetto State. Zuczek states:

Considering the Palmetto State's integral role in both the Civil War and Reconstruction (it experienced both the longest period of Reconstruction and

the largest and most dynamic federal presence), the examination of Carolina politics, personages, and society is necessary to an understanding of the era as a whole. Yet despite the bulk of scholarship, the central figures in this drama, conservative white Carolinians, have received a surprisingly small amount of attention. Confederates and planters, crackers and politicians, held the key to Reconstruction; their support, their indifference, or their opposition would have a critical impact on the present and future conditions of the state.¹³

Zuczek is exactly right and even though his monumental work provides an excellent picture of Reconstruction in South Carolina, it does not focus primarily on the first year after the war which has allowed for this thesis. Hopefully this work will provide a better understanding of the men who instigated the most dynamic period in the history of the United States and why they still defied the federal government until they finally won the war in April 1877.

¹³ Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), ix.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RADICAL NATURE OF SOUTH CAROLINA AND SECESION

In the many decades that preceded the Civil War, South Carolina held the reputation as the most radical state in the Union. Part of the rebellious nature associated with the Palmetto State was directly related to its greatest leader and representative, John C. Calhoun, but the real reason that South Carolina held this distinction centered on the state's one-party political system. No other state in the Union held this distinction until secession. Whether the people of South Carolina were nullifiers, secessionists, or unionists, they all were truly loyal to the one-party system that existed in the state and every white citizen in the state put on a united front when the state came into conflict with the national government, showing uncanny unity that helped the state earn its radical reputation. Eventually the radical nature associated with the white elite in South Carolina would come to a boil and the citizens of the Palmetto State would secede from the Union. This would put the young nation on a course for war that would not change South Carolina's rebellious nature despite the negative consequences linked to the war's outcome.

Members of the white elite in South Carolina did not rebel against the federal government because they were looking for a fight. They rebelled because they would do anything to protect the slave labor that supported their economic system and agrarian way of life. One historian has commented, "the willingness to secede from the Union, to tear apart the American experiment in liberty, seemed strange for a state that so heavily

emphasized its role in creating that union during the American Revolution.”¹⁴ It is exactly their role during the American Revolution that made them willing to fight to protect the institution of slavery against a government that they felt was becoming just as tyrannical as the British before the Revolution. The process toward secession was natural to the leaders of South Carolina because they felt as if they were following in the footsteps of the Founding Fathers who also rebelled against despotic leadership.

To the leaders of South Carolina the United States of America was founded as an agreement between the original thirteen colonies in defiance of tyranny, and any of the members who voted to join the young nation by ratifying the U.S. Constitution had just as much right to vote to remove their state from the Union. This is the ideology on which John C. Calhoun based his *South Carolina Exposition and Protest* of 1828, in which he asserted that individual states could void any federal legislation that they deemed unconstitutional.¹⁵ This type of ideology is based on the 10th Amendment to the Constitution: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”¹⁶ Calhoun used this amendment to introduce his doctrine of nullification to combat the Tariff of 1828, but his theory of nullification and states’ rights went so far as to claim that individual states could even secede from the Union instead of simply nullify any

¹⁴ W. Scott Poole, *South Carolina’s Civil War: A Narrative History*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005), 1.

¹⁵ John C. Calhoun, *The Papers of John C. Calhoun Volume X, 1825-1829*, Ed. by Clyde N. Wilson and W. Edwin Hemphill, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 508.

¹⁶ U. S. Constitution, Amendment X.

particular legislation. This type of ideology by Calhoun was not unique because Thomas Jefferson and James Madison had proposed similar ideas in the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions in opposition to the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798.¹⁷

Jefferson and Madison opposed the Federalist legislation because they felt that the Constitution was nothing more than a compact agreement between the states. Calhoun followed their example by building his ideology concerning nullification and states' rights around their original ideas. Calhoun's *Exposition and Protest* could be construed as the beginning of South Carolina's radical and rebellious ways. However, the decline of Federalist power in the late 1790s especially after passage of the Alien and Sedition Act really sealed the fate of a second party in the state, and this should be viewed as the beginning of the state's rebellious ways. The Federalist Party's popularity declined to the extent that no Federalist held a significant office in the state and the party was now deemed in South Carolina as the party that threatened basic liberties. This would lead to an absence of any type of organized political opposition in South Carolina leading all the way to the Civil War.¹⁸ Thus, the establishment of the one-party system in the state began around the beginning of the century, and from this point the Palmetto State began to form its radical nature based originally on the words of Jefferson but eventually on the words of Calhoun.

The establishment of a one-party system was not immediate but derived slowly during the early 1800s as Jefferson established his agrarian legacy that would eventually

¹⁷ Kermit L. Hall ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 764-765.

¹⁸ Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 254.

include the successful presidential campaigns of Madison and Monroe. During the early years of the Republic the state had more serious political problems that were more directly related to the factionalism that had existed in the state for over forty years between the citizens of the backcountry and the lowcountry. The establishment of a more central state capital than Charleston was a major issue and eventually the two sections of the state agreed on Columbia as the location for the legislature. There were also problems with proper apportionment of lawmakers between the two sections of the state, but the biggest issue being the lowcountry's paranoia that the backcountry was hostile toward slavery. This was before the invention of Eli Whitney's cotton gin and the cotton boom that precipitated the need for slaves in the backcountry.¹⁹

Even during the early years of the country, the issue of slavery was a tense subject, especially in South Carolina where the rice planters of the lowcountry relied heavily on slave labor. These planters felt that the backcountry was conspiring against their economic prosperity. The raging slave rebellion in Saint Domingue, coupled with the backcountry's dislike of slavery, heightened the lowcountry's alarm at the prospect of slave insurrection, especially since they were outnumbered by a nearly 3 to 1 margin by their slaves. The growing religious atmosphere spearheaded by Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists in the backcountry only added to the anxiety of the lowcountry planters, but the turn of the 19th century would finally bring about reconciliation. According to Walter Edgar, "the decline of the Federalist Party and the

¹⁹ Ibid, 255-258.

linkages between lowcountry Jeffersonians and leading inland planters such as Robert Anderson, Andrew Pickens, and John Ewing Colhoun of Pendleton District; Robert Hunter of Laurens; and Wade Hampton of Richland made the possibility of reform more likely.”²⁰ Both sides agreed to create a publicly-funded college in Columbia to educate the young men of the two feuding sections in rhetoric similar to the one that would guarantee the future unity of the state.

The newly launched South Carolina College would become the hub of political radicalism in the state, as the school’s president, Thomas Cooper, would teach the political rhetoric of states’ rights and secession to an entire generation of aspiring young politicians. According to historian John Edmunds, “many of his students imbibed Cooper’s radical political philosophy, which propounded an ideology of strict construction of the Constitution with the correctness of states’ rights.”²¹ Cooper was viewed as being radical because he had already been imprisoned under the Alien and Sedition Acts for attacking the administration of John Adams and charged with libel for supposedly writing false, scandalous, and malicious words against the President. Cooper was known to have had a profound influence on Jefferson, who subsequently had an impact on John C. Calhoun, whose influence in turn would touch the entire South. Ironically, Cooper attacked Calhoun while he was the Vice-President for being “inconsistent and faint-hearted” because of Calhoun’s desire and ambition to be President

²⁰ Ibid, 259.

²¹ John B. Edmunds, Jr., *Francis W. Pickens and the Politics of Destruction*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 7.

of the United States. That desire directly conflicted with the states' rights ideology of the electorate in South Carolina and would eventually cause him to lose favor in Washington, as he became more of a sectional leader after penning the *South Carolina Exposition and Protest*.²²

While president of South Carolina College, Cooper influenced the views of many future state leaders, including Francis W. Pickens, the secession governor; William H. Gist, his predecessor who left office the day that the Secession Convention met; Christopher G. Memminger, the first Secretary of the Treasury for the Confederate States of America and author of the *Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union and the Ordinance of Secession*; and Milledge L. Bonham and Andrew G. Magrath, who both served as governors during the Confederacy. This led to the general assumption that he was the schoolmaster of state rights doctrines, which he fondly accepted.²³ His pamphlet *Consolidation* established his position as a radical advocate of the states' rights doctrine as he warned against consolidating too much power within the federal government.²⁴ He included his political and economic beliefs in his college lectures and influenced a generation of young men who would eventually become political leaders in South Carolina. With a public school led by Cooper teaching a common curriculum to future

²² Dumas Malone, *The Public Life of Thomas Cooper 1783-1839*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1961), 295.

²³ *Ibid*, 282.

²⁴ *Consolidation, An Account of Parties in the United States from the Convention of 1787, to the present Period*, Columbia, S.C., Printed at the "Times and Gazette" office, 1830.

leaders' sectional strife within the state diminished, and further unified the state politically under one party.

Most of the future leaders in South Carolina would attend South Carolina College and a whole generation would be indoctrinated in states' rights rhetoric under the tutelage of Thomas Cooper before he resigned as president because of his religious views. The South had many colleges, but South Carolina College was one of the few in the region that actually taught on a collegiate level, making it a popular institution for young Southerners.²⁵ Cooper was one of the prized members of the faculty, though eventually his outspoken views on religion brought about an outrage from the increasing numbers of Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians in the state who eventually started their own denominational colleges. Despite Cooper's eventual resignation for being an outspoken Deist, his lasting effect on the Palmetto State would be his political rhetoric that influenced so many men who would eventually be responsible for seceding from the Union and leading the nation into civil war.

Thomas Cooper would plant the seed in the future leaders of the state, but John C. Calhoun would be the man that actually watered the seed as these future leaders grow into prominent men within the state. Calhoun was the leader of a trio composed of Francis W. Pickens, James H. Hammond, and Robert Barnwell Rhett. A closer look at each of these individuals is enough to provide a definitive view of the forces that

²⁵ Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 299.

destroyed the Union.²⁶ All three of Calhoun's disciples were swayed by the rhetoric of Cooper at South Carolina College and used their remarkable talents to advocate the states rights position. Using the words and intellect of their gallant leader well after his death, these men would be the catalyst of the secession movement that eventually would lead to war.

More important than the individual men eventually responsible for secession was the political system established long before any of them achieved power. The one-party system in South Carolina became a norm during the Jefferson administration because the Federalist Party was deemed a threat to American liberties. At that time, the state had been in the vanguard of national unity, but the establishment of a one-party system within the state would eventually lead to the radicalism that would define the state on the eve of secession in December 1860. South Carolina had a unique brand of politics, one without restraints of party or party discipline. South Carolina leaders could mobilize quickly and protest more radically than any other state. They had grassroots democracy without the restraints of the party system, which proved to be a fine atmosphere for radicalism. Calhoun actually enjoyed the political freedom that was so popular in his home state and saw little chance in the radicalism getting out of control.²⁷

Calhoun may have been naïve about the state's political freedom and concerns about unchecked radicalism, but he fought in earnest to keep the one-party system as the

²⁶ John B. Edmunds, Jr., *Francis W. Pickens and the Politics of Destruction*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 9.

²⁷ Lacy K. Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860*, (New York: Oxford University press, 1988), 144.

“status quo” within the state. Calhoun Democrats steadily opposed the Whig Party in the summer of 1840 in what would be the first elections since 1812 along national lines in the Palmetto State. The buildup to the election of 1840 caused Calhoun and his followers much anxiety in the months before the election, unlike anything they had faced in years.

Calhoun guided his men with a steady hand and fought against the Whigs in every county in the state. The matters at hand were of such significance that Calhoun stayed close to home and declined a Fourth of July speaking engagement in New York City. In his letter dated June 4, 1840, which was later published in the *Greenville Mountaineer* in October, Calhoun stated how important the upcoming elections were to the Democratic Party:

Thus regarded, never has there been a more important crisis since the adoption of the Constitution. The issue involved is one which may well call for the energy and efforts of freemen. The final decision cannot long be postponed.—Now is the time for action. A few years must decide for or against us. Government cannot stand still. It must advance or recede; but when its direction is once taken, if it should be in a wrong direction—against the course for which we contend, it will be beyond human power to restore it short of revolution.²⁸

Calhoun was adamant about what had to be done to ensure the Democratic dominance in South Carolina that had existed since the decline of the Federalist Party. He would make sure that victory would be assured despite the long-term consequences of the unchecked radicalism fostered by this one-party system.

With the elections quickly approaching, Calhoun continuously explained the differences between the two parties as the same factionalism that separated the

²⁸ John C. Calhoun letter to Charles P. Daly dated June 4, 1840, as printed in the *Greenville Mountaineer* dated October 2, 1840, np.

Federalists of Hamilton and the Republicans of Jefferson from the inception of Washington's first cabinet. In a letter to Larkin Stowe, Calhoun observed:

It ought never be forgotten, that the strength of the [Democratic] party lies in its strict adherence to principles. As long as it so adheres, it is invincible; but when it departs from them, it becomes relatively weaker, than its opposite; and this from the nature and constitution of the two parties and the principles on which they rest. [...]. Fortunately we have a standard, which the whole party acknowledges, by which the truth of what I assert may be tested with certainty; I refer to the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions on the Alien and Sedition laws of '98, and the Virginia report, on the same, in '99. Brought to this test, it will be found, that there is not a principle, or measure, which they condemn in such just and severe terms, except the Alien and Sedition laws themselves, which has not since been countenanced and acted on by the party, to a greater or less extent; such is the effect of power long possessed, on parties and individuals.²⁹

Calhoun recognized that his party's unique dominance in the state of South Carolina was tied directly to the decline of the Federalist Party after the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. This is because the Acts were deemed as infractions against personal liberty, which the original thirteen colonies had fought so gallantly for during the American Revolution. Calhoun used these facts in the same manner that he had exploited the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions to write his *Exposition and Protest*, which challenged the power of the federal government by preaching state sovereignty and nullification.

The Palmetto State would eventually be associated with radicalism and this was due to the white elite's ability to keep a one-party system. The Whigs won a few seats in the state legislature during the 1840 elections but not enough to change the existing social

²⁹ John C. Calhoun letter to Larkin Stowe dated September 12, 1840, as printed in the *Greenville Mountaineer* dated October 23, 1840, np.

and political order in the state. Calhoun had kept the status quo intact and handily defeated the opposition that dared to challenge his authority within not only his home state, but also within the entire South. He felt that his own effectiveness as South Carolina's and the South's chief advocate, depended on unity within the state, and he had assured that the Palmetto State would remain united by making sure the Whigs had no future there. Despite winning a few seats in the legislature, the Whigs ultimately bowed to defeat in South Carolina and the Calhounites reigned supreme, keeping their radical one-party system virtually intact.³⁰

The defeat of the Whigs in South Carolina was important for more than one reason. First, the radical leaders of the state kept their unchecked one-party system intact without anyone to oppose them. Another important issue at the time was the growing abolition movement in the North that made the defeat of the Whigs that much more important. With the abolitionist movement growing rapidly in every Northern state by the 1840s, white Southerners increasingly followed Calhoun and quit apologizing for the institution of slavery by vigorously defending it as a positive good.³¹ As the institution of slavery became increasingly criticized in the North, the South united under Calhoun's ideology of states' rights by applying it directly to the defense and protection of slavery.

In the decade since the nullification crisis, all of the southern states that had been skeptical of South Carolina's radical action and seemingly rebellious attitude over the tariff issue gradually came back within the Palmetto State's circle, unofficially making

³⁰ Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 338.

³¹ *Ibid*, 339.

Calhoun their voice and leader. With most of the South following the lead of South Carolina on the issue of states' rights in order to protect the institution of slavery, Unionist factions rose again within the Democratic Party of each state to oppose any action that might endanger the integrity of the Union. This is where South Carolina was more distinct than any other southern state—most of the Unionists in the Palmetto state were not willing to give up slavery to preserve the nation; they were South Carolinians first and Americans second. Even the prominent Unionist and future provisional governor during Presidential Reconstruction, Benjamin F. Perry, began seeing eye-to-eye with Calhoun on national issues. Historian Lillian A. Kibler sentimentally stated that the “threatened interference by Congress with slavery had aroused his Southern blood.”³² This by no means meant that Perry wanted to secede from the Union, but it does demonstrate that most of the white elite in South Carolina understood that their entire economy revolved around the institution of slavery and any threat to that institution was a threat to their whole way of life.

Like most Southern states, South Carolina was a place where political leadership was a social custom. Human aspirations toward power often explain why men go into public life, but even the lures of power cannot explain why so many individuals of great aptitude took part in South Carolina politics.³³ Most of the political leadership in the late

³² Lillian Adele Kibler, *Benjamin F. Perry: South Carolina Unionist*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1946), 220.

³³ Harold S. Schultz, *Nationalism and Sectionalism in South Carolina 1852-1860: A Study of the Movement for Southern Independence*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 5.

1840s and through the 1850s had never known a South Carolina that was not being radical and defiant toward the federal government. Men like R. Barnwell Rhett, James Henry Hammond, and Francis W. Pickens, Calhoun lieutenants, had gained all of their first experiences in politics during the nullification crisis. All of them had gone to school at South Carolina College and had been influenced by Thomas Cooper. Then there were younger politicians such as James L. Orr, James Chesnut, Lawrence Keitt, and Milledge Bonham whose entire childhoods and adult lives had consisted of a heavy dose of southern patriotism and states' rights. They had never known a content South Carolina within the Union. All of these men were South Carolinians molded and raised in the image of John C. Calhoun and by the end of the 1850s their actions would decide the fate of the Union.³⁴

Cooper and Calhoun both died before secession and war became reality but their legacies were tied directly to the conflict that almost tore the nation apart. South Carolina was the perfect place for Cooper to settle and expound on his radical political views after fleeing England because of his support for the French Revolution in the 1790s. In South Carolina he finally found a place where his political and economic views were not in the minority, and he used his position at South Carolina College to perpetuate his beliefs in states' rights. Cooper found nearly an entire state that followed his dogma dating back to his support for Jefferson against the Alien and Sedition Acts. Cooper and Jefferson were such close friends that Jefferson sent his grandson to South Carolina College to learn directly from Cooper. Similarly, Calhoun established a long-standing legacy not only in

³⁴ Ibid, 9.

South Carolina, but also in the entire South as the spokesman for states' rights.

Ironically, Calhoun was originally a "War Hawk" who supported the growth and power of the federal government until the realization that he would not achieve his greatest ambition. He completely reinvented himself around the base of his power in South Carolina advocating states' rights.

Both men would play their part in establishing the radical nature of South Carolina politics but neither man can claim full responsibility for the radical nature that ensued in the Palmetto State. It was a culmination of many events along with their rebellious rhetoric that would lead South Carolina out of the Union. Without any party opposition, the "Fire-Eaters" who led the young nation into civil war did so by literally following the words of Cooper and Calhoun with only limited resistance from local Unionists. Even that resistance was not enough to save the Union, because the Unionist of South Carolina were also part of the one-party system that for decades had dominated the state and they believed in the slave labor economy which enabled their way of life.

Two incidents in the 1850s would fuel the sectional rift that had steadily developed in the previous two decades and eventually lead to South Carolina seceding from the Union. The first was the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 which was intended to settle the dispute over slavery in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska by giving the settlers "popular sovereignty." This phrase effectively meant that they could decide for themselves whether or not their territory would be a free state or slave state when the territory was admitted into the Union. Due to Northern hostility to slavery, Northern Democrats were in a precarious position; they had to choose between being friendly to

Southern Democrats or the support of their constituents, and they could not have both.³⁵ South Carolina's white elite understood this dilemma and realized they had to do what was best for South Carolina and not the Democratic Party. This realization within the Democratic Party established that the antislavery issue was the most powerful political movement in the North and the rush was on to get control of these two territories by both Northern abolitionist and Southern slave interests.

What ensued was the infamous "Bleeding Kansas." Antislavery abolitionists and proslavery Southerners clashed in a number of skirmishes and massacres for control of the territory. The turmoil in Kansas was a precursor to the Civil War and the fighting that took place there could actually be regarded as the first battles of the conflict. During this time the radical nature of South Carolina's leaders became a headline again as Preston Brooks attacked Charles Sumner in the Senate chambers. On May 19, 1856, Sumner verbally attacked both Senator A. P. Butler and the state of South Carolina itself, because of their support for slavery in Kansas.³⁶ Brooks was Butler's cousin and decided to cane Sumner rather than challenge him to a duel, deeming him to be socially inferior. Only days after Sumner's verbal attack on Butler, Brooks accompanied by Congressman Lawrence M. Keitt of South Carolina beat Sumner senseless in the Senate chambers. The incident made Brooks a hero in the South and Sumner a martyr in the North.³⁷ Both

³⁵ Harold S. Schultz, *Nationalism and Sectionalism in South Carolina 1852-1860: A Study of the Movement for Southern Independence*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 70.

³⁶ Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 347.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 347.

Brooks and Keitt resigned their seats in the House, but both were overwhelmingly reelected by their constituents in the special elections to fill their seats.

The fighting in Kansas dragged on as antislavery forces of the North clashed with proslavery forces of the South over control of the territory. According to historian David M. Potter, “for Kansas, locally, the war was a kind of bushwhacking contest between rival factions for the control of land claims, political jobs, and local economic opportunities, as well as a struggle over slavery.”³⁸ This brought about a stronger and more unified Republican Party in the North that wanted to contain slavery and let it die by natural means. At the same time it brought to prominence a more violent type like the abolitionist John Brown. Brown made his name as an abolitionist in Kansas slaughtering proslavery families in what has been deemed the Pottawatomie Massacre in retaliation for proslavery forces sacking Lawrence, and the attack on Senator Sumner by Congressman Brooks.

Brown’s actions in Kansas, which also included helping runaway slaves reach Canada, gave him notoriety among high-ranking Northern abolitionists. Within a couple of years, he would be the most hated man in the South but a hero for all Northern abolitionists and eventually their martyr in the second major incident of the 1850s. Brown forcibly took over the U. S. Arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, intending to use its arms to equip a spontaneous slave uprising in the South. Believing himself an agent of God, Brown raided and captured the arsenal, but the slave insurrection that he dreamed

³⁸ David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis 1848-1861*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 217.

of never came about. Captured by Colonel Robert E. Lee and U. S. Marines, he was hung for his offenses by the state of Virginia.³⁹

Brown's actions horrified the South, which led to more agitation about the slave question.⁴⁰ To most Southern political leaders, Brown's raid was greater than anything they had ever experienced before with the similar insurrections of Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner. "Suddenly partisans of every hue in South Carolina were homogenized by the fear of servile insurrection and Yankee conspiracy. Regardless of whether they were slave traders or submissionists, secession men or cooperationists, they all felt the same horror and fear."⁴¹ John Brown's actions in 1859 did more to unify the South than any proposed anti-slavery legislation had ever done. Most of the white elite in the South believed that his terrorism was condoned, supported, and supplied by Northern abolitionists (which was true) and the subsequent election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 as the 16th President of the United States would lead to South Carolina following through on its threats of the previous decades to secede from the Union on December 20, 1860.

Secession did not happen overnight because there were leaders in the Palmetto state who were Unionists, including Benjamin F. Perry, Wade Hampton III, James L. Orr, and James L. Petigru. They wanted to prevent disunion if possible. As Scott Poole has observed, "Like [Robert B.] Rhett [secessionist], these Unionists displayed unalloyed

³⁹ William C. Davis, *Rhett: The Turbulent Life and Times of a Fire-Eater*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 380.

⁴⁰ John B. Edmunds, Jr., *Francis W. Pickens and the Politics of Destruction*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 142.

⁴¹ William C. Davis, *Rhett: The Turbulent Life and Times of a Fire-Eater*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 381.

devotion to African slavery. Unlike Rhett, they believed slavery safer within the Union than outside of it.”⁴² James L. Petigru, who may have been more of a loyalist than a unionist, refused to disavow the Union. But secession was inevitable and he knew that there was nothing he could do about it. Walter Edgar notes, “His old comrade in the state’s factional battles, Benjamin F. Perry of Greenville, resigned himself to secession and said that since Carolinians were “now all going to the devil...I will go with them.”⁴³ Even some who were considered moderates in South Carolina, such as the new governor Francis W. Pickens, James L. Orr, or John L. Manning, would be considered radicals in any other part of the South, which attests to the truly radical nature associated with South Carolina politics.

That radical nature had been building and festering since the demise of the Federalist Party over sixty years earlier. After six decades of unchecked and nearly unchallenged political dominance, South Carolina Democrats seemed ready to heed the words of Cooper, Jefferson, Madison, and Calhoun and make secession a reality in the aftermath of the Harpers Ferry incident. Historian Steven Channing notes, “All over the state Unionists like Perry were seriously questioning their hope that the peace and safety of the South could remain in the Union. But what could be more dramatic, or more welcome to radicals than an avowal of despair by this particular man [i.e....Perry].”⁴⁴

⁴² W. Scott Poole, *South Carolina’s Civil War: A Narrative History*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005), 11.

⁴³ Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 355.

⁴⁴ Steven A. Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 97.

Perry had been a staunch Unionist who had often clashed with nullifiers and secessionists, but he was greatly respected and admired by most prominent men within the state.

South Carolina assembled its legislature to address the problems facing the state in the wake of John Brown's raid. South Carolina was not representative of the South. The lack of a two-party system and the peculiar political structure associated with it set South Carolina apart from the rest of the South. Actually, this made South Carolina a perfect model for Southern separatism for the slaveholding South.⁴⁵ The slaveholding aristocracy of the state gathered in Columbia to set in motion the events that would ultimately lead the nation into civil war.

Benjamin F. Perry and Wade Hampton III were two of the most prominent Union men in South Carolina before secession, and would also have major impacts on the state during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Perry had opposed nullification and secession for most of his career as a state representative and senator from the Greenville District of the upstate and as the editor of the *Greenville Mountaineer*. Hampton derived from a bloodline that produced great American heroes. His grandfather Wade Hampton was a Revolutionary War hero and his father Wade Hampton II was an aide to General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. Both men were prominent within the state politically and both wanted to keep the Union intact if at all possible, but

⁴⁵ Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 2.

they both also believed in the states' right to secede from the Union if it was deemed necessary.

After most of the South Carolina delegates and many other key Southern Delegates walked out of the 1860 National Democratic Convention at Institute Hall in Charleston over conflicts about slavery, Perry remained as a representative of South Carolina and addressed the Convention. During his famous address to the Convention in May 1860, he espoused the rhetoric of a true Southerner and left no doubt about where his loyalties lay.

I stand before you, Mr. President, an old-fashioned Union Democrat, born and bred such, and such I have continued, consistently, without faltering or wavering in my faith, amidst the storms of secession and nullification which have swept over South Carolina. I am a Southern man in heart and feeling, and identified with the South, my birth-place, by every tie that is sacred on earth and every interest that can bind a man to his own native soil. I love the South, and it is because I love her, and would guard her against evils which no one can foresee or foretell, that, I am a Union man and follower of Washington's faith and creed. It was as a Democrat and a Union man that I came into this Convention, determined to do all that I could to preserve the Democratic party and the Union of the States. I came here not to sow the seeds of dissension in our Democratic ranks, but to do all that I could to harmonize the discordant materials of the party. I came in good faith, as a Democrat, to remain here, and represent the Democracy of South Carolina, and abide by the actions and nomination of this Convention. In honor I feel myself so bound, and if I had entertained other feelings and other views, I should not have taken my seat in the Convention. I had confidence in the patriotism and justice of the party to which I belong. If I had not I would not have made a common cause with them. No party can be kept together unless the members are disposed to yield something. Every one cannot carry out his own views and notions of propriety and justice.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Benjamin F. Perry, *Biographical Sketches of Eminent American Statesmen with Speeches, Addresses and Letters by Ex-Governor B. F. Perry of Greenville, S. C.*, (Philadelphia: The Ferree Press, 1887), 148-149.

Perry's address before the Convention served many purposes; most notably to assert that he was first and foremost, loyal to his native state-while being respectful of the Northern Democrats. He also warned that compromise on the issue of slavery would be the only alternative that might save the Democratic party in the upcoming elections. This address before the National Democratic Convention expressed the mindset of a South Carolina Unionist because it confirms unequivocally that he was loyal to his state.

After coming under fire for not leaving the Convention with the rest of South Carolina's representatives, later that same month Perry met with his constituency of the Fifth Congressional District in South Carolina. He wished to explain his course of action at the Convention and let the voters decide for themselves whether or not he acted properly on their behalf. He explained that nothing good could come out of breaking up the only national party⁴⁷ in the United States because that played directly into the hands of the "Black Republicans." He stated:

How any Union man can expect good to grow out of the destruction of the only national party now in existence in the United States, is, to me, incomprehensible. And so it is, how any disunionist can expect success by dividing the South into three hostile factions! Both unionists and disunionists, and co-cooperationists also, have pursued a suicidal course. The Black Republicans will be the only gainers by these factious movements.⁴⁸

Perry understood that the consequences of the National Democratic Convention in Charleston could lead the Palmetto State down the path of secession and ultimately war. He still held out hope that the factions of the Democratic party could come to a

⁴⁷ The Democratic Party was the only national party being represented in the North and South, because the Republican Party was only represented in the North.

⁴⁸ Benjamin F. Perry, *Biographical Sketches of Eminent American Statesmen with Speeches, Addresses and Letters by Ex-Governor B. F. Perry of Greenville, S. C.*, (Philadelphia: The Ferree Press, 1887), 169.

compromise and keep the Black Republicans out of the presidency, but the radicals within the state wanted nothing to do with the national party and his expectations were never met.

Like Perry, Wade Hampton III was a conservative in the most radical state in the Union. He was also one of the largest slave owners in the South and was disillusioned by the tremendous support for John Brown in the North. Even though he wanted to preserve the Union, he understood that unless Northern hostility toward the institution of slavery rapidly changed, nothing would be able to save the nation. Hampton famously espoused his views in the South Carolina Senate on December 10, 1859 when he stated:

Unless an entire revolution of public sentiment takes place at the North—unless that spirit of hostility towards us, that seems to have spread like some dread pestilence through-out their land, is rebuked, speedily and effectually by the good and true men of the North...unless that religion which preaches rapine and murder is superseded...I do not see how the Union can be or should be preserved.⁴⁹

Hampton agreed that Lincoln's election made secession necessary. He had never doubted states' rights, but his family had fought for American independence creating an American legacy. Now he would fight for Southern independence and create a Southern legacy.

The leaders of the Palmetto state were in a leadership position to decide the fate of most Southern states based on the fear of slave insurrections and uprisings brought about by the events at Harpers Ferry. John C. Calhoun had always envisioned a united South, which could dictate its own interests in order to maintain the Union. Calhoun had

⁴⁹ Anti-Slave Trade Speech of Wade Hampton in the South Carolina Senate dated December 10, 1859, as printed in the *Charleston Mercury* dated December 12, 1859.

always been a cooperationist and now nearly a decade after his death it seemed his vision of a solid South was becoming a reality. The obstacle was the resistance of Virginia, which could not be convinced by Christopher Memminger, South Carolina's envoy, that secession was quickly becoming a reality. The long history of moderate leadership provided by the Old Dominion in the South was falling into the hands of the most radical state in the Union, South Carolina. Because of Virginia's tradition of opposition to activism, South Carolina Unionists had often looked to Virginia to quell secession activity, but now it was too late.⁵⁰ Although in the minority, secessionist leaders in Virginia encouraged the leaders of South Carolina, and the lower South did unite behind the Palmetto State despite the misgivings of the upper South.

After Harpers Ferry not everyone in South Carolina gave up on the Union, but they were skeptical of a Northern power that was increasingly hostile to the institution of slavery. The election of Abraham Lincoln as president was actually the deciding blow that put the secession movement of 1860 into full swing. When U.S. Senators James Chesnut Jr. resigned from his Senate seat on November 10, 1860, and James Henry Hammond retired from his seat three days later, the walls holding up the Union definitely began to shake. In a letter dated November 30, Edward J. Pringle wrote Mary Boykin Chesnut:

I see that Mr. Chesnut has resigned and that South Carolina is hastening into a Convention, perhaps to secession. Mr. Chesnut is probably to be President of the Convention. I see all of the leaders in the State are in favor of secession. But I

⁵⁰ Steven A. Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 119.

confess I hope the black Republicans will take the alarm and submit some treaty of peace that will enable us now and forever to settle the question, and save our generation from the prostration of business and the decay of prosperity that must come both to the North and South from a disruption of the Union. However, I won't speculate. Before this reaches you, South Carolina may be off on her own hook—a separate republic.⁵¹

Everyone in the United States knew that the culmination of decades of states' rights advocacy over the institution of slavery was about to come to a boil and the pot was the state of South Carolina.

The legislature in South Carolina decided to call a state convention in order to decide the state's next course of action following the election of Lincoln. The election of delegates for the convention took place on December 6. The consensus was that the convention would take South Carolina out of the Union, which essentially made secession a non-issue in the election.⁵² The factionalism was over in the Palmetto State. Delegates elected to what would become the Secession Convention were for the most part already in agreement, with the exception of the few Unionists who would make last-ditch efforts to keep the Union together. They knew that their task was hopeless, just as it had been earlier in the year when they had tried to keep the Democratic Party together at the national convention.

Up until this point, political leaders and newspapers in South Carolina had preached secession throughout the election process. Now that the "Black Republican" Abraham Lincoln had been elected the preaching was over and it was time for action

⁵¹ Mary Boykin Chesnut, *A Diary from Dixie*, Edited by Isabella D. Martin and Myrta Lockett Avary, (Gloucester: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), 3-4.

⁵² Harold S. Schultz, *Nationalism and Sectionalism in South Carolina 1852-1860: A Study of the Movement for Southern Independence*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 228.

throughout the Palmetto State. There were large secession rallies and delegates from all over the South traveled to South Carolina to participate in the festivities. In early November, there was a rally in favor of secession in Charleston that united the delegates of South Carolina and Georgia. The preaching at these gatherings called for the protection of liberty by all means through peaceful and constitutional measures, but the feeling was eminent that war was inevitable.⁵³

With the election of Lincoln, the moderate leaders of Virginia wanted to meet with the rest of the Southern States in a conference. This greatly agitated the radical leaders of South Carolina who vehemently opposed any type of meeting with the leaders of the Old Dominion. They had proposed the same measure earlier in the year with C. G. Memminger as emissary, and were now impatient with Virginia's timidity. The *Charleston Mercury* fumed—

This is the measure which South Carolina proposed to Virginia last winter. It was hooted down, and rejected as a disunion measure. If it had been adopted, an Abolitionist would not, in all probability, have been elected President of the United States, and the sectionalism of the North might have been alarmed. It was an exceedingly conservative proposition, which Virginia was unable to appreciate. The times have now passed beyond it. Virginia may now call, but the South will not answer. She is completely demoralized in the estimation of the South; and no Southern State, intent on vindicating her rights and preserving her institutions, would go into a conference with her. She has placed the Union above the rights and institutions of the South, and will only seek a conference with the Southern States in order to bring them down to the level of her fatal Union policy. [...]. The Southern States, however, will disregard their counsels. They want *no Conference but in the Convention which will assemble to frame the Constitution, and complete the organization of a Southern Confederacy.*⁵⁴

⁵³ "Grand Secession Rally! South Carolina and Georgia United!" *Charleston Mercury*, November 10, 1860.

⁵⁴ "Southern Conference—Too Late!," *Charleston Mercury*, November 19, 1860.

Virginia received its answer to its proposed Southern Conference and along with the rest of the upper South was given an ultimatum to demonstrate where their loyalties lay. This proclamation to the leaders of Virginia was a full month before actual secession and showed just how radical the lower South, led by South Carolina, had become.

The time for calmer heads to prevail had passed and the fate of the Union lay in the hands of the leaders of the Palmetto State as they called together a state convention in Charleston to decide on the secession issue. Even the more moderate Francis W. Pickens was now sounding like a radical fire-eater in the House Hall on November 30 in which he stated: “Let your Convention assemble and pass the ordinance of secession now and forever, and soon as possible. Let them nail your flag to the mast, and let your brethren in the South, Southwest, and North, know there is one State ready to tread the path of independence, if she treads it alone.”⁵⁵ Pickens’s fiery tirade helped him secure the governorship during the convention in Charleston and the former Calhoun disciple would be credited as the leader of the state that destroyed the Union.

The General Assembly elected Pickens as governor on December 12 and he was inaugurated five days later. Historian John Edmunds notes, “He delivered a short speech to the assembled legislators in which he castigated the North for electing Lincoln; he then announced that he was ready to take the oath of office and “swear undivided allegiance to South Carolina.”⁵⁶ Then on December 20, 1860, the delegates of South Carolina met at Institute Hall in Charleston to sign the Ordinance of Secession and officially remove the

⁵⁵ “Political Meeting,” *Charleston Mercury*, December 1, 1860.

⁵⁶ John B. Edmunds, Jr., *Francis W. Pickens and the Politics of Destruction*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 153.

state from the Union. Bells were ringing, cannons were firing, and people were shouting, causing James Petigru to ask J.D. Hope if there was a fire. Hope informed Mr. Petigru that the Ordinance of Secession was signed and Petigru replied, “I tell you there is a fire; they have this day set a blazing torch to the temple of constitutional liberty and, please God, we shall have no more peace forever.”⁵⁷ Petigru may have been the only prominent true Unionist in the state. He actually may have been closer to a loyalist but he did not leave South Carolina when secession was announced, and he would never live in his beloved United States again as he would die a sad man in Charleston in 1863.

Other prominent Unionists such as Benjamin F. Perry and James L. Orr were saddened by the actions of December 20 at Institute Hall, but they remained loyal to their state, eventually serving in the Confederacy as both officers and legislators. This is what generally separated South Carolina Unionists from other Southern Unionists-most of the Unionists (the important ones) in South Carolina remained loyal to their state, while Unionists from other parts of the South left for the North or went west. The most memorable moment on the night of December 20 at Institute Hall was when Rhett arrived at the table to the cheer and applause of everyone to sign the Ordinance of Secession. There were no dry eyes in the audience as he knelt and bowed his head in silent prayer before signing the Ordinance, as he finally achieved victory in his quest for secession.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ James Petigru Carson, *Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru: The Union man of South Carolina*, (Washington: H. L. & J. B. McQueen, Inc., 1920), 364.

⁵⁸ Lillian Adele Kibler, *Benjamin F. Perry: South Carolina Unionist*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1946), 346.

In the words of Edward J. Pringle to Mary Chesnut, South Carolina was now “a separate republic” as all 169 delegates voted for the Ordinance of Secession.⁵⁹

The memory of John C. Calhoun was felt in the fiery city of Charleston during all of the excitement over secession and some wanted his presence to be pervasive during the festivities. In a letter to the editor of the *Charleston Mercury*, an anonymous Carolinian wrote that the delegates to the convention should sign the Ordinance of Secession, proceed to the tomb of Calhoun, and read the Ordinance of Secession at his final resting place. “The sublime moral effect of such a demonstration is too apparent to need any urgent appeal to the gallant sons of our city and State, to make it a subject of *immediate consideration*.”⁶⁰ The effects of Calhoun’s leadership were felt by the actions of Hammond, Pickens, and Rhett that led to the historic day in Charleston. The spirit of Calhoun was indeed present during the festivities and throughout the celebration even though he had warned against disunion as he neared death.

The state of South Carolina would become the Republic of South Carolina, an independent nation. The leaders of the Palmetto state had operated for over six decades in a one-party political system with virtually no political opposition and the ramifications were now being displayed in the form of secession. The political atmosphere within the state had always been fiery and anti-Union for all of the men who voted for the Ordinance of Secession whether Secessionists, Unionists, or Loyalists. They would have to live with their decision to break up the great American experiment, which did not

⁵⁹ “The 20th Day of December, in the Year of our Lord, 1860,” *Charleston Mercury*, December 21, 1860.

⁶⁰ “Procession to the Tomb of Calhoun,” *Charleston Mercury*, December 20, 1860.

bother many of the men because they were never really part of it. Under their one-party system they had controlled a political system for decades that defied everything that the great American experiment stood for and the next logical step was leaving that political system to form a new type of federal government that held less political power.

The leaders of South Carolina viewed themselves in much the same tradition as the Founding Fathers. They felt that there were many great minds assembled in the Palmetto State just as in the original thirteen colonies during American Independence. In the *Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union*, C. G. Memminger closed the declaration by saying:

We, therefore, the People of South Carolina, by our delegates in Convention assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, have solemnly declared that the Union heretofore existing between this State and other States of North America, is dissolved, and that the State of South Carolina has resumed her position among the nations of the world, as a separate and independent State; with full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do.⁶¹

The radical leaders of the Palmetto State even patterned this document after the Declaration of Independence, following in the historic footsteps of the Founding Fathers.

⁶¹ C. G. Memminger, *Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union and the Ordinance of Secession*, Evans & Gogswell, 1860.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PALMETTO STATE'S CIVIL WAR AND REESTABLISHMENT OF THE OLD ORDER: APRIL 1865 TO DECEMBER 1865

In *South Carolina's Civil War: A Narrative History*, W. Scott Poole stated: “A clear-eyed examination of the issues that led to the state’s precipitous decision reveals a single unsettling, but inescapable, truth; the leaders of the polity known as the state of South Carolina were, in 1860, willing to commit treason in order to defend the institution of slavery.”⁶² While Poole is not totally wrong in his assessment that South Carolinians would do anything to protect the institution of slavery, he does seem exaggerated in claiming that the leaders of South Carolina, men who grew up on the words of John C. Calhoun and teachings of Thomas Cooper advocating states’ rights, had actually committed treason. While it was not beyond them perhaps to commit treason to protect slavery, their actions were not treasonous, but under the United States Constitution perfectly legal. Indeed, only after the ratification of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution would their actions have been treasonous.

But now that South Carolina was independent of the United States, questions immediately arose over the protection of the previously federal property such as the forts around Charleston Harbor. Before resigning from their elected offices, the former U.S. representatives from South Carolina promised President James Buchanan that there would be no attacks on Major Robert Anderson, the commander of Fort Moultrie, provided he received no reinforcements and stayed at his present location. The only

⁶² W. Scott Poole, *South Carolina's Civil War: A Narrative History*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005), 3.

problem with this deal was that Anderson was never informed by the President or the Secretary of War about it. Anderson realized that Fort Moultrie was a place of patriotic significance to South Carolinians. It was named after Revolutionary War hero William Moultrie who had commanded the South Carolina militia and held off the British fleet, thus making the fort a symbol against despotic leadership. Fort Moultrie was a powder keg and the citizens of the state were the match if Anderson did anything provocative, such as breaking the agreement between the delegates of South Carolina and the President of the United States.⁶³

Major Anderson knew that he had a better chance of holding out against the rambunctious South Carolinians if he moved his men from Fort Moultrie and on December 26, 1860, he relocated them to the still incomplete but better fortified Fort Sumter. There was much outrage in the Palmetto State over who was to blame for letting Anderson sneak out of Moultrie to Sumter, and Governor Pickens received most of it. Mary Chesnut said of Pickens, “Major Anderson has moved into Fort Sumter, while Governor Pickens slept serenely.”⁶⁴ Pickens jumped on the defensive and quickly tried to salvage the situation and his fledgling reputation. He quickly seized Castle Pickney, occupied Fort Moultrie, fortified Morris Island, and seized the federal arsenal, the customhouse, and any other U.S. property within South Carolina’s territory. Pickens’s quick actions after the Anderson move from Moultrie to Sumter quieted down the

⁶³ Dan L. Morrill, *The Civil War in the Carolinas*, (Charleston: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 2002), 11-12, 16.

⁶⁴ Mary Boykin Chesnut, *A Diary from Dixie*, Edited by Isabella D. Martin and Myrta Lockett Avary, (Gloucester: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), 4-5.

criticisms he was receiving from the gentry of the state who did not want him as governor.

Although he was initially criticized for sleeping on the job in the aftermath of the Anderson incident, Pickens's actions afterward proved that he was an able executive and the legislature of the Palmetto Republic awarded him with extraordinary powers and created an executive council to act as his cabinet. On December 30, 1860, Pickens chose A. G. Magrath as Secretary of State, D. F. Jamison as Secretary of War, C. G. Memminger as Secretary of the Treasury, A. G. Garlington as Secretary of the Interior, and the Lieutenant Governor, W. W. Harlee, as Postmaster.⁶⁵ The Governor now had the power to wage war, negotiate treaties, and send and receive ambassadors. Since he was the chief executive of the Palmetto Republic, he was also responsible for negotiations with the U.S. president, intelligence, coastal defense, state militia, and appointments to government offices and commissions within the militias. The pressure on Pickens was immense and he did an able job for an upstart freestanding government even while men such as Robert Barnwell Rhett had already begun calling for an immediate storming of Sumter. Pickens, however, waited.⁶⁶

Now that South Carolina had seceded from the Union and established itself as an independent republic with its own governing infrastructure, the only thing left was to

⁶⁵ John B. Edmunds, Jr., *Francis W. Pickens and the Politics of Destruction*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 157.

⁶⁶ W. Scott Poole, *South Carolina's Civil War: A Narrative History*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005), 27.

bring the rest of the Southern states into the secession movement and create a Confederacy of slave-holding states. Sending out representatives to speed up the secession movement elsewhere was also part of Pickens's job as chief executive of the Palmetto Republic. In early 1861, six other Southern states of the Lower South passed articles of secession, starting with Mississippi (January 9th), Florida (January 10th), Alabama (January 11th), Georgia (January 17th), Louisiana (January 26th), and Texas (February 1st). They assembled in Convention in Montgomery, Alabama, to form the Confederate States of America on February 8th, electing Jefferson Davis the next day as their provisional president.⁶⁷ The fire-eaters from South Carolina pushed Robert Barnwell Rhett for the presidency, but the devout secessionist was deemed too radical even for the new Confederacy. While the Palmetto Republic was short-lived, South Carolina had a head start in making war preparations compared to the rest of the states in both the North and the South.

In early March, Brigadier General P. G. T. Beauregard arrived in Charleston to take over command of the Confederate military operations around the coastal region. When it was realized that there would be no amicable agreement between the United States and the Confederate States, Beauregard realized that he must take Fort Sumter. On April 11th he sent a delegation to Fort Sumter led by James Chesnut who explained to Major Anderson that cordial agreement could be reached between the two conflicting governments. Beauregard wanted Anderson to surrender the fort, but Anderson politely

⁶⁷ Dan L. Morrill, *The Civil War in the Carolinas*, (Charleston: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 2002), 50.

refused. On April 12, 1861, the first shots of the Civil War would be fired as Confederate troops from South Carolina, led by General Beauregard, began bombarding Fort Sumter without mercy. Edmund Ruffin, a devout secessionist, had the honors of firing the first shot. When Ruffin fired the first shot that began the Civil War, he instigated what many historians consider the most controversial and venerated time in the history of the United States.

Although there is not any doubt that the Civil War was fought over whether or not slavery should continue in the United States, there were other issues that also brought about this conflict. All of them, however, were associated with slavery, especially for the South. The Northern states had a free market economy based on capitalism, while the South's economy was based on the labor of slaves. In the Southern gentry's mind ending the institution of slavery would destroy the Southern economy, and then there would be the problem of what to do with the slaves once they were freed. Southerners thought that the abolition of slavery would eventually culminate in a race war and they had no problem going to war with the North in order to protect and preserve their way of life.

What ensued was a conflict in which both sides fought with courage and honor, but eventually dragged on longer than anyone expected. The war was especially destructive in the South. South Carolina avoided most of this destruction initially, except along its coast. As Southern defeats mounted, the Confederacy began a transformation from a conservative war in which it fought for legitimacy and foreign recognition, to a more desperate and offensive-minded war to win independence from the Union. The loose Northern blockade of Southern ports tightened as the war dragged on and

Southerners were not able to get outside help. Therefore, they decided to make sacrifices against their agrarian way of life so that it would be preserved in the end. Realizing they would have to fight the war on their own, the Confederacy initiated conscription and passed the Partisan Ranger Act in April 1862, which blurred the distinction between civilians and soldiers and concentrated more power in the central government in order to win the war. This move away from Southern ideals to the kind of government more associated with the North demonstrates how desperate the South became for victory; it had no choice.

South Carolina would experience the harshest effects of the war as the conflict ended when Major General William Tecumseh Sherman marched from Atlanta to Savannah, burning or plundering everything in his path, and after he was done, he intended to do the same to South Carolina. Sherman wanted the Palmetto State to pay for its radical nature that had led to secession and the war in the first place. He was indeed coming to South Carolina, and Confederate leaders prepared for his inevitable arrival. Beauregard moved his base of operations from Augusta, Georgia, to Charleston, which he believed would be Sherman's objective.⁶⁸ Beauregard was wrong, as Sherman headed for Columbia. White citizens of South Carolina viewed him as the Devil for destroying their possessions while the African-American slaves viewed him as a liberator for setting them free. Eventually Sherman would blaze a path through the state and General Joseph

⁶⁸ W. Scott Poole, *South Carolina's Civil War: A Narrative History*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005), 142.

E. Johnston would surrender his army to him in North Carolina on April 26, 1865 after Lee had already surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865.

In the wake of Sherman's devastation was some of the most atrocious destruction of the war. While South Carolinians did not want this type of devastation, they still believed that secession had been their best course of action. After rumors of Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Emma LeConte, for example, wrote in her diary, "The South will not give up—I can not think that—but I look forward to years of suffering and grief, years of desolation and bloodshed."⁶⁹ This shows that some white citizens of South Carolina had not lost the will to fight because they would rather suffer than have the South give up and be defeated. Inevitably, however, the South was just out-manned and out-gunned. White Southerners were left with limited resources, their most valuable resource, the people they held in bondage, had been freed. Essentially, there was really no reason for the conflict to continue. The war had been fought over slavery and now slavery was dead because most of the slaves had won their freedom and the South was an occupied territory.

The Civil War produced many heroes in South Carolina, most notably General Wade Hampton III. Wade Hampton had given everything to the Southern cause during the War, even having his youngest son, Preston, die in his arms from a wound to his groin. His son Wade Hampton IV was injured during the same melee and General Hampton still led his men in battle, despite not knowing the fate of Wade IV and

⁶⁹ Emma LeConte, *When the World Ended: The Diary of Emma LeConte*, Edited by Earl Schenck Miers, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), 85.

realizing full well what had happened to Preston. As his wife traveled to Virginia to grieve with him, their family home in Columbia was pillaged as the looters took everything of value.⁷⁰ The Civil War and the consequences associated with it left Hampton with a deep need to vindicate what he had done, as he had lost so much giving nearly everything for South Carolina and the Confederacy. His personal experiences in the war helped determine his response after the war, when he initially played the good citizen until the realization set in that Northern leaders were going to make South Carolina pay for its radicalism. Hampton needed vindication for all he had lost—that is what inspired him during the latter parts of the war, and vindication would inspire him against what he deemed to be Northern tyranny.

If Hampton had any reservations about the States' Rights Doctrine as a Unionist before the War, then after the War he had totally transcended his mode of thought as he now had no doubts about states' rights. Hampton was approached by many to lead a contingent of South Carolinians seeking a secure home in another country, but showing his true mettle he mailed a letter to the editor of the *Columbia Phoenix* that demonstrated why he was such a successful leader during the war. Hampton replied:

The very fact that our State is passing through so terrible an ordeal as the present should cause her sons to cling the more closely to her. My advice to all of my fellow citizens is that they should devote their whole energies to the restoration of law and order, the reestablishment of agriculture and commerce, the promotion of education and the rebuilding of our cities and dwellings which have been laid in ashes. To accomplish these objects, the highest that patriotism can conceive, I recommend that all, who can do so should take the oath of allegiance to the United States Government, so that they may participate in the restoration of Civil

⁷⁰ Edward G. Longacre, *Gentleman and Soldier: A Biography of Wade Hampton III*, (Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 2003), 219.

Government to our State. War, after four years of heroic but unsuccessful struggle has failed to secure us the rights for which we engaged in it. To save any of our rights---to rescue anything more from the general ruin---will require all the statesmanship and all the patriotism of our citizens. If the best men of our country---those who for years past have risked their lives in her defense---refuse to take the oath, they will be excluded from the councils of the State, and its destiny will be committed of necessity to those who forsook her in her hour of need or to those who would gladly pull her down to irretrievable ruin. To guard against such a calamity, let all true patriots devote themselves with zeal and honesty of purpose to the restoration of law, the blessings of peace and the rescue of whatever liberty may be saved from the general wreck. If, after an honest effort to effect that object, we fail we can then seek a home in another country.⁷¹

Hampton essentially took command of the situation and told his fellow citizens that they were needed more now than ever despite the perilous conditions that existed within the state. Hampton wanted redemption. He had lost too much to turn back, and he would stay in the state to make sure that everything was not in vain.

Benjamin F. Perry was not the war hero like Hampton, but this once devout Unionist did serve his home state and the Confederacy. Before the war as editor of the *Mountaineer* in Greenville, Perry was criticized heavily by Nullifiers in their newspapers. This eventually led to a duel with Turner Bynum in which Perry killed the states' rights advocate.⁷² Although he opposed nullification, Perry was first and foremost a South Carolinian who believed in pride, a hard work ethic, and most importantly, honor. He had always been an able newspaperman and lawyer, but he found his calling in public office; Perry had served on the state and federal levels as a Unionist Democrat. Despite the realities of his minority position in the state, Perry never wavered in his opposition to

⁷¹ Letter from Wade Hampton to the editor of the *Columbia Phoenix*, July 27, 1865. Hampton Family Papers, Box III, Folder 84, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S.C.

⁷² Lillian Adele Kibler, *Benjamin F. Perry: South Carolina Unionist*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1946), 126-133.

nullification and secession, even though he did believe in the constitutionality of the states' rights doctrine.

With the Republican Party gaining power in the North, South Carolinians had as the presidential election of 1860 approached preached secession on a daily basis. Perry was against this action because the election of Lincoln was not an unconstitutional act but legal and constitutional, that therefore could not justify secession. On August 13, 1860, Perry sent a letter to the editors of the *Charleston Courier* which demonstrated in his opinion where the actual blame of the impending presidential election should lie. Perry stated:

The probability is that the Black Republican candidate will be elected President of the United States. It is a grievous misfortune, and one to be deeply lamented by every citizen of the South. But it must be remembered that the Southern States will have brought this misfortune, grievous as it may be, on themselves, by their own divisions and party strife. Nothing can be more clearly shown. It was predicted at the time, and the South forewarned of the impending danger.⁷³

Despite his effort, Perry was not successful in his attempts to quell secession and South Carolina would become the first state to secede from the Union only four months later. Perry had spent most of his life fighting to avoid this course of action by opposing the actions of John C. Calhoun until Calhoun's death in 1850. After that he opposed those of Calhoun's followers who carried on Calhoun's legacy. With the threat of actual war, however, Perry did not hesitate to defend his state.⁷⁴

⁷³ Benjamin F. Perry, *The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry: Volume 1 Essays, Public Letters, and Speeches*, Edited by Stephen Meats and Edwin T. Arnold, (Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1980), 141.

⁷⁴ Lillian Adele Kibler, *Benjamin F. Perry: South Carolina Unionist*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1946), 348.

Thus Perry the staunch Unionist became Perry the loyal Confederate. He always believed that the states' rights doctrine was constitutionally sound, but he never wanted it to actually come to fruition. This was noted in a speech he delivered during a public meeting after the war at the Greenville Court House on July 3, 1865, when he said:

The secession of the Southern States was far greater and very different from a rebellion proper. It was organized by constitutional sovereign States, acting in their sovereign capacity, and not by unauthorized assemblages of citizens. [...]. To call such a war a rebellion simply is a misapplication of terms. The greatest and best men of the Southern States were most conscientiously leading the war, either in council or on the field of battle.⁷⁵

Like Hampton, though, Perry had a personal reaction to wartime events that influenced his political response after the conflict. He was enraged at the total devastation that was inflicted upon the Palmetto State by General Sherman and neither man would forget the horrors as they sought to get the state back into the Union. During the War, Perry would serve in the state legislature and was appointed district attorney invoking the Confiscation Act seizing enemy property for the Confederacy, and ironically, with his home state an occupied territory after the fall of the Confederacy, Perry would be appointed provisional governor for the state of South Carolina. This alarmed many Northerners after his defiant speech in Greenville.

After four years of devastating war, there was controversy in Washington about how to bring the Southern states back into the Union. President Lincoln was lenient on this issue because he wanted to reunite the Union as quickly as possible, despite outside pressure from the more radical wing of the Republican Party led by Thaddeus Stevens in

⁷⁵ Benjamin F. Perry, *Reminiscences of Public Men with Speeches and Addresses*, (Greenville, SC: Shannon & Co., Printers, 1889), 237-239.

the House and Charles Sumner in the Senate. Both men wanted to punish rebellious Southern states severely for seceding from the Union. Lincoln would feel the joy associated with the end of the war, but he would never see the reunification that he so cherished. He was assassinated on April 14, 1865, at Ford's Theatre by John Wilkes Booth and the next day Vice-President Andrew Johnson of Tennessee was sworn in as the seventeenth President of the United States.⁷⁶ This left the white elite of South Carolina with a little more confidence as they prepared for reentry into the Union, mainly because Johnson was a Southerner and a Democrat.

Ironically, for South Carolinians, the day Lincoln was assassinated—April 15—had another meaning in the Palmetto State, which was meant as a slap in the face to all of them who had opposed and rebelled against the Union. On April 15, 1865, the *Charleston Courier* reported, “the historic old flag was yesterday replanted on Fort Sumter. The day, the occasion, and the event marks a new era for South Carolina, and hereafter will be among the most memorable in her annals.”⁷⁷ Anderson (now a Major General) raised the same flag that he lowered exactly four years to the day earlier when he surrendered the historic fort. This was done to restore Anderson's honor and to make the white elite of South Carolina realize that the war they had instigated was over. Federal troops were everywhere and within a few weeks they would occupy virtually the entire state. Reconstruction had officially begun and the leaders of the Union wanted to send a clear message as to who was in charge.

⁷⁶ “Important: Assassination of President Lincoln,” *Charleston Courier*, April 20, 1865.

⁷⁷ “Fort Sumter: The Raising of the “Old Flag” by Maj. Gen. Anderson,” *Charleston Courier*, April 15, 1865.

Hampton, who had already lost so much during the War, became increasingly bothered by Sherman's official report of his march through the Carolinas. Sherman had blamed most of the burning of Columbia on Hampton in the report, saying that Hampton ordered the destruction of cotton bales in Columbia's streets so that it would stay out of Union hands. This really agitated Hampton because it was untrue; he fired back in a letter to the editors of the New York Day Book saying:

I have just seen General Sherman's official report of his march through the two Carolinas. As this report misrepresents me, in the grossest and falsest manner, I trust that you will not deny me the right to vindicate myself. [...]. I did not order any cotton "moved into the street and fired." On the contrary, my first act on taking command of the cavalry to which I was assigned only the night before the evacuation of Columbia was to represent General Beauregard the danger to the town of firing the cotton in the streets. Upon this representation, he authorized me to give orders that NO cotton in the town should be fired, which order was strictly carried out. I left the city after the head of Sherman's column entered it, and I assert, what can be proved by thousands, that not one bale of cotton was on fire when he took possession of the city. This assertion to the contrary is false, and he knows it to be so. [...]. He shall not with impunity make me the scapegoat of his sins.⁷⁸

The controversy rekindled the fire in Hampton that something had to be done so that history did not have a one-sided view. This would help him become one of the greatest proponents of the "Lost Cause" and work strenuously for Redemption in South Carolina, because he knew that the Northern view of the war would not be representative of all that was lost in the South.

Hampton and Sherman had a history. During the waning days of the War, when Sherman decided to make it his mission to ensure that all of South Carolina would pay

⁷⁸ Letter from Wade Hampton to the editors of the New York Day Book, June 14, 1865, Box III, Folder 84, Hampton Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, SC.

for bringing about civil war. Sherman's actions during this time enraged Hampton who was already furious about all he had lost. In his memoirs, Sherman actually confessed to blaming Hampton for the burning of Columbia, because the people adored him so much and he wanted to shake the faith of South Carolinians in their war hero.⁷⁹ His plan backfired, as the white citizenry of South Carolina embraced their hero, having witnessed first hand Sherman's destruction in the Palmetto State. Sherman empowered Hampton more in South Carolina, because Hampton did not accept the official report and publicly called Sherman a liar. Short of being dead, not many had suffered as much as Hampton because of the war. He did not have much left, but he still had his honor, reputation for integrity, and respect of the white citizenry of the state.

The reestablishment of the old order did not happen over night. President Johnson and the victorious North had to deal with two tremendous questions: What to do about the status of the freed slaves; and, what to do about the rebellious southern states.⁸⁰ Luckily for white South Carolinians, as well as the rest of the Southern states, President Johnson was a native Southerner and like his predecessor (Lincoln) wished to readmit all Southern states to the Union as painlessly as possible. The President was unrestricted in his plan for Reconstruction because Congress was not in session and could not offer input with regard to his goals of readmitting states. Johnson had supporters within South

⁷⁹ Walter Brian Cisco, *Wade Hampton: Confederate Warrior, Conservative Statesman*, (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc., 2004), 155.

⁸⁰ Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 1-2.

Carolina who hoped to assist him, for “the old Unionists were not slow in seizing the initiative in restoration when the Confederacy collapsed in the spring, and most of the local reconstruction meetings were organized by them.”⁸¹ This is how Benjamin Franklin Perry received a majority of support and as part of his reconstruction plan and was eventually appointed provisional governor by Johnson.

General Hampton approved of Governor Perry’s appointment and he made his endorsement public in a letter to the editor of the *Columbia Phoenix*:

A distinguished citizen of our State---an honest man and true patriot---has been appointed Governor. He will soon call a Convention of the people which will be charged with the most vital interests of our State. Choose for this Convention your best and truest men; not those who have skulked in the hour of danger---nor those who have worshipped Mammon, while their country was bleeding at every pore---nor the politicians, who after urging war dared not encounter its hardships, but those who laid their all upon the altar of their conflict. Select such men and let them serve as your representatives. You will then be sure that your rights will not be wantonly sacrificed, nor your liberty bartered for a mess of pottage. My intention is to pursue this course. I recommend it to others.⁸²

Within a week of writing this letter, Hampton signed an application for amnesty that was fully endorsed by Governor Perry. Perry personally informed the President that Hampton had not been an agitator for secession before the war and that he was advising friends and followers to become loyal citizens to their country.⁸³

⁸¹ Donald H. Breese, *Politics in the Lower South during Presidential Reconstruction, April to November, 1865* (Dissertation: University of California Los Angeles, 1964), 54.

⁸² Letter from Wade Hampton to the editor of the *Columbia Phoenix*, July 27, 1865. Hampton Family Papers, Box III, Folder 84, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S.C.

⁸³ Walter Brian Cisco, *Wade Hampton: Confederate Warrior, Conservative Statesman*, (Washington: Brassey’s Inc., 2004), 167.

President Johnson's policy for Reconstruction, grounded as it was in the theory of "individual disloyalty rather than state disloyalty" became official on May 29, 1865, and two proclamations followed defining the course Southerners must follow.⁸⁴ The first Proclamation of Amnesty and Pardon required everyone who had supported or participated in the Confederacy to take an oath of loyalty to the Union, to deny secession, and to accept emancipation. Southerners were broken down into classes in this proclamation and fourteen separate classes had to appeal directly to the President for their pardon. The second proclamation was on the state level where a provisional governor would be appointed by the president and a convention would be called to amend the state constitution which must meet the same requirements that included accepting emancipation. Although the plan seemed severe to white South Carolinians, they soon realized that the president was granting pardons liberally despite the special classes assigned to many of the high-ranking ex-Confederates.⁸⁵

The citizens of South Carolina (both black and white) were eager for the restoration of civil government, if not for the same reasons. White South Carolinians wanted to reestablish their authority and to have federal troops removed as quickly as possible by complying as closely as possible with the President's Reconstruction demands, while black South Carolinians wanted recognition as equal citizens, and they wanted the federal troops to enforce it. Of course, there were different opinions as to the

⁸⁴ Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 11.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 11.

course South Carolina should take in order to be readmitted into the Union, as was indicated by the June 20, 1865 *Charleston Courier*:

As South Carolina was the first State to advocate the right of secession, and the theory of a Government established on the basis of slave labor, so let her now be the first to accept the new order of things. Let her people unanimously annul the Ordinance of Secession, disavow the fatal doctrine of States Rights, and acknowledge the freedom of the slave. Such a movement would be a long stride towards taking her true position in the Union, and do much to cast aside the feeling of bitterness now existing towards South Carolina in the North and West. It would also strengthen the bond of unity and sympathy with all sections.⁸⁶

This was the more popular opinion of the white elite within the state because they knew that once back into the Union, the federal troops would leave and they would assume total control over the state's affairs. That control was the real issue in the Palmetto State at this time, because the newly freed slaves heavily outnumbered the white elite and they needed to hold total power in order to keep the black population in check.

As soon as Governor Perry learned of his appointment, he headed for Washington to meet with the President. President Johnson gave Governor Perry unrestricted power and wished that Perry "would use all diligence in having the State reconstructed, and members of Congress elected to take their seats as soon as that body assembled."⁸⁷ After leaving the Executive Mansion, Governor Perry headed to his hotel and wrote his Proclamation to be published in all South Carolina newspapers. In Perry's account of his provisional governorship he stated of his proclamation:

⁸⁶"The Duty of South Carolina," *Charleston Courier*, June 20, 1865.

⁸⁷ Benjamin F. Perry, *Reminiscences of Public Men, with Speeches and Addresses*, (Greenville, SC: Shannon & Co. Printers, 1889), 247.

In it I restored to office all civil officers, who were in office at the suspension of civil government in South Carolina. They were simply required to take the oath of allegiance presented by the President in his Proclamation. This saved me a great deal of trouble and annoyance in selecting and appointing to office, from the thousands of applications that would have been made. I had confidence in the integrity and honor of the old officers, and knew they had been elected by the people. I did not wish to enquire whether an officer had been a secessionist or a Union man, nor had I any disposition to make my patronage a source of reward to personal friends. Many of those restored to offices had been my *bitterest* political enemies.⁸⁸

In this statement, Governor Perry demonstrated that he was in fact part of the white elite of the state because he failed to acknowledge that his Proclamation returned to power all of the men who had seceded from the Union in the first place. His actions also demonstrated that the white elite of the former Palmetto Republic still did not respect the rights of the former slaves who were totally disregarded in his Proclamation.

The white elite were now in charge of the political infrastructure thanks to one of their own, Provisional Governor Perry, who was given unrestricted power and reinforced by the President of the United States. This gave leaders a false sense of security about their status within the Union and within three months of the war's end they began celebrating their Confederate pasts by holding barbecues to venerate and commemorate the men who fought for the state's right to secede. They would post announcements in the newspaper to let everyone know well in advance of the festivities, such as the one that appeared in the July 27, 1865, issue of the *Anderson Intelligencer*:

Barbecue. All persons who served with the "Palmetto Riflemen" in the Army of Northern Virginia, from the beginning to the close of the late war, and the parents or wife of each deceased member, are cordially invited to

⁸⁸Ibid, 248.

partake of a Barbecue to be given by Mr. J. O. Keys, at his residence two miles from Anderson village, on Saturday the 29th of July. In the case of a deceased comrade, should there be neither parent or wife, a brother or sister will be expected as the representative of such deceased.⁸⁹

This notice not only demonstrated that the white elite had a false sense of security, but it also showed that they persisted in a strong sense of Southern nationalism by celebrating their heroes only three months after being defeated by joining together in remembrance.

At this time the white elite felt so bold that it even printed speeches delivered by the leading speakers at these barbecues. The address of Lieutenant James A. Hoyt of the Palmetto Riflemen at the barbecue on Saturday the 29th of July demonstrated the strong sense of nationalism in which fallen heroes were venerated and the ones lucky enough to participate in the day's festivities were celebrated, perpetuating at the same time Lost Cause sentiment. In his address Lt. Hoyt commented:

We meet to-day under circumstances of peculiar interest. After a protracted and desperate struggle—perhaps the greatest of modern times—the remnant of our Company is met to revive old associations and perpetuate friendly intercourse. And it is no feigned modesty, which bids me say that I feel incompetent to the task imposed upon my humble ability. The theme is inspiring enough to engage the most eloquent and gifted, and I would that another had been chosen to render justice to fallen comrades and to the living paid appropriate honors. But the duty is assigned me by that generous friend who has called us together, and I cannot forbear to commemorate the deeds and valor of a company whose reputation was ever dear and precious to me.⁹⁰

Lieutenant Hoyt then proceeded to trace the history of the company. He covered its

⁸⁹ "Barbecue," *Anderson Intelligencer*, July 27, 1865.

⁹⁰ "Address of Lieutenant James A. Hoyt, delivered at a barbecue given to the Palmetto Riflemen, on Saturday the 29th of July, 1865," *The Anderson Intelligencer*, August 3, 1865.

inception to the end of the war by notably beginning with the naming of the company in which he stated that “the name selected was that which it has been your pride to render illustrious—the “Palmetto Riflemen.” His remarks clearly demonstrated South Carolina nationalism.⁹¹

There is also other evidence that illustrated that the white elite of South Carolina believed they were not a beaten people and had not lost their sense of Confederate nationalism nor their radical nature. Multiple advertisements appeared in local newspapers promoting pro-Southern literature such as the *Conservatist*, the *Southern Literary Messenger*, *Prospectus of the Charleston Mercury*, and the *Southern Guardian*. These literary journals and magazines promoted the same pro-Southern rhetoric that had led to the Civil War. They were all centered upon the principles of states’ rights as evident in the advertisement for the *Southern Guardian* in the July 20, 1865, issue of the *Anderson Intelligencer*:

THIS JOURNAL, now entering upon its third year under the present proprietor, is rapidly extending its circulation and influence. Founded and conducted upon the principles of States Rights, it enjoys the reward of public confidence and enlightened approval. Entirely independent in its management, it has stood with unwavering confidence upon the soundness, integrity, and consistency of its principles. Through evil report, as well as through good, its voice has been heard in defence [sic] of the EQUALITY of the South: its counsels have ever been and are for RESISTANCE to the wrongs attempted to be put upon us by a sectional majority. The *Southern Guardian* looks for support to the State and section whose rights, honor and interests it has faithfully espoused and maintained.⁹²

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² “The Southern Guardian, A Political and News Journal,” *Anderson Intelligencer*, July 20, 1865.

This advertisement for the *Southern Guardian* is clear evidence that the white elite in the Palmetto State were not only continuing its resistance to Northern control, but still espoused the principles and ideology that were prevalent before the war. This was mostly because of the President's rather lenient plan for Reconstruction which many believed would have them officially back in the Union before the end of the year. To their surprise, Reconstruction for South Carolina was not to be such an easy task.

Less than three months after the Civil War ended, the same men who had brought the nation to war by being the first to secede from the Union were now back in power and celebrating their Confederate pasts. This was largely thanks to President Johnson and Provisional Governor Perry, who wanted to usher the state back into the Union as quickly and as painlessly as possible. This allowed these former agitators to regain their power in the state and now they were just as bold in their rhetoric and proclamations as they were before the war. Governor Perry was charged with assembling the state convention in order to declare secession null and void and charter a new state constitution. This was supposed to include African Americans, but the defiant attitude of the white elite in the state would rise again as leaders came together on September 16, 1865. At the state convention in Columbia this defiant attitude dominated when the leaders refused to declare secession null and void. They only repealed it, which reinforced its legitimacy in their eyes and was a slap in the face to Northern leaders. Even conceding this much was ludicrous to many as four delegates, led by A. P. Aldrich, voted against the measure without qualms. Aldrich was later elected Speaker of the House.⁹³

⁹³ Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina*, (Columbia: University of South

Now that the whites of South Carolina were back in control, they still had to deal with the problem of what to do with the over 400,000 African-Americans who were now free. The whites were a minority in the state to men that they had previously held as their own property. In order to protect former slaves, the federal government created the Freedmen's Bureau to help former slaves enter into legitimate contracts without fear of retribution by their former masters. By this time, though, all of the former slaves were suspicious of written contracts because they had been told by radical propagandists they were essentially papers of re-enslavement.⁹⁴ The ex-slaves in South Carolina were deemed to be necessary by the ruling elite to harvest crops and keep the economy going and this became a thorn in the side of Governor Perry. Especially in the low country where there was a large population of African-Americans protected and encouraged to resist their former masters by African-American troops. Governor Perry took action at the state convention by commissioning lawyers Armistead Burt and David Wardlow to draft a code regulating the black population.

Armistead Burt sought out the advice of Edmund Rhett, who suggested that changes be made slowly, with safeguards to protect both whites and blacks. In other words, Rhett wanted to subjugate blacks and keep them in a condition that was as close to slavery as possible. As Richard Zuczek explains:

Introduced in October and passed in December, South Carolina's black codes clearly indicated the future of Carolina society should whites remain in control. The code itself was composed of three laws. The first recognized that slavery no longer existed and blacks can sue in court,

Carolina Press, 1996), 11.

⁹⁴ Lillian Adele Kibler, *Benjamin F. Perry: South Carolina Unionist* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1946), 401.

own property, and make contracts. The second law prohibited blacks “employed in husbandry” from selling anything without “written permission of the employer or District judge.” Article 13 prohibited the ownership of weapons, and Article 30 put legal distinctions in order: in the case of any misdemeanor by a “person of color,” any white can *arrest* the accused. If the misdemeanor is committed by a white, any person may *complain* to the magistrate. The third law imposed a “sunrise to sunset” workday, complete with restrictions on movement and liberal justifications for employee dismissal, following a trend set—and enforced—by planters privately since emancipation. In addition, the law effectively closed the door on black economic opportunity, for blacks could be only farm laborers or hired servants, unless they purchased a license from the judge of the district court. Yet the license was too expensive for most, and white judges held the final say.⁹⁵

The Northern Radicals felt that South Carolina was operating under its own plan of reconstruction rather than the one set forth by the President, which many of them felt was too lenient. The first state to secede from the Union was still a place for rebellion, according to Northern newspapers, and the “black codes” enacted by the ruling elite was nothing more than the means to subjugate people of color. This situation would fuel the fire of the Radical Republicans when the thirty-ninth Congress came into session.

Ironically for Governor Perry, these actions contradicted his own speech at the state convention at which he reiterated the fact that the institution of slavery was gone and that the leaders would have “to abolish slavery in your new or amended Constitution.”⁹⁶ The legislators did end the institution, but they placed African-Americans in a position that was as close to slavery as possible with the institution of the “black codes.” Although a Unionist before the war, Governor Perry was a firm believer

⁹⁵Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 15-16.

⁹⁶ “Extracts from Gov. Perry’s Message,” *The Anderson Intelligencer*, September 28, 1865.

in the Southern states' rights to control black labor as long as they felt it was economically necessary. Near the end of his speech he showed his true mettle when in fact he began ranting about suffrage for African-Americans:

They [(Radical Republicans)] forget that this is a white man's government, and intended for white men only; and that the Supreme Court of the United States has decided that the negro [sic] is not an American citizen under the Federal Constitution. That each and every State of the Union has the unquestioned right of deciding for herself who shall exercise the right of suffrage, is beyond all dispute. You will settle this grave question as the interest and honor of the State demand.⁹⁷

Of course, Governor Perry closed by talking about the bright future faced by South Carolina in the Union now that the cause of the friction between North and South (slavery) had been removed. Yet his words demonstrated that even the man whom the President had handpicked to bring the Palmetto State back into the Union believed in states' rights and was first and foremost a South Carolinian.

Meanwhile South Carolinians were putting forth nominations for the upcoming elections and the overwhelming favorite for the gubernatorial nomination was General Wade Hampton III. Even though Hampton had initially been an opponent of secession, it had long been forgotten due to his immaculate military career and his passionate dedication to the Confederate cause.⁹⁸ Hampton was flattered, but he modestly refused the nomination, believing his election as governor would not help the state be readmitted quickly to the Union because of his former high-ranking position in the Confederacy. The convention therefore selected James L. Orr, a former Unionist who had wound up

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Donald H. Breese, *Politics in the Lower South during Presidential Reconstruction, April to November, 1865* (Dissertation: University of California Los Angeles, 1964), 241.

being a Confederate Senator. Still, South Carolinians were proud that all of their original nominations for governor, state and federal senators, and representatives were men who could not take the test oath.

Governor Perry even had problems appointing public office holders because South Carolina simply did not have enough Union men to do so. In a letter to President Johnson explaining his appointments in the provisional government, Perry stated:

I now beg leave to further explain to your Excellency, that in organizing a Provisional Government, in South Carolina, I knew it was impossible to fill the appointments with union men. In a large portion of the State there were no union men, none who had ever made their weight and influence felt, when the Union was imperiled. I thought it wisest and best to restore to office those who had been chosen by the people, were familiar with their official duties, had taken the oath of Allegiance, and were pardoned. I had confidence in their honor and plighted fidelity and loyalty.⁹⁹

Perry had to explain his appointments to the President because he was being bothered by Union General Quincy Gilmore who thought that he had transcended the power that the President had authorized him. Gilmore even informed Washington of his feelings and told Perry that “he could not suppose [that Perry] was authorized to reappoint all the old civil officers who had been in rebellion, nor did he think [that Perry] was authorized to order magistrates to administer the oath of allegiance, which duty had been exercised by, and properly belonged to, the Provost Marshals.”¹⁰⁰ Of course, Perry was being

⁹⁹ Letter from Governor Perry to President Johnson, August 29, 1865, *The Papers of Andrew Johnson: Volume 8, May – August 1865*, Edited by Paul H. Bergeron, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 670.

¹⁰⁰ Benjamin F. Perry, *The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry: Volume 1 Essays, Public Letters, and Speeches*, Edited by Stephen Meats and Edwin T. Arnold, (Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1980), 227.

reassured by the President who wanted to reinstate the entire South as quickly as possible.

James L. Orr won the gubernatorial race by a slim margin over Wade Hampton and Hampton was not even running for the office. According to the historian Donald Breese, “[This] demonstrated [that] Orr was not exceedingly popular in South Carolina in 1865, but from the Northern point of view he was the most qualified man in the state for the position with the exception of Provisional Governor Perry.”¹⁰¹ The results may not have had anything to do with Orr at all, but demonstrated how much Hampton was idolized as a symbol of defiance. Like Perry, Orr was an old Unionist who had opposed Calhoun and Nullification, but he was more prominent than Perry on a national level having served ten years in Congress, the last two as the Speaker of the House. He was a cooperationist in 1860, but, like Perry, he had followed his beloved Palmetto State into secession. As a Confederate Senator, he had become a bitter critic of President Jefferson Davis and blamed him for Southern failure near the end of the war. Many conservatives in the state therefore did not trust Orr, which may explain why the voting was so close for the governorship. Orr was so wounded by what he perceived as a vote of no confidence that he seriously entertained refusing the office, but was dissuaded by Unionists Perry and Armistead Burt.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Donald H. Breese, *Politics in the Lower South during Presidential Reconstruction, April to November, 1865*, (Dissertation: University of California Los Angeles, 1964), 242.

¹⁰² Lillian Adele Kibler, *Benjamin F. Perry: South Carolina Unionist* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1946), 420.

When Provisional Governor Perry relinquished his duties to Governor Orr in December 1865, he believed that the Palmetto State had met all of President Johnson's requirements for readmission into the Union. According to Johnson's plan, the rebellious state had. But the Thirty-Ninth Congress came into session during this same time and soon all Southern states realized that the Radicals of the North had other plans. "The Radicals had no intention of surrendering their control to the Democrats," Lillian Kibler notes, by playing upon the "Black Codes" and atrocity stories of Radical journalists, they had spread distrust of the South throughout the North and prepared the way for their "vindictive program."¹⁰³ This was leading to a showdown in Washington between the Radical Republicans of the North and the Democrats of the North and South, and the first step for Radical Republicans was to prevent the readmittance of the states "reconstructed" by President Johnson.¹⁰⁴

Why would the Radical Republicans of the North fear such a quick readmission of the states formerly in rebellion? Basically it was about numbers and control in Congress, but the "Black Codes" were to be used to keep Southerners out of Washington. Governor Perry echoed this sentiment after being refused his seat in the Senate by stating:

But if the Northern people really feel so much interest in the negro race as they would have us believe, why do they not hold out inducements for the freedmen to immigrate North, and live there with their friends and patrons, who are able to take care of them? Nothing of this kind has been offered or attempted. On the contrary, many of the former non-slave holding States have prohibited their entrance under severe penalties. They have likewise been denied the right of suffrage in all of these States except six. The Southern States are very willing

¹⁰³ Ibid, 439.

¹⁰⁴ James S. Allen, *Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy 1865-1876* (New York: International Publishers, 1937), 82.

for the freedmen to go North, and have there conferred on them the right of suffrage. But it is just and right on the part of Connecticut and other States, where the negro has been free for a century, that he should be denied the right of voting there, and for those States to insist that he shall be allowed to vote in South Carolina, where he has just been emancipated? We do not complain of the policy of Connecticut, but insist that she has no right to enforce on us a different policy. Every State has the undoubted right, under the Federal Constitution, to determine for herself who shall exercise the right of suffrage.¹⁰⁵

The point of maneuver was the roll call when Congress convened. “The matter of the roll call had been under discussion in the public press for weeks. Wendell Phillips had raised the question in July when he stated forcefully his fear that presidential pressure would result in McPherson’s (Clerk of the House) calling the names of all Southern members-elect and thus effect the immediate admission of the seceded states.”¹⁰⁶ The failure to acknowledge Southern representation was viewed as justifiable action in the North and as a Northern conspiracy to further punish the South by Southerners. McPherson let it be known as the matter was debated in the press that he would not place the names of the Southern representatives on the roll of regularly elected members.¹⁰⁷

The refusal of the Thirty-Ninth Congress to seat the Southern representatives and the subsequent creation of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction created another phase in the struggle over the future of the South.¹⁰⁸ What ensued was a *coup d’etat* by

¹⁰⁵ Benjamin F. Perry, *The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry: Volume I Essays, Public Letters, and Speeches*, Edited by Stephen Meats and Edwin T. Arnold, (Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1980), 161.

¹⁰⁶ John H. Cox and Lawanda Cox, *Politics, Principle, and Prejudice 1865-1866: Dilemma of Reconstruction America* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 140.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 141.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 28.

Northern Radicals in order to keep their power in Congress, while Southerners were reminded again that they were a defeated people. As James Allen explains the Radical Republican maneuver:

Even before [President] Johnson delivered his first annual message announcing the restoration of the former Confederate states, Thaddeus Stevens introduced the resolution providing for a joint committee of the House and Senate to investigate conditions in the Southern states and determine whether they were fit to return to the Union. The resolution also provided that no Congressman should be admitted from the South until the report of the Committee was made and acted upon and that all matters concerning the representation of these states should be referred to the Committee without debate. The Joint Committee on Reconstruction, consisting of 15 members with Stevens as Chairman, was thus set up to constitute an insurmountable barrier to restoration. The resolution, which was passed in February 1866, denied representation to the Southern states, without even granting them a hearing. (Many of the Congressmen chosen by the Johnson electorate had been Confederate leaders, including even Alexander H. Stephens, Vice-President of the Confederacy.) All matters pertaining to Reconstruction now had to go first before the Committee, which became, in effect, the supreme council of the revolution. Johnson's whole scheme was thus nullified at one stroke.¹⁰⁹

The Radical Republicans realized that the President's Reconstruction policy was too lenient for the rebellious South and Southern representation by prominent Confederates and the establishment of black codes was nothing more than a reestablishment of the old order which would essentially keep the black majority population oppressed. The Radical Republicans also realized that by keeping Southern states out of Congress they would be able to pass legislation such as the 14th Amendment that would eventually give equal citizenship to blacks and guaranteed equal civil rights. If the Northern Republicans

¹⁰⁹ James S. Allen, *Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy 1865-1876* (New York: International Publishers, 1937), 82.

could give the vote to the disenfranchised black population, then they could control the policies of the Southern states as well as federal politics. By denying Southern representation in the House, the Radical Republicans were looking at the big picture of politics and a bright future for the Republican Party.

In December 1865 the white elite of South Carolina was still in a state of denial until Republicans in the 39th Congress opened their eyes to the reality of their situation. Even Governor Orr's inaugural address demonstrated the pompous attitude of the white elite within the state as he had the audacity to mention the possibility that Congress would grant slave holders in the South compensation for losing their property (slaves). "I therefore cherish the hope that Congress will, as soon as the public debt is provided for, make some just and equitable arrangement, to make the citizens of the South some compensation for the slaves manumitted by the United States authorities."¹¹⁰ This is demonstrative of the white elite mentality within the state less than a year after the end of the Civil War. They believed that they were still in a position of importance and power. Instead the Radical Republicans were about to let the white elite of South Carolina know what the repercussions were of their having led the United States into war.

¹¹⁰ "Inaugural Address of Governor Orr," *The Anderson Intelligencer*, December 14, 1865.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTINUED RADICALISM AND RESISTANCE IN THE FACE OF DEFEAT: DECEMBER 1865 TO MAY 1866

In its own way, South Carolina had met all of President Andrew Johnson's demands under his plan of Reconstruction after the rebellious state finally ratified the 13th Amendment and repudiated the state's Confederate war debt. Provisional Governor Benjamin Perry remained in control of the state until Governor-elect James Orr could be sworn in and these were the last two orders of business left in his charge before he left the gubernatorial office and assumed his new duties as a senator in Washington. Due to the radical nature of South Carolina politicians, both Unionists and Secessionists alike saw no point in ratifying the 13th Amendment officially ending slavery because the convention had already done so in the new state constitution. Governor Perry realized that the state would not be considered to rejoin the Union without ratifying the Amendment and he took action to ensure its ratification. Governor Perry "was anxious that South Carolina, being the first State to leave the Union, should be the first to return."¹¹¹

Due to the large amount of black troops stationed in South Carolina, Governor Perry was still receiving complaints about them before leaving office and their continued encouragement of black South Carolinians to retaliate against their former masters. He was essentially powerless but often complained to the Secretary of State of the United

¹¹¹ Benjamin F. Perry, *The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry: Volume I Essays, Public Letters, and Speeches*, Edited by Stephen Meats and Edwin T. Arnold, (Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1980), 238.

States about the black troops in general, hoping for their eventual withdrawal. Perry stated:

I also continued my remonstrance on the employment of Negro troops by the Federal Government in South Carolina, and I gave him a detail of their atrocious conduct. At Newberry Court House they took a young gentleman from Texas out of the ladies' car, and shot him for resisting the intrusion of the Negro Soldiers on the ladies! At Anderson they protected and carried off a Negro who had wantonly murdered his young master! At Greenville, the Negro troops had knocked down the citizens in the streets, without the slightest provocation! At Pocotaligo, they had gone to a gentleman's house, and after trying him, had violated the ladies. I never received any reply to this communication. But the Negro troops were removed from the upper country, though not from the lower country for a great while.¹¹²

Perry believed in the institution of slavery before the war and he knew that it would always be safer in the Union rather than out of it. Northern abolitionists had urged President Johnson to appoint an able black executive like Frederick Douglas as military governor of South Carolina before Perry's appointment seeing "the poetic justice as well as the punishment of that traitor state in such a consummation."¹¹³ It is not known if Perry ever knew about the proposed plan, but Northern abolitionists knew that he was of the same blood and party as the most radical element in the state who believed that African-Americans were an inferior race with no lot better than servitude. Yet, his lack of power in these race-related matters hindered him throughout his term as provisional

¹¹²Benjamin F. Perry, *The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry: Volume I Essays, Public Letters, and Speeches*, Edited by Stephen Meats and Edwin T. Arnold, (Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1980), 242-243.

¹¹³Telegram from James M. Thompson to President Johnson, May 5, 1865, *The Papers of Andrew Johnson: Volume 8, May – August 1865*, Edited by Paul H. Bergeron, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 33.

governor. Even more disturbing to Perry, was the lack of action on the part of the federal government in race-related matters, which bothered him further. Still, he still executed his duties to the best of his ability within the boundaries provided by the President.

During his farewell speech to the legislature, Perry felt that he had done everything that the President had asked in order for South Carolina to be readmitted into the Union. As he wrote,

As soon as the President's Proclamation was issued, the people of South Carolina went cheerfully forward and took the amnesty oath. They promptly assembled in Convention, under the order of the Provisional Governor, and reformed their State Constitution, as was desired by the President. They abolished slavery, and freely gave up their two hundred millions invested in slaves. When advised to adopt the Congressional amendment to the Constitution of the United States abolishing slavery, South Carolina was the first Southern State which ratified the same, and set an example for her sister States to follow. She has been first, also, in preparing a wise and human code of laws for the protection of the freedmen in all their rights of personal property, and allowing them to give testimony in her Courts of Justice. She has now elected her Representatives in both Houses of Congress, and commissioned them to take their seats in that body. She has organized a perfect State Government, with Legislative, Executive and Judiciary Departments, all republican in their character, and the members of each swearing to support the Constitution of the United States. Her ordinances of Secession have been repealed, and she now pledges herself to stand by the Union in good faith, and with all sincerity.¹¹⁴

Perry then passed the torch to Governor Orr who would now shoulder the burden of getting the Palmetto State readmitted into the Union. Still feeling the bitter sting of his slim victory in the gubernatorial election, Governor Orr was an able politician. He had been the former Speaker of the House in the federal government, but neither he nor Perry

¹¹⁴ Benjamin F. Perry, *Reminiscences of Public Men with Speeches and Addresses*, (Greenville, SC: Shannon & Co., Printers, 1889), 293-294.

was prepared for the extreme radicalism planned by the Radical Republicans of the 39th Congress.

Meanwhile, General Hampton had finished the year helping to organize the local militia and had become a trustee at his alma mater, South Carolina College, which was in the process of trying to reopen in 1866 as the University of South Carolina. Although he had not officially run for governor, he was inspired by the confidence and respect that the public paid him with their votes, having narrowly lost the election. He would convey his appreciation in the pages of the *Columbia Daily Phoenix*:

This I shall cherish as one of the proudest recollections of my life, for it assures me of your belief that I have tried to do my duty. It only remains for me, in bidding you farewell, to say that whenever the State needs my services she has only to command and I shall obey.¹¹⁵

Hampton now wanted to make his plantations prosperous again and as fate would have it, most of his old slave's stayed out of economic necessity to work for him. He hoped to make a profit by properly conducting business with his former slaves. Just like Perry and Orr, Hampton was leery of the Northern Radicals and he just hoped that they would not interfere further in his business.¹¹⁶

The Radical Republicans continued to make things hard for Hampton though, and every other white citizen in the Palmetto State and South in general. He would always hold resentment in his heart because of Sherman's actions in the state, but he was frustrated that South Carolina still had not been readmitted to the Union. He vented his

¹¹⁵ Notice from General Wade Hampton to the Public, *Daily Phoenix*, November 15, 1865.

¹¹⁶ Edward G. Longacre, *Gentleman and Soldier: A Biography of Wade Hampton III*, (Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 2003), 251.

frustration in a letter to President Johnson, which appealed for action and justice for the Southern states. As Hampton to the President:

The terms you offered the South [were] accepted in perfect good faith, and she has kept them with the most scrupulous honor. Her most bitter enemies cannot charge her with the smallest breach of her plighted faith. When your proclamation of May 29, 1865, was issued, the South supposed that the acceptance of its terms would be the one condition precedent to a restoration of the Union—that cardinal, if not sole object, the accomplishment of which the North declared repeatedly in the most solemn manner to be the only purpose of the relentless war waged on us for four years. But, to our surprise, we soon found that other and graver demands were made upon us. We were required to change the time-honored Constitutions of our States—to declare the abolition of slavery legal—and to repudiate the Confederate debt...When the South had conformed to all these rigid requirements—many of which she could but regard in the light of *ex post facto* enactments—she naturally supposed that her part of the contract having been fulfilled to the letter, equal justice demanded a like observance of their obligators by the other parties to the covenant. But how stands the case to-day, Mr. President? More than a year has elapsed since the South, under a solemn promise of peace and amnesty; laid down those arms which through four bloody years she had borne with a heroism rarely equaled and never surpassed. She had been assured, in the most authoritative manner, that she had but to lower these arms to be received again into full communion with the other States—to resume her place in the councils of the nation—to have the mantle of forgiveness and oblivion thrown over her sins, and to take her full share of the glory and the liberty which are the peculiar features of the “best government the world ever saw.”¹¹⁷

This letter made Hampton a target for the Radical Republicans in Congress, because he was challenging not only their actions, but the legitimacy of these actions and bringing to light the discrepancies of reconstruction at the same time perpetuating Lost Cause sentiment. Added with the fact that he never officially surrendered during the war, he became a clear target for Radical Republicans because of his popularity in South Carolina, and all that he symbolized in his quest to attain vindication.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Wade Hampton to President Andrew Johnson, Hampton Family Papers, Box 4, Folder 108, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, SC.

Radical Republicans realized that they could do nothing to change how the white Southerners voted, especially in South Carolina. The state had operated predominantly under a one-party system for years, though Republicans did have a plan for bringing all of the Southern states under their control. The split that had existed between the unionist Democrats and secessionist Democrats in South Carolina had been over since secession and never reemerged when President Johnson started his plan of Reconstruction. South Carolina was united under a philosophy of white supremacy, which was unacceptable to the Republican Party. As historian W. R. Brock has written, “For its adherents the Republican party was no ordinary political association: it was the party which had stood firm against the expansion of slavery, saved the Union, and represented all which the age regarded as enlightened.”¹¹⁸ Radical Republicans wanted to establish safeguards for the newly freed blacks such as constitutional amendments that could easily be passed without Southern representation and hoping that the African-Americans would show their gratitude by voting Republican. This would essentially establish a political stronghold in the South for many years to come since the black population far outnumbered the white population in most Southern states.

The Radical Republicans knew the only way to get everything that they wanted was to keep the elected officials of the Southern states out of Congress, if necessary they would have the votes to override a presidential veto. The 13th Amendment had already been ratified by most of the Southern states as a part of the President’s Reconstruction

¹¹⁸ W. R. Brock, *An American Crisis: Congress and Reconstruction 1865-1867* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1963), 62.

plan, and it forever banned slavery in the United States and its territories.¹¹⁹ The Radical Republicans desire to take the process a step further to ensure that the newly freed slaves were grateful to the political party that had freed them, guaranteeing them power in all branches of government for years to come. Thus, as Walter Edgar writes, “when the clerk of the House of Representatives did not read the names of the members from the former Confederate states at the opening session, there was a strong message that reconstruction of the South did not mean the return of the ancien regime.”¹²⁰ Provisional Governor Perry was one of the men denied his seat, enraging members of the white elite of the Palmetto state who believed that they had fulfilled all aspects of the President’s Reconstruction plan.

Once again, the personal past of South Carolina leaders affected their reaction to political events. Perry was also enraged by this act of disrespect considering what he had done in the past to quell nullification and secession. Now that his beloved South Carolina was ravaged by war, Radical Republicans wanted to make matters worse by deciding on the fate of the Southern states without any type of Southern representation. Perry felt the same rage that Hampton was feeling by this total lack of respect and speaking on national restoration he remarked:

It is most remarkable that whilst two-thirds of the States are legislating on the dearest and most vital interests of the Southern States, these States, composing one-third of the Republic in population, and one-half in extent of territory, should be excluded from all participation in such legislation. It is not only contrary to Republican principles, but an outrage on the sense of justice in a

¹¹⁹ U. S. Constitution, Amendment XIII.

¹²⁰ Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 384.

despotism, for ten millions of people to be tried, condemned, and deprived of their civil, political and constitutional rights without a hearing.... The Southern people have been peculiarly unfortunate. At one time they thought it better to withdraw their members from Congress, and live separately from the North. This they desired to do peaceably and quietly. The North objected, and declared that the Union should not be dissolved. They were repeatedly told that they must lay down their arms, elect their members of Congress, and resume their position in the Union. Finally they consented to do so. Now they are told that the Union is dissolved, and they shall not be allowed to resume their places in it! Let the North beware, lest in forging chains for the South they do not enclose themselves.¹²¹

Perry did not believe that the North was abiding by the U. S. Constitution, but making its own rules in which the South must pay for four years of war.

There is nothing more gratifying to a noble and generous nature than mercy and forgiveness. Nor is there anything more pleasant to a mean and cowardly spirit than the gratification of its revenge and hatred. The history of man in all ages illustrates the truth of this assertion.¹²²

Perry was incensed; he had fought for decades to keep the Union together and a year after the official end to the war the Radical Republicans were making new rules that actually kept the Union dissolved. He felt betrayed by all that he had believed in, and he would fight for Southern rights as the Radical Republicans continued their plan of reconstruction.

The Radical Republicans were deliberate in their actions, which aimed partly at keeping Southern representation out of Congress and partly at giving adult black males the right to vote. This reinforced the Radical Republican majority. Thaddeus Stevens offered the following Resolution on the first day of the session:

¹²¹ Benjamin F. Perry, *Biographical Sketches of Eminent American Statesmen with Speeches, Addresses and Letters by Ex-Governor B. F. Perry of Greenville, S. C.*, Introduction by Senator Wade Hampton, (Philadelphia: The Ferree Press, 1887), 197-201.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 202.

Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled, that a joint committee of fifteen members shall be appointed, nine of whom shall be members of the House, and six members of the Senate, who shall inquire into the condition of the States which formed the so-called Confederate States of America, and report whether they or any of them are entitled to be represented in either House of Congress, with leave to report at any time by bill or otherwise; and until such report shall have been made, and finally acted upon by Congress, no member shall be received into either House from any of the said so-called Confederate States; and all papers, relating to the representation of the said States shall be referred to the said committee without debate.¹²³

This resolution passed easily the House and, after some delay, the Senate. The Joint Committee on Reconstruction so formed meant even more problems for the white citizenry of South Carolina. For it brought the Republican Party's control of state politics for the next decade using African-Americans, native white Republicans ("scalawags"), and Northern immigrants ("carpetbaggers").

The leaders of South Carolina had made a grave mistake to bet their future on the President's Reconstruction plan. Further, the "black codes" by which they meant to keep African-Americans subjugated and the lingering reality of so many unnecessary deaths of Union soldiers in the war, gave the Radical Republicans the pretext they needed to overpower the President and his lenient Reconstruction plan. The Radical Republicans established a civil rights bill which would essentially eliminate the black codes and reinforce the 13th Amendment. The bill declared:

There shall be no discrimination in civil rights or immunities among the inhabitants of any State or Territory of the United States on account of race, color, or previous condition of slavery; but the inhabitants, of every race and color, without regard to any previous condition of slavery or

¹²³ William H. Barnes, *History of the Thirty-Ninth Congress of the United States*, (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 34.

involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall have the same right to make and enforce contracts, to sue, be parties, and give evidence, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property, and to full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property, and shall be subject to like punishment, pains, and penalties, and to none other, any law, statute, ordinance, regulation, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.¹²⁴

After finally getting the bill passed through both Houses of Congress, the only debate stemming from the bill was whether or not the President would actually sign it. The measure guaranteed rights for about four million American citizens, but it would also take away some of the power left to the States by the Constitution. This was the two-fold dilemma that the President faced as he agonized over his course of action.

Being true to his lenient policy on Reconstruction, Johnson vetoed the bill, claiming that African-Americans were guaranteed freedom under the 13th Amendment and due the same protections as any citizen under the U. S. Constitution.¹²⁵ At this point, the white elite of South Carolina realized who was winning the power struggle in Washington. That is because the Republicans mustered a two-thirds majority to over-ride the President's veto and passed the civil rights bill into law. The Civil Rights Bill prohibited states from discriminating against their citizens based on color, which was a direct attack upon the "black codes." Members of the white elite were beginning to realize who really held the power and started taking appropriate actions to not only maintain their power within the state, but to also keep the African-American population as subjugated as possible. The distraction and disappointment associated with the

¹²⁴ Ibid, 189.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 253.

realization of the power struggle in Washington did not diminish their resistance at home where they felt that their control was still strong.

The distractions connected with the radical nature of the 39th Congress did nothing to weaken the strong nationalistic Southern spirit of the white elite in South Carolina. Local papers continued to venerate Confederate heroes and praise all men who had fought for the Confederacy. In an article, “The Confederate Dead,” the *Edgefield Advertiser* urged all Southerners to help the widowed and orphaned from the war as well as the maimed who could not fend for themselves. The piece stated that unlike Northern heroes, Confederate heroes were “unpensioned and unhonored, except as they are pensioned and honored by the love and charity of their more fortunate companions in the great struggle they must go battling to the grave. Let us pension them, and honor them with boundless charity and kindly love.”¹²⁶ This article not only appealed for charity to all of those who had fought for the Confederacy, but it also mentioned the “lost cause” for which they fought as one of unbridled glory.

At this time, the egos of the white elite within the state were so large that they even seemed to chastise Northern papers who wrote of the heroic actions of Confederate heroes. In “Southern Heroes in the Northern Press,” the *Edgefield Advertiser* commented:

It is no wonder, therefore, that stories of the late war should be so popular, and that every scrap of incident connected with that great struggle should be read with eager interest. But there is one feature about those incidents of the war published in Northern papers that is both striking and instructive—and that is, that the heroes are not the successful raiders and victorious

¹²⁶ “The Confederate Dead,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, January 31, 1866.

generals of the Northern army, but the defeated paladins of the Confederacy. Not Grant, or Sherman, or Sheridan, or Slocum, but Lee, or Jackson, or Johnson, or Beauregard. Not Kilpatrick or Gilmore, but Stuart, or Hampton, or Forest, or Mahone.¹²⁷

Sarcastically, the editor played the role of Northern newspaper editors as he continued:

These are the men whose achievements we glorify, whose deeds we rehearse, whose heroism we delight to honor, these are the men whose exploits are detailed in our papers, and whose names are household words in every Northern State. Why is this? Why do we not write up our own great men? Why do we not hold them up to the admiration of the rising generation? Why seek our heroes outside of our own line? Because the unperverted instincts of man are ever on the weaker side. Because no amount of force can influence feeling, and no measure of success can command sympathy. Because an unequal struggle challenges our admiration and kindles that admiration and enthusiasm. Because no amount of sophistry and no power of reiteration can make men think it glorious for five to beat one. And because a war of invasion is in itself and of its very nature calculated to be unpopular with a free people. When in addition we take into consideration the high character and unsullied reputation of the leading men of the South, we have reason good for the interest they excite and the position they occupy in the minds of a large majority of the Northern masses.¹²⁸

This article held two purposes for the white elite within the state. First, it ridiculed the Northern press for venerating Southern heroes because that would have never happened in the Southern press regarding Northern heroes. Second and most importantly, the article instilled a sense of greatness into the white citizenry of South Carolina by displaying the greatness of Southern heroes against odds that were clearly unbeatable in their minds, and thus perpetuating the “lost cause” mythology in the minds of all white South Carolinians.

Both Governor Perry and General Hampton were proponents of the Lost Cause movement, having continuously venerated the heroes of the Confederacy in their public

¹²⁷ “Southern Heroes in the Northern Press,” *The Edgefield Advertiser*, February 14, 1866.

¹²⁸ “Southern Heroes in the Northern Press,” *The Edgefield Advertiser*, February 14, 1866.

speeches. When Perry's wife published some of his speeches, addresses, and letters after his death, she asked Hampton to write the introduction to the book, and Hampton, by this time a former governor himself of South Carolina, current U. S. Senator, and proponent of the Lost Cause, gladly obliged. Hampton stated in the introduction: "No monument to perpetuate [Perry's] name and his fame could so arouse the universal sympathy of our people as does this simple memorial of her devotion to him and of her reverence for his memory."¹²⁹ This clearly demonstrates the rhetoric used in Lost Cause mythology as Hampton referenced "our people," not of the United States, but of South Carolina and the entire South in general. This is also a clear indication of the feelings and deep respect that each of these former Unionists, Confederates, and most importantly South Carolinians, held for each other.

Ironically in the same work, Perry eulogized Hampton in a sketch essentially sending the same type of message that the Senator forged in the introduction to the work. Perry said of Hampton:

Honor, patriotism and virtue taught him willingly to sacrifice his life if necessary in the defence [sic] of his country and those great principles of self-government for which his distinguished grandfather had fought so gallantly in the American Revolution. [...]. [...], General Hampton has delivered an oration in Baltimore on "The Life and Character of General Robert E. Lee," which is one of the most admirable addresses of the kind that has ever been made on the death of a hero and patriot. It will be a gem in the history of the great contest in which Southern States were engaged.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Wade Hampton on Benjamin F. Perry, *Biographical Sketches of Eminent American Statesmen with Speeches, Addresses and Letters by Ex-Governor B. F. Perry of Greenville, S. C.*, Introduction by Senator Wade Hampton, (Philadelphia: The Ferree Press, 1887), vii.

¹³⁰ Benjamin F. Perry, , *Biographical Sketches of Eminent American Statesmen with Speeches, Addresses and Letters by Ex-Governor B. F. Perry of Greenville, S. C.*, (Philadelphia: The Ferree Press, 1887), 565-568.

The Lost Cause rhetoric used by both of these men served a purpose as they used their influence and popularity in the state to champion this origin of thought. They would never forgive Sherman who would continuously be demonized in the state (and most of the South) for his actions at the end of the war. Both men venerated in speeches Robert E. Lee, who so eloquently stated in his farewell address to the Army of Northern Virginia on April 10, 1865 that it had been compelled “to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources.”¹³¹

Hampton and Perry espoused Lost Cause rhetoric because they had both witnessed first hand the terrible devastation inflicted on to their beloved South Carolina. Hampton had fought gallantly in the Civil War and lost nearly everything that was dear to his heart, most notably, his son. Perry had seen the state that he called his “country,” virtually destroyed by the Union that he fought so gallantly to preserve. They both held so much rage in their hearts at the total devastation that they felt the need to do something to vindicate all that had happened. They preached the Lost Cause for that vindication. It may not have been in the title of their speeches, but it was an underlying message every time they spoke publicly. Both men sought redemption for their fallen land and they would continue espousing Lost Cause rhetoric until their deaths.

There are many other newspaper articles, which broadcast the same Lost Cause rhetoric in South Carolina. An article, “True Southern Feeling,” that appeared in the January 11, 1866, issue of the *Anderson Intelligencer*, stated:

There is no more contemptible site on the face of the earth than a man who

¹³¹ Robert E. Lee, General Order No. 9, April 10, 1865, <http://www.stratfordhall.org/no9trans.html>

is false to his country. And depraved beyond all measure must be he who unblushingly proclaims himself so in the face of the world. The Southerner who can truly say, that during the last four years, he never felt the first emotion of sympathy with the Confederate cause, that his heart throbbed exultingly at the news of a Southern victory, or sank at the rumors of a Federal triumph, is a man we would not care to trust. He who could live in a struggle, see the courage with which it was sustained and the sacrifices unsurprisingly endured, that it might prove successful, who could live amid the fluctuations of the war, mark the tide of success ebb and flow, see society breaking up around him, feel the agitation and upheaval caused by the throes of the in its agony, and remain unmoved, his equanimity undisturbed, his pulses even beat unaccelerated or unretarded, is a moral phenomena, or a man to be marked and avoided forever. [...]. The Southern people have nothing to be ashamed of in their struggle, and Nothing to be sorry for but that their sacrifices were made in vain. Even the true hearted Unionists of the South glory in the prowess, endurance, and the dash of their people, their energy and actions, their fertility in resources, their moderation in triumph, and their fortitude in defeat. They exult in the deathless fame they have acquired, the lofty qualities they have displayed, and the immortal names they have added to the worlds roll of fame. They reverence the hallowed spots— [...]. They sympathize with the victors of Chancellorsville; and they stand where stood the few and fearless followers of Lee and Johnston when they surrendered, and realize with a sense of sympathy, that is painful in its genuineness, “how patriots fell when all but life and honor’s lost.” Ten thousand times better are such men than those who fought throughout the war, and at its close fall in with the victors and cry *peecevvvi*.¹³²

This article is another piece of evidence that members of the white elite in the state were not in their own minds a defeated people, but a proud people who, since the war’s end, had been using propaganda such as this essay to persuade the rest of the white citizenry in the state to their way of thinking. In 1866 they were indoctrinating the white citizenry for what they perceived to be the rest of the war, however long it may last.

The aristocracy of the state was so confident of its leadership at this time that some of them even had the ill-advised boldness to ask the federal government for

¹³² “True Southern Feeling,” *Anderson Intelligencer*, January 11, 1866.

reparations from Sherman's burning of Columbia, which provoked a response from Sherman himself in Southern newspapers. As he noted in his letter, "I assure you that I feel deeply for you and all others who lost their property in the fire; but if the United States were to assume the liability, it would be an admission that we had done wrong. This is not true."¹³³ Since the end of the war, the white elite in the state of South Carolina had done nothing to demonstrate that members were remorseful for their actions which had led to four years of bloody civil war. As Northern Radicals viewed their actions, they sought reinstatement into the Union, reparations from the federal government, and denied a majority of the citizenry equal rights under the U. S. Constitution. They were still in defiance of the federal government because their radical nature remained even though they were essentially an occupied territory. The Radical Republicans would eventually make them pay for their rebellious actions.

For example, several unreconstructed sentiments were frequently and publicly voiced in local papers. In its March 1, 1866, edition the *Anderson Intelligencer* boldly proclaimed that the Confederate Army still existed. When questions arose over whether or not Confederate officers should be called by their military ranks, the *Intelligencer* answered with an astounding "yes."

This is the fact that the Confederate army still exists. Our readers need not be startled. We are not talking treason, nor anything like it. We are sustained by the highest military authority in the United States. The Confederate States have perished, it is true. They live only in history, but the Confederate army still exists; it exists as an army of paroled prisoners, and every member of it is a paroled soldier. So, too, of the Confederate navy. This is not a mere theory of my own. It is the theory of the

¹³³ "General Sherman on the Burning of Columbia, SC," *The Edgefield Advertiser*, March 28, 1866.

government and of the military authorities. [...]. If Robert E. Lee or John Smith thinks proper to write himself “Gen. R. E. Lee, C.S.A.,” or “Captain John Smith, C.S.N.,” it is no indication of a rebellious or treasonable spirit, but may be quite the contrary. I may only evince a becoming sense of the of the responsibilities of a paroled prisoner of war.¹³⁴

This was but another example of the recalcitrant attitude that had remained in the state since the close of the war. The people who had brought the United States to civil war were not repentant for their actions; far from it, they were only trying to solidify themselves back in the Union so that they could maintain their local power.

The attitudes that were displayed daily in the newspapers of South Carolina were not the thoughts of a defeated people. They were the feelings of a confident people who knew what they wanted and how to achieve it. These men did not cower in seclusion and hold secret meetings to celebrate their Confederate heroes; they did it in the open for everyone to see. They were not trying to hide the fact that they still believed in their own superiority over their Northern occupiers; they openly flaunted it. The white elite of South Carolina continued to wage war in an unconventional manner. The Radical Republicans would make them pay initially for their prideful attitudes, but final redemption would go to the radical white elite of the state.

Historian Richard Zuczek notes that “Republicans in Congress realized that if they wanted to build a new south, they would have to be the instruments of change.”¹³⁵

¹³⁴ “Titles of Confederate Officers—The Army Still Exists,” *Anderson Intelligencer*, March 1, 1866.

¹³⁵ Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 32.

The Radical Republicans reacted against the ‘black codes’ and the South’s defiance by crafting the 14th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

After much haggling over many months the wording of the amendment was finally worked out and passed both Houses of Congress. In June the 14th Amendment was then sent out to each of the thirty-six states for ratification and the President was basically powerless under the Constitution to veto a joint resolution submitting a constitutional amendment to the people.¹³⁶ This would turn out to be one of the most important pieces of legislation that Congress ever passed.

Section one of the 14th Amendment established the “due process” and “equal protection” clauses. This gave African-Americans equality under the Constitution as citizens and meant that they could not be held in bondage without due process of the law. The first section of the amendment essentially meant that the “black codes” were now a violation of the U. S. Constitution. It also overturned the Dred Scott decision in which Chief Justice Roger B. Taney had declared that no African-Americans, whether slave or free, had a right to citizenship in the United States. The Radical Republicans were going to establish a new South by using legislation that the Southern states could not hinder.

Section two established the right to vote to all male citizens of each state and effectively over-rode the previous apportionment of African-Americans as counting only as two-thirds. African-Americans males could now legally vote if they were at least twenty-one years of age. This was an effort by the Radical Republicans to gain control

¹³⁶ William H. Barnes, *History of the Thirty-Ninth Congress of the United States*, (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 465.

eventually of politics in the lower South. Before Radical Reconstruction ended, the Republican dominated Congress would pass the 15th Amendment to fully enforce this section of the 14th Amendment, which specifically stated that all males had the right to vote regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.¹³⁷

At the immediate time, section three and section four of the 14th Amendment were meant to quell the sense of Confederate nationalism that still existed not only in South Carolina but in other parts of the South. Section three black-listed all who had served as officers in the Confederate Army or as legislators in the Confederate government from ever serving in the congress. Section four denied reparations to all of the white elite who had lost property (slaves) during or as a result of the war. When the 14th Amendment came to the leaders of South Carolina for ratification, needless to say, it was overwhelmingly rejected.

Governor Orr of South Carolina opposed the 14th Amendment, thinking that ignorant ex-slaves did not have the intelligence to elect men to office who would make major decisions. Almost unanimously, the South Carolina legislature rejected the amendment as did every other ex-Confederate legislature, with the exception of Tennessee. Regardless, the 14th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution was pushed through Congress over the President's veto in June 1866.¹³⁸ This was devastating to whites in South Carolina, where the blacks were a majority of the population and the

¹³⁷ U. S. Constitution, Amendment XV.

¹³⁸ Lillian Adele Kibler, *Benjamin F. Perry: South Carolina Unionist* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1946), 443.

government of the state could easily fall into their hands. With the fall elections of 1866 rapidly approaching, black citizens of the state would soon get their first taste of political power as Radical Reconstruction would hamper the abilities of the white elite to disenfranchise the black majority.

Soon during Radical Reconstruction there would emerge prominent and able black representatives from South Carolina. Probably the most notable of these was Francis L. Cardozo, a Charleston mulatto, who was a well-educated and skillful politician. Other prominent black representatives were Robert B. Elliott, an Eton College graduate, Richard H. Cain, future congressman, and Jonathan J. Wright, a future state supreme court justice.¹³⁹ Of course, all of these men as well as most of their black brethren were Republicans, and naturally so since the Republican party was responsible for their emancipation, civil rights, and equality. Their problem was time; they only held power for a short period because most of the white Northern men who put them into power were just like the white Southern men who had earlier enslaved them, in that they all felt that the black man was racially inferior to the white man. For this reason, the conservative Democrats of South Carolina waged a decade long war which they viewed as a continuation of the Civil War to reassert their power within the state during Radical Reconstruction.

After many years the white elite of South Carolina would get their “redemption” with the election of General Wade Hampton III as governor of South Carolina. Soon

¹³⁹ Ernest McPherson Lander, Jr., *A History of South Carolina, 1865-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 11.

after, all of the federal troops would be withdrawn and the white citizenry would hold political power in a one-party system for another century. Since the end of the Civil War, the white elite in the state never wavered in their quest to control political affairs and with the election of General Hampton they actually won their war. They waited out the Radical Republicans and never faltered in their beliefs or their ideals. The white elite of South Carolina finally finished the business that they had started on December 20, 1860.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The white elite of South Carolina, men who had led the state politically for decades, never quit fighting the Civil War. They essentially entered what they perceived to be the second phase of the war as they continued to fight, until once again, they controlled all aspects of the state's affairs in the Union. Reconstruction was nothing more than a thorn in their side that temporarily slowed down their progress for control. The need for vindication fueled them for more than a decade until they achieved this ultimate goal. Through it all, they remained defiant while expressing the same views that pushed them toward war in the first place. Union men such as Benjamin Perry and Wade Hampton III experienced a transformation through this process, which ultimately made them the defenders of the state against what they deemed to be Northern tyranny.

No man in South Carolina tried to protect the Union more than Governor Perry. For decades he fought against nullification and secession, trying to preserve the Federal Union and slavery in the process. Yet, he still experienced the transformation from a Union man to a defender of the Southern cause. Justifying the state's actions after the war, Perry reflected:

They thought, too, that they were justified in taking this step by that great principle embodied in the American Declaration of Independence, deemed sacred to the cause of liberty and Republican Government, which declared that every people had an inalienable right to self-government and the right to change their form of Government when they saw proper. It was on this principle that their forefathers had separated from Great Britain. They were in hopes, and a large majority of them did verily believe, that the Northern States would let them depart in peace, and try their experiment of a Southern Confederacy, rather than involve the country in a cruel, bloody and unnatural war, to enforce an unwilling political alliance. If they could have foreseen the horrible results of secession in the

desolation of their country, the abolition of slavery, the destruction of property, a four years' war, and the sacrifice of two hundred thousand Southern lives, no sane South Carolinian would have thought of, much less advocated, such a doctrine; and it is hardly probable that if the Northern people could have foreseen the loss of five hundred thousand of their fellow-creatures, and the increase of their national debt to more than three thousand millions of dollars, that they would have been willing to have paid this horrible price as a Christian and civilized people for the sake of living under the same Government with the Southern States.¹⁴⁰

Like every other white citizen in South Carolina, Perry believed that the state's actions were constitutionally sound. He also began placing the blame of the actual war on the North for not allowing the Southern states separate peacefully. This was common in South Carolina after the conflict, as most prominent white citizens continued to show a defiant attitude whether they were unionist or secessionist before the war.

By the end of his provisional governorship, the rage had built up in Perry's heart and mind. The devastation of the state in the aftermath of the war and the large numbers of black troops along the coast made his blood boil. The whole reconstruction process only added to his fury. In his personal writings he observed:

I was anxious that South Carolina, being the first State to leave the Union, should be the first to return. Had I foreseen the degradation, infamy and ruin, which has followed our return to the Union, never would I have advised such a step, whilst in possession of my senses. I concur with Jefferson Davis in saying that if the Southern people could have foreseen the future, there would have been no surrender.¹⁴¹

Then he was essentially slapped in the face for his loyalty and good service as provisional governor by not being allowed to take his seat in the U. S. Senate. Perry would use these

¹⁴⁰ Benjamin F. Perry, *The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry: Volume I Essays, Public Letters, and Speeches*, Edited by Stephen Meats and Edwin T. Arnold, (Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1980), 157-158.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 238.

insults upon his honor and integrity by channeling his rage for the rest of his life in a blazing oratory promulgating the Lost Cause, essentially espousing all that was good and pure about the South, the Confederacy, and the Southern way of life.

Like Perry, Hampton needed vindication for all that he had lost during the war. According to historian Rod Andrew Jr., “With his hometown in ruins and his father’s estate in ashes, there was little left to fight for other than vengeance, duty, and honor, and the memory of lost loved ones.”¹⁴² Hampton’s rage was demonstrated near the end of the war when he continuously looked for opportunities to attack Sherman’s forces. It was also evident in his refusal to surrender officially after the war. Ultimately though, Hampton would lay down his sword and seek a pardon from President Andrew Johnson, but he would be attacked by the Radical Republicans for the next decade. Not for fighting gallantly on the battlefield, but for being himself, a symbol of the Confederacy and a patriarch to the people of South Carolina.

Wade Hampton would be the savior for the Palmetto State’s white citizenry as he had been so many years before in the War. He would continue to challenge the one-sided views of the Republican Party and Republicans would continue to attack his character. They even produced a pamphlet that was distributed at the 1868 Democratic Convention in New York City that was nothing more than propaganda because he was not afraid to oppose them.

Wade Hampton, of South Carolina, a prominent member of the Democratic rebel Convention held in New York City, July 4, 1868, and a member of the Committee

¹⁴² Rod Andrew, Jr., “Wade Hampton: Confederate Warrior to Southern Redeemer,” unpublished manuscript, 309.

on Resolutions, was one of the most vindictive cavalry generals of the rebel army. The records of cruelty will be searched in vain for atrocities like those committed under his sanction. He was the wretch who caused seventy-five of our Union prisoners to be put to death in violation of all the laws of war, and under circumstances of atrocity almost without parallel in the history of civilized or savage nations. He was thoroughly “chivalric” in the Southern sense of that word, thinking no more of “nailing a nigger’s ears to a pine-board fence and then shooting him,” than in partaking of the hospitality of the Convention. Having fought for four years against the government of the immortal Washington, he says he “determined never to surrender, and he never did.” Being a member of the Committee on Resolutions in the rebel Convention, according to his own account it was upon his motion that the Committee introduced into the platform the atrocious and revolutionary declaration that the reconstruction acts of Congress were “UNCONSTITUTIONAL, REVOLUTIONARY, NULL, AND VOID.”¹⁴³

The Radical Republican propaganda would not sway the white citizenry of South Carolina as Hampton would eventually ascend to the governor’s office. No matter how hard they tried, Radical Republicans could not change the history witnessed by these citizens of South Carolina. They had viewed their home state virtually destroyed by a federal government that refused to let them secede peacefully, and then had the audacity to make the state pay through reconstruction for over a decade.

The negative propaganda only fueled Hampton’s rage further, and he continued to espouse Lost Cause rhetoric anytime he was asked to speak publicly. He let the anger fuel the words he uttered and serve as the vindication he so desperately needed for all that he had lost in the war. He believed in the states’ rights doctrine more than ever and he was not going to allow Radical Republicans to bully him into a dark corner and keep him

¹⁴³ Pamphlet title, “25 Rebel Generals, 30 Rebel Colonels, 10 Rebel Majors, 20 Rebel Captains and Other Minor Rebel Officers. 5 Rebel Governors, 15 Rebel Congressmen, 105 Rebel Member, Nearly One-Fifth of the Whole Number, of the Late Democratic National Convention of July 4, 1868, Which Nominated Seymour and Blair, Together With a Brief History of Their Lives, Sayings, and Doings,” Huntington Library, San Marino, California, 1868, np.

quiet. South Carolina was not wrong in his view—the white elite were following in the footsteps of their forefathers and with Hampton that was a literal analogy. He essentially became his generation’s John C. Calhoun or Thomas Cooper, as he continued the fight until the North finally decided to get out of his country.

After the surrender of Robert E. Lee and Johnston the actual Civil War was over, but in the minds of South Carolinians the fight continued. With the onset of Radical Reconstruction “white Carolinians grew more unified and deliberate, and their resistance became more organized, directed, and effective. By 1876 resistance had evolved into war.”¹⁴⁴ Republicans controlled South Carolina with their carpetbaggers, scalawags, and black representation but the conservative Democrats still possessed the two most important resources available, land and money. After a decade of political turmoil in which the Republican party planted a foreign government in the state to break up the old order and establish universal male suffrage for every man, white South Carolinians were finally ready to strike back and win the war. The elections of 1876 would bring redemption to South Carolina.

South Carolina was the first state in the Union to secede and in effect it was the last one to surrender because there was no white opposition in the state outside of carpetbaggers and scalawags because the white elite were unified. The leaders of the old order were united in their quest to restore racial control and regain political power. It did not matter if they were unionists or secessionists before the war, because they were

¹⁴⁴ Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 5.

unified from secession forward, wanting only what was in the best interest of their state. It did not matter to these men if that happened in the Confederacy or the Union, but that South Carolina was treated fairly and the conservative order ruled. After redemption they would truly be more distinct than ever as they could play the part of good Americans at the same time displaying Southern nationalism glorifying those who gave all for their state.

Campaigning for Hampton in the 1876 gubernatorial election Perry refuted the claims of Governor Daniel Chamberlain that the Republican party freed the slaves. Notes Lillian Kibler, “Perry stated that slavery in South Carolina had been abolished by the state convention of 1865 representing all slave holders of the state, and by ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment by the legislature—and in no other way.”¹⁴⁵ Here was the man who 16 years before had voted against secession showing the defiant attitude that all white men in South Carolina possessed. Even this staunch Unionist, Perry was not willing to concede to the federal government that they had freed the slaves but that it was the very men who had enslaved them in the first place that had given them the very freedom that they enjoyed at that particular time. Ironically, this election year fell on the centennial of American independence and the white elite of South Carolina viewed the elections of 1876 as their march for independence.

When Hampton won the gubernatorial election of 1876, white South Carolinians across the state rejoiced. White residents had come full circle and never relinquished

¹⁴⁵ Lillian Adele Kibler, *Benjamin F. Perry: South Carolina Unionist* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1946), 491.

their quest to gain full control over their state again. “The resistance of Carolina whites had coalesced into “people’s war,” resulting in the overthrow of an “alien” government, its collaborators, and its unacceptable social system.”¹⁴⁶ Unionism did not prevail in the Palmetto State but secession did as the very men who took South Carolina out of the Union and fought against it were now in total control and again free to establish their paternalistic order. For South Carolina, the Civil War officially ended on April 11, 1877, when Hampton took the oath of office. The Civil War and Reconstruction were over for the white citizenry of the Palmetto State and Redemption finally took place.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 5.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 201.

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