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RED SHIRT REVISITED: THE POLITICS OF MARTIN GARY 1868-1881

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RED SHIRT REVISITED: THE POLITICS OF MARTIN GARY 1868-1881

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

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

by
Patrick Dean Kent
May 2015

Accepted by:
Dr. Rod Andrew, Committee Chair
Dr. Vernon Burton
Dr. Alan Grubb

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the genesis and characteristics of the politics of Martin Witherspoon Gary, a controversial individual who achieved prominence during the Reconstruction era (1868-1876) in South Carolina. Although his significance has been acknowledged in the recent historiography of the subject, few works have covered Gary and his politics extensively. Prior historians have succeeded largely in establishing Gary as nothing more than a caricature in South Carolina history; either a noble savior or contemptible villain depending on their own partiality to Gary's politics.

By utilizing state newspapers from the era, the contrasting portrayals of Gary in secondary sources, and Gary's own collection of personal papers, this thesis expands upon the recent historiography of Reconstruction South Carolina by discussing the importance of Gary's politics at length and from his own perspective. I suggest that upon closer examination of Gary and his politics, we find tangible evidence of a rupture in South Carolina's traditional "conservative" ideology that has often gone understated. This rupture hallmarks the beginnings of a "die-hard" legacy of postbellum white supremacy in South Carolina that challenged the views of moderate conservatives and continued to endure after Gary's death with the ascendancy of one of his most ardent followers, Benjamin Ryan Tillman.

DEDICATION

To native South Carolinians all; past, present, and future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The final draft of this thesis would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of many individuals other than myself. I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Rod Andrew, and fellow committee members Dr. Vernon Burton and Dr. Alan Grubb for not only their invaluable guidance in regards to the intellectual and contextual development of this thesis, but also their genuine enthusiasm for the project as a whole. Dr. Paul Anderson, coordinator of the graduate program at Clemson, also deserves my sincere thanks for his overriding guidance throughout all of my educational and bureaucratic endeavors during my time spent in the graduate program. Thanks for my student colleagues are also in order. Aside from lending “moral support,” your work ethic, positive attitudes, suggestions and advice both in and outside of the seminar room have fostered an environment that is both collaborative and conducive to making all of our time spent here at Clemson worthwhile. At the risk of forgetting someone, I will not list names, suffice to say you all have made this experience a memorable one.

I would also like to thank my girlfriend, Haley, for always being supportive during this long and sometimes arduous process. Her sacrifices made in order to help me successfully pursue my passion for history and complete this portion of my graduate education have not gone unnoticed. Thanks should also go to my parents, Jack and Phoebe, for instilling the values of confidence, independence, and work ethic within me that have enabled my success.

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INTRODUCTION

THE “BALD EAGLE” OF EDGEFIELD

Known as the “Bald Eagle of Edgefield County,” Martin Witherspoon Gary had a “picturesque” appearance and aggressive temperament that have become hallmarks of his enduring legacy in South Carolina Reconstruction historiography. The *Cyclopedia of Eminent and Representative Men of the Carolinas of the Nineteenth Century* considered the former Confederate General as “above all a man of firm convictions and outspoken opinions...his was not a nature of compromise or concession where principle was concerned...some prejudiced opponents held that he lacked conservatism and moderation.”¹ A correspondent for the *Cincinnati Enquirer* described Gary’s personality in similarly colorful terms: “General Gary is one of the oddest, finest, brilliant geniuses I ever encountered...he is fiery, fearless, and goes off in conversation like a skyrocket and reaches a conclusion by bursting into showers of strange words and funny sayings...his temper was such that none but a brave man dare cross him.” Gary’s physical attributes seemingly complemented his outspoken nature. Standing five feet eleven inches tall with an “elegant, well-proportioned form, Gary bore himself with an air of distinction...his face was that of a thinker and doer combined...his classic features, mobile and full of expression, were lighted by the searching grayish-blue eyes of the natural fighter, and more than one man was to quail before his fiery glance.”² Such descriptions of Gary encapsulate a continuing problem historians face when determining Gary’s

¹ *Cyclopedia of Eminent and Representative Men of the Carolinas of the Nineteenth Century*. (Columbia: South Caroliniana Library, 1892), 206; *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 14, 1881.

² Claude Bowers, *The Tragic Era: the Revolution After Lincoln*. (Cambridge, Mass: The Riverside Press, 1957), 502-503

importance in Reconstruction South Carolina. Gary's trademark bellicosity and striking physical appearance have resulted in his becoming something more of a caricature than a legitimate historical agent. Gary's political *modus operandi* has also been oversimplified. Staunchly white supremacist, Gary radically advocated physically threatening, intimidating, and even killing the Republican opposition in South Carolina's gubernatorial election of 1876. On the surface level Gary's personality and politics only deal in absolutes; and this has contributed to the posthumous perception of him as a one-dimensional figure by both his admirers and detractors. Early twentieth century histories of Reconstruction South Carolina pigeonhole Gary as either a noble hero or contemptible villain depending on the author's biases and partiality to South Carolina's varying Reconstruction narratives. Because of this, Gary's controversial depiction in South Carolina Reconstruction historiography warrants a brief discussion before delving into his politics.

Subsequent to Gary's death, Red Shirt acolytes began casting Gary's heroic image in earnest. In 1895, Gary's most prominent disciple—Ben Tillman—emphatically claimed that “under the leadership and inspiration of Mart Gary—because he planned and brought about the straight out movement of 1876” South Carolina Democrats “won the fight” for redemption. Earlier that same year, Tillman argued in the *Charleston News and Courier* that his deceased friend “deserved the honor more than any other of redeeming the state.”³ Tillman's pro-Gary sentiment

³ Ben Tillman, *Speech of the Honorable B.R. Tillman in the Constitutional Convention of South Carolina on Thursday, October 31, 1895*. (Columbia: State Co. Printers, 1895); *Charleston News and Courier*, September 17, 1895. The term “Red Shirt” refers to South Carolina Democrats who contributed to “redeeming” the state from Radical Republican rule in 1876 by participating in local rifle clubs characterized by their militant structure. The “red shirt” became the unofficial uniform of these clubs; its exact origins are still debated today. While the vast majority of Red Shirts were white,

would become the basis for a number of works seeking to reinforce Gary's image as South Carolina's savior in 1876. Henry T. Thompson's *Ousting the Carpetbagger from South Carolina*, first published in 1926, described Gary as an individual whose "character and Democracy were equally above reproach" and who, alongside Wade Hampton III, "stood out conspicuously in redeeming the state." Thompson dedicated his book to the Red Shirts of 1876 and their "unceasing vigilance, tireless energy, and exalting patriotism," the very qualities Gary's sympathizers were keen to bestow on him.⁴ Virginia journalist Alfred Brackenbrough Williams, who went to South Carolina to cover the Red Shirt campaign in 1876, added another flamboyant dimension to Gary: "never has there been sweeter or more welcome music in my ears than the high pitched voice of General Martin Witherspoon Gary uplifted in eloquent profanity, coming up with us from behind with his company." Historian Claude G. Bowers utilized Williams' reminiscences to detail the "character" of Martin Gary and the Red Shirt campaign while "attacking the Republican leaders of 1868, 1872, and 1876" in his Dunning-school based interpretation of Reconstruction, *The Tragic Era*.⁵ Bowers' *The Tragic Era* also made use of a different set of source material that was eventually compiled into another book, one that, according to its

Blacks were also invited to join the clubs in specific locales throughout the state. See Edmund Drago, *Hurrah for Hampton! Black Red Shirts in South Carolina During Reconstruction*. (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 12-25, 57-90.

⁴ Henry T. Thompson, *Ousting the Carpetbagger from South Carolina*. (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 3.

⁵ Alfred B. Williams, *Hampton and his Red Shirts: South Carolina's Deliverance in 1876*. (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1935), 298; Neil Macaulay, "South Carolina Reconstruction Historiography." *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, (Vol. 65, No.1, Jan. 1964), 27.

author, “brought General Gary out of the obscurity to which he had been relegated by historians.”⁶

Written over a twelve-year period and published in 1940 by Spartanburg native William Arthur Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered* was heralded as a “factual and startling account of Reconstruction days in South Carolina.”⁷ In actuality, *Red Shirts Remembered* resembles little more than a Gary hagiography. Sheppard manipulates his source material to persuasive effect, attempting to firmly establish one Martin W. Gary as the preeminent “Southern Brigadier of the Reconstruction Period” evidenced in the book’s subtitle. Sheppard’s book is scathing in its denunciation of Radical Republicans, whom he labels the “scepter of adamant Negroism,” and also Gary’s Democratic contemporaries. The venerable and politically moderate Wade Hampton III is portrayed by Sheppard as a broken, destitute man who “weakly demurred at being thus dragged into public life” upon his nomination for the state governorship in 1876.⁸

Sheppard’s extremist account of Reconstruction and Gary’s importance in that saga received harsh criticism from several leading South Carolina historians of the 1940’s, including David Duncan Wallace, Robert H. Woody, and Francis B. Simkins. These three historians “failed in the first instance to find important material relating to the period, and in the second instance to find new material” within the pages of *Red Shirts Remembered*.⁹ Wallace and Simkins and Woody

⁶ Macaulay, 30; William Arthur Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered: Southern Brigadiers of the Reconstruction Period*. (Atlanta: Ruralist Press, Inc., 1940), x.

⁷ *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, January 28, 1940.

⁸ Sheppard, 30, 85-88.

⁹ William Arthur Sheppard, *Some Reasons Why Red Shirts Remembered*. (Greer: The Chas P. Smith Company, 1940), 3.

published their own revisionist syntheses of Reconstruction South Carolina in the 1930's that were unique for the time in their temperateness and objectivity. Both discuss Gary's contributions to the campaign of 1876, but stop short of painting "an idyllic portrait of General Gary, the most extreme of the white leaders."¹⁰ Far from hero worship, Wallace's portrayal of Gary in his *History of South Carolina* and Simkins' and Woody's in their *South Carolina during Reconstruction* may have served as an impetus for Sheppard's radical rebuke that put "the importance of General Gary dramatically before the public."¹¹ After the publication of *Red Shirts Remembered*, racial moderates followed in the footsteps of Wallace and Simkins and Woody and began fashioning a suitable characterization of the "Bald Eagle" that fit into their own Redemption narrative. Instead of branding Gary a savior, these authors cast Gary as a scheming, borderline diabolical individual. According to Wade Hampton III apologist Hampton Jarrell, "General Gary was a bitter man...he had a one track mind...if South Carolina had elected to follow Gary in the counter-revolution of 1876...Gary's leadership would have been as disastrous for the state as [Thaddeus] Stevens' had been for the nation."¹² Jarrell disseminates this villainous interpretation of Gary throughout the pages of his book *Wade Hampton and the Negro: the Road not Taken*, first published in 1949. The purveyors of Gary's heroism are scornfully referred to as part of a "tradition of a prideful telling of inordinate fraud and intimidation in the election of 1876 initiated by Gary that has had

¹⁰ Francis Simkins and Robert H. Woody, *South Carolina during Reconstruction*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932), 559.

¹¹ Macaulay, 26.

¹² Hampton M. Jarrell, *Wade Hampton and the Negro: the Road not Taken*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1949), 112.

considerable influence on historians of the period.”¹³ In a sense, however, Jarrell’s assessment of Gary retains a common characteristic with the very Red Shirt propaganda he chastises. Much like his predecessors, Jarrell’s interpretation of Gary comes across as simplistic and one-dimensional. Here the caricature of Gary rears its head again, only this time he is presented not as a “savior” but as a “scourge” upon Wade Hampton’s noble pursuit of political moderation.

Conflicting interpretations of Gary often succeed in raising more questions than they answer. If Gary’s importance in South Carolina’s Reconstruction historiography is to be interpreted within an objective historical framework, it cannot be done by routine characterizations alone. The prior historiographical conceptualization of Gary as either “heroic” or “villainous” has resulted in a perspective that is detrimental to understanding Gary’s role and influence during South Carolina Reconstruction. In an attempt to avoid these interpretive pitfalls, this thesis will present Gary as a formative player in the complex political environment of Reconstruction-era South Carolina. Probable motives for the genesis and reasoning of Gary’s politics will be detailed; doing so will highlight how and why Gary’s political ideology at large is representative of a marked shift in South Carolina’s traditional “conservative” ethos. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to outline a working definition of the term “conservative” as it relates to this thesis in order to understand the rift created by Gary’s politics during and after Reconstruction in South Carolina.

¹³ Ibid, 146. See Jarrell’s preface for the author’s stance on racial moderation.

The definition of “conservatism” and Gary’s historical significance has been debated in the recent historiography of the subject. Since the late 1960’s, historians have attempted to further analyze Gary’s perceived role during Radical Reconstruction (1868-1876), the Bourbon Era (1877-1890), and the age of Ben Tillman (1890-1900). Three works in particular stand out in their attempts to reexamine Gary’s historical significance. These are in chronological order of their publication: William J. Cooper’s *The Conservative Regime*, (1968) Stephen Kantrowitz’s *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*, (2000) and W. Scott Poole’s *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry* (2004). Each of these books has proven influential in defining the term “conservatism” as it relates to this thesis. Cooper and Poole agree that the theme of the past was a major influence upon the southern conservative mindset. According to Cooper, “the theme of the Confederacy and of times past pervaded the Conservative mind...South Carolina Conservatives looked forward not to a better world but to a re-created one...their program had unity only in its loyalty to an idealized past.”¹⁴ Central to this idealized past were societal and political relations built upon the pillars of rational order, white “paternalism” in regards to race relations, and social prestige. Adherence to custom and tradition also defined a particular aspect of the conservative mindset. In W. Scott Poole’s estimation, “the southern conservative tradition shows some resemblance to continental romantic conservatism that looked to the classical and medieval past as a guide for society more deeply human than the turbulent world created by the political and economic

¹⁴ William J. Cooper Jr., *The Conservative Regime: South Carolina 1877-1890*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 20.

revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century.” Poole also claims that South Carolina conservatives “rejected modernity outright,” believing the threat of modernity was represented within the “radically autonomous self, abstracted from paternalist and hierarchical relationships.”¹⁵ Using these mutual qualities of conservatism delineated by Cooper and Poole as a guide, this thesis will suggest that the term “conservatism” represents a tangible set of social and political values that were challenged by Martin Gary. Even if an exact definition of “conservatism” is difficult to agree upon in the context of South Carolina history, the qualities of nostalgia, peace and order, and a steadfast devotion to bygone tradition created a working worldview for southern conservatives which was notably different from the political platform Gary espoused.

Standing in contrast to this viewpoint is Stephen Kantrowitz. Kantrowitz argues that the connotations inherent to the term “conservative” typify an idealized set of values that do not actually exist.¹⁶ To Kantrowitz, any distinction between Gary’s radicalism and Hampton’s moderation is nonexistent. “Conservatism” is inseparable from the platform of white supremacy, whether such a platform was propagated by advocating racial warfare or couched in more peaceful rhetoric. Such a conclusion seems ripe for debate. Although both Democratic radicals and moderates were indeed waging the same campaign to “redeem” South Carolina in 1876, each envisioned a different method as to how this could be accomplished. The desirable end result also differed for both factions: one anticipated the complete

¹⁵ W. Scott Poole, *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 4, 17.

¹⁶ Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2000), 78. The quotations around the term “conservative” are his own.

subjugation and marginalization of African Americans, while the other group sought to provide Blacks with limited social and political rights by adhering to a set of “paternalistic” values inspired by southern conservative tradition. Although both of these outcomes are fundamentally racist, they suggest a series of different assumptions and consequences that eventually came into conflict with one another. Accordingly, this thesis will position itself against Kantrowitz’s argument by asserting there are differences between Gary’s radicalism and the moderate politics of his contemporaries.

The works of Cooper, Poole, and Kantrowitz all discuss Gary’s political ideology as one not concomitant with the more moderate political agenda embodied by Wade Hampton. Cooper claims that “since 1877 Gary had led the opposition to the policies and the candidates of the conservative Democrats dominated by Wade Hampton; his opposition had been bitter and vocal.”¹⁷ Similarly, W. Scott Poole argues that Gary’s radicalism would eventually “have grave consequences for the conservative movement in South Carolina” due to its emphasis on overt violence, political fraud, and the antipathy towards Hampton and his moderate followers who “spoke favorably of the freedmen.”¹⁸ Even Kantrowitz discusses Gary as an independent challenger to South Carolina’s traditional conservative Democratic leadership. Gary’s defiant nature, Kantrowitz argues, transformed him into an icon “for white men disgusted with the arrogance of wealth” while his “combative iconoclasm” in the name of white supremacy “appealed to men who felt abandoned

¹⁷ Cooper, 64.

¹⁸ Poole, 118-119.

by their political leaders.”¹⁹ Regardless of these arguments, each of these authors still categorizes Gary under the broad banner of “conservatism” as a whole. Gary is implicated as a *radical* conservative, but how this label differentiates Gary from the likes of a “traditional” conservative needs to be analyzed in greater detail. One of the goals of this thesis is to further expand on the descriptions of Gary presented by Cooper, Poole, and Kantrowitz in an effort to make clearer why Gary and his politics represent a significant departure from their more moderate counterparts. This will be possible by analyzing Gary’s ideological bent in conjunction with the perceived origins and contents of his proposed plan for Wade Hampton’s gubernatorial campaign of 1876, which will show why Gary’s politics were markedly different from those of his moderate conservative opposition.

Chapter One details Gary’s racial ideology, one grounded in an uncompromising vision of white supremacy. Gary’s strict adherence to the white supremacist cause laid the foundation for both his political ideology and the finer details of his “No 1. Plan of Campaign” that he hoped South Carolina’s Democratic leadership would adopt to redeem the state. Gary’s fiery personality served to amplify the bombast of his white supremacist rhetoric, as becomes evident when analyzing the contents of Gary’s various speeches and their eventual censorship by moderates within the Democratic Party. Gary believed racial warfare was inevitable should “common white men” in South Carolina not take action and become the architects of their own redemption policy. To Gary, redeeming the state boiled down to a “question of race, not politics.” The following quote, culled from one of

¹⁹ Kantrowitz, 94-95.

Gary's speeches, adequately summarizes his stance on race: "the negro is united against the white man in this state, while as yet the white men are not united against the black man. Whenever they become so, it then will only be a question of time as to which will control."²⁰ This attitude towards race became Gary's political calling card and differentiated him from moderate conservatives, racist though they may have been.

Chapter Two details the supposed "degeneracy"—to Gary, at least— of Reconstruction-era Edgefield, South Carolina. One of Gary's sympathizers described Gary's resident county as the "cesspool of South Carolina's political sewer."²¹ Edgefield and its surrounding areas have been frequently perceived as the most violent, explosive, and unstable in Reconstruction South Carolina. Such an environment may have contributed to the aggressive, militant underpinnings evidenced in Gary's plan of campaign. Gary's advocacy of radical Democratic "straight-outism" became amplified by the Hamburg Massacre, an event that seemingly encapsulated the "degeneracy" in Edgefield and the political contest in 1876 South Carolina as a whole. For Gary, the "bloody affair at Hamburg" seemingly reaffirmed how effective violence and intimidation could be in forcing the hand of Radical Republicans and the rest of the state's black population. Gary purportedly played a role in provoking the riot for this purpose, capitalizing on the highly politicized nature of the affair. Gary could be satisfied in knowing South Carolina's

²⁰ Excerpt from Gary's Feb. 19 1874 speech given at the South Carolina Taxpayers Convention quoted in David Duncan Wallace, "The Life of Martin Witherspoon Gary" Manuscript (South Carolina Historical Society, 1922), 52; Jarrell, 57; Poole, 119.

²¹ Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 25. Sheppard dubbed Edgefield a "cesspool" due to its Reconstruction-era government, which consisted largely of Blacks and Radical Republicans. Modern historians, of course, would take issue with this assumption considering the county was a hotbed for white supremacy.

Republican and black populaces had reason to fear the possibility of an indiscriminate campaign of violence against them after the Hamburg affair. Hundreds of white militia groups were formed throughout the South Carolina upcountry to give the appearance that Gary's threats of violence were both tangible and omnipresent. The success of Gary's plan hinged upon these groups; for Gary believed the regimented nature of the rifle clubs in comparison to the Ku Klux Klan would convince more moderate whites who straddled the political fence to join them. Wade Hampton and his fellow moderates distanced themselves from Hamburg and the perceived mob-like qualities of the rifle clubs, even if he advocated their use for "peaceful" shows of force.

Chapter Three discusses Gary's utilization of Mississippi's 1875 "redemption" as a feasible blueprint for the development of his own written plan of campaign and radical brand of "straight-outism" in 1876. White Mississippians overcame a Black majority of five to one via intimidation, fraud, and bloodshed spurred on at the behest of white Democrats. Written correspondence between Gary and Mississippi's redemption leaders indicates the similarities between Gary's "No. 1 Plan of Campaign" and the "Mississippi Plan" used to redeem that state. The emphasis on the use of violence and intimidation became a defining characteristic of Gary's political crusade, regardless of how often or whether he and his followers employed either. Gary took the precedent set in Mississippi and ran with it, for to him it highlighted how effective white solidarity could be coupled with threats, intimidation, and outright violence in "redeeming" South Carolina. Critical to implementing Gary's plan of violence and intimidation were the rural, poor white

masses who declared themselves ready to “strike for white supremacy” at a moment’s notice.²² Gary’s taking up the cause of the “common man” highlights his disdain for South Carolina’s traditional conservative aristocracy and marks the beginning of a shift in the state’s body politic.

Chapter Four will discuss Gary’s politics after 1876 and his challenge to the state’s traditional conservative leadership. During this time, Gary became a vocal critic of Wade Hampton’s “conservative regime” and was eventually shut out of politics because of this. Before Gary renounced politics for good, however, he began advocating his own independent platform for governor based on the “foundation laid in 1876”—a foundation that Gary and his followers interpreted quite differently from those of the moderate Hampton clique. Gary’s posthumous influence on Ben Tillman is also briefly touched upon; Tillman’s nearly complete disenfranchisement of South Carolina’s black population seemingly vindicated Gary’s political manifesto. Tillman himself was eventually accused of destroying the conservative, aristocratic tradition “which gave distinction to the South Carolina of an earlier day.”²³ The seeds of this destruction, it will be seen, were planted in Martin Gary’s political ideology well before Tillman completed it.

²² Stephen Budiansky, *The Bloody Shirt: Terror After Appomattox*. (New York: Viking Penguin, 2008), 223-224.

²³ Francis Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman: South Carolinian*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944), 549.

CHAPTER ONE

“ONLY BY THE INSTINCT AND AFFINITY OF RACE” – GARY’S RACIAL IDEOLOGY

Further analyzing Martin Gary’s racial ideology seems to be an extraneous task upon first glance. The question of the “central theme of southern history” to Gary was literally black and white.²⁴ White supremacist to the core, Gary described South Carolina’s Reconstruction battle line as a “question of race, not politics” in its very essence and entirety.²⁵ Gary’s racial ideology was far from a unique one in Reconstruction South Carolina; his ability to garner followers and support in rural South Carolina for a political campaign that stressed the white sentiment of feeling “honor bound to control the vote of at least one Negro by intimidation, purchase, or how he may best accomplish it” merely highlights this fact.²⁶ This “radical” element of Gary’s white supremacist mantra laid the background and impetus for both Gary’s political platform as a whole and the finer written details of his “No. 1 plan of campaign.” Gary’s initial appeal to South Carolina’s rural whites lay within his promise to “strike for white supremacy” both quickly and aggressively as the need arose.²⁷ The radical views of Gary and his contingent of followers in regards to the race question differentiated them from their moderate conservative opposition throughout the state, who were concerned with the political ramifications of Gary’s extreme position on the subject.

²⁴ Ulrich. B Phillips, “The Central Theme of Southern History.” *The American Historical Review*, (Vol. 34, No. 1, Oct. 1928), 30-43.

²⁵ Excerpt from Gary’s Feb. 19, 1874 speech at the South Carolina Taxpayers Convention, quoted in Wallace, “The Life of Martin Witherspoon Gary” Manuscript, 52; Jarrell, 57; Poole, 119,

²⁶ Gary’s “No. 1 Plan of Campaign,” Martin Gary Papers, South Caroliniana Library; reprinted in Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 48.

²⁷ *Columbia Union Herald*, October 29, 1874; Budiansky, 223-224.

On June 1, 1868, Edgefield Democrats met at the county courthouse to discuss a resolution adopted by a segment of the state's Democratic Party at a convention in Columbia one month prior. Present at the Edgefield county courthouse meeting was Martin W. Gary, who took issue with a particular resolution adopted in Columbia. It read as follows:

Resolved, That under the action of the State of South Carolina heretofore taken, we recognize the colored population of the state as an integral element of the body politic, and as such, in person and property, entitled to a full and equal protection under the State Constitution and laws; and as citizens of South Carolina, we declare our willingness, when we have the power, to grant them under proper qualifications, as to property and intelligence, the right of suffrage.

Gary made his disdain for the resolution public with a series of remarks printed in his resident newspaper, the *Edgefield Advertiser*, a little over a week after the meeting at the Edgefield County courthouse took place. Gary's trademark candor was on full display as he proclaimed to "regard this resolution as fraught with grave consequences to the people of this state."²⁸ With South Carolina on the cusp of congressionally-implemented Radical Reconstruction, the establishment of biracial governments and limited Black suffrage as later outlined in the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the United States Constitution would prove a difficult pill for Gary to swallow. Faced by this reality, Gary began crafting his own vocal opposition to South Carolina's impending Republican order. Gary's decision to take up the cause of resistance seems to have been influenced by his background as a wealthy plantation owner, wartime service in the name of secession, brash

²⁸ *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 10, 1868.

personality, and desire to achieve political significance. If these qualities inspired Gary's initial resistance to Congressional Reconstruction, however, Gary's continual and constant emphasis on the race issue became the method by which he could "survive in a political system that had undergone a revolution."²⁹ For Gary, the supposed threat of political independence posed by South Carolina's black majority remained problematic. Gary rejected any "qualified" notion of Black suffrage outright, for if such a resolution was "acquiesced in, or adopted by the citizens of the state, it [would be] the initiative steps to their future additional ruin and degradation." In full and complete favor of a "*white man's government* under the dominion and management of the sons of the *Caucasian race*," Gary declared his "unwillingness to grant the negro the privilege of voting under any circumstances or under any qualifications as to property or intelligence, either as to offices of the State or of the United States" no sooner than Radical Reconstruction had gotten underway.³⁰

In making this bold proclamation to oppose "qualified" Black suffrage at all costs, Gary's political agenda had already begun situating itself against South Carolina's racially moderate leadership some eight years before Gary's "No. 1 Plan of Campaign" came to fruition. Gary himself was not oblivious to this issue. Instead of calling for the complete political marginalization of Blacks as Gary had done, moderates such as then-governor James Lawrence Orr and Wade Hampton III made conservative appeals to South Carolina's white population in the hope to accord

²⁹ Dan Carter, *When the War was Over: the Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867*. (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1985), 274

³⁰ *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 10, 1868.

freedmen limited political suffrage. Doing so, Orr and Hampton believed, would offer South Carolina “a tolerable way out of the impasse of military rule.” Described by one source as a “man of conservative opinions,” Orr described his feelings in regards to the Reconstruction Acts as follows: “I will accept their terms, humiliating as they may be, and openly, fairly, and squarely urge their adoption by our people.” Orr went on to say that “a flourishing condition of the state is as much the interest of the black man as the white man...they need representation in congress as much as we do.”³¹ Wade Hampton, whose moderate leadership would eventually prove far more persuasive than Orr’s, urged whites and blacks alike to adopt a platform of mutual cooperation: “the broad fact that the two races in the South must henceforth harmonize on a political basis to avoid a bloody conflict is the ground covered by Wade Hampton,” claimed the *Charleston News and Courier*.³² Hampton stated he was “perfectly willing to see a constitution adopted by our State, conferring the elective franchise on the negro, on precisely the same terms as it is to be exercised by the white man,” and argued for white South Carolinians to fully recognize black political rights.³³ Such moderate sentiment seemed a repulsive proposition for Martin Gary. To Gary, Orr and Hampton “no doubt had good intentions” in their advocacy of limited Black suffrage. Gary believed these intentions, however, gave credence to the proverb that “hell is paved with good intentions.”³⁴ As will soon become evident, Gary frequently combined this type of religious oratory and

³¹ William Watts Ball, *The State that Forgot: South Carolina’s Surrender to Democracy*. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1932), 142; Simkins and Woody, 83; *Charleston Daily Courier*, April 3, 1867.

³² *Charleston News and Courier*, April 4, 1867 in Simkins and Woody, 84.

³³ Rod Andrew, *Wade Hampton: Confederate Warrior to Southern Redeemer*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 340.

³⁴ *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 10, 1868.

patriotic bombast when propagating his radical viewpoint in an effort to appeal to poor, rural whites throughout the South Carolina upcountry who resided in counties with black population majorities.

In his remarks on the April 1868 state Democratic convention given to the *Edgefield Advertiser*, Gary also disavowed “qualified” suffrage in all of its various forms. Any willingness by Orr, Hampton, and South Carolina’s moderate leadership to embrace the Republican Party’s “African auxiliary,” he said, meant their “consent to make this [South Carolina’s] a mongrel government...if one negro can vote, you might as well let them all do so...and make the children of your former slaves the successful competitors of your children for the honors of the state.”³⁵ Gary believed attempts at social and political cooperation between Blacks and whites were an exercise in futility; in these views the origins of Gary’s radical political platform as one that depicted the battle for South Carolina as a “question of race, not politics” were already on full display as early as 1868. Unwilling to acquiesce to a “mongrel government,” Gary prophesized all-out racial warfare in South Carolina as a viable last resort to relieve the state “from the numerical negro supremacy that the unconstitutional Reconstruction acts have fixed upon her.”³⁶ Although Wade Hampton was not present at the April 1868 state Democratic convention, a contingent of his moderate followers wrote a petition in a last ditch effort to subvert the federally imposed state constitution which would grant South Carolina readmission into the union while affording its black citizens political rights and

³⁵ Ibid; *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 9, 1868.

³⁶ *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 10, 1868.

offices. Racist in its essence, the petition nevertheless did not condone Martin Gary's radical brand of white supremacy, but proposed more moderate means: "we do not mean to threaten by arms, but the people of our state will never submit quietly to negro rule...we may have to pass under the yoke you have authorized, but by moral agencies, by political organization, by every peaceful means left us, we will keep up this contest until we have regained the political control handed down to us by an honored ancestry."³⁷ Even this proclamation was insufficient by Gary's racial standard. Gary, who epitomized the "die-hard element in South Carolina," saw in the Democratic convention's failure to garner any influence over the black vote proof that no political middle ground could exist between black and white.³⁸ As the representative delegate of South Carolina's third congressional district, Gary espoused this viewpoint at the national Democratic convention that took place in New York on July 4th, 1868, declaring "this is not a question as to intelligence or property; it is a question of whether the Negro and white man can enjoy political privileges in common. And if they could, is it desirable that they should?"³⁹ The ensuing six years of Radical Reconstruction in South Carolina would emphatically strengthen Gary's resolve when it came to reestablishing a "white man's government."

Subsequent to South Carolina's readmission to the Union in 1868, the state Democratic Party quite literally "went underground" in its attempt to combat Radical Republicanism. Historian Richard Zuczek argues that "disorganized, locally-

³⁷ John S. Reynolds, *Reconstruction in South Carolina: 1865-1877*. (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 93; Jarrell, 25.

³⁸ Jarrell, 27.

³⁹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 9, 1868.

based resistance appeared, along with trial-and-error attempts at cooperation, abstention, fraud, and economic intimidation in an effort to weaken the state Republican machine.” By 1874, the “underground” Democratic resistance against Radical rule had become more “organized, directive, and effective” and the party’s organization as a resurgent political body began to follow suit.⁴⁰ There was still no universal consensus among South Carolina Democrats, however, as to how their growing influence could be translated into a viable political platform. Traditional conservatives such as Wade Hampton feared any politicization of the color line, which might set the stage for all out racial warfare in South Carolina. Indeed, “it had been for the very purpose of precluding such an outcome that they [moderate conservatives] had, in the first place, embraced the biracial and accommodationist approach.”⁴¹ For Hampton and his moderate conservative followers, the social ramifications of racial inequality did not correspond exactly with the political battle for the state. African American participation in South Carolina’s Reconstruction government, along with accusations of corruption and bribery, further incited moderate conservatives to rally against the Republican Party as a whole. Benjamin Perry, appointed governor of South Carolina in 1865 by president Andrew Johnson, summed up postwar political sentiment among his fellow conservatives as follows: “men of my way of thinking knew that white rascals, putting themselves on the level with the ignorant negroes, would corrupt and control them...the only security

⁴⁰ Lewis P. Jones, “The Bald Eagle of Edgefield” (Unpublished Manuscript, 1974), 47-48; Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 4-5.

⁴¹ Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics 1869-1879*. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1984), 58, 150-152.

against the ruin, social as well as political, of the state was *political* separation of the races.”⁴² Inspired by their disdain for the Republican Party and a continued desire to promulgate black subservience, South Carolina conservatives tended to draw the political battle for their state amongst partisan lines in which the racial undertones were implicit: the despicable Republicans fueled by their African American conspirators versus the white solidarity of magnanimous Democrats. Differing from this approach was Martin Gary, who advocated a more immediate, expedient, and violent approach to South Carolina’s “race question.” Gary himself seemed to relish in the prospect of racial warfare, this attitude being a byproduct of his strict adherence to radical white supremacy. As a result of this, Gary’s solution to reestablishing white rule in South Carolina combined a different series of “tactics” and ideological values whose roots stood in contrast to Hampton’s accommodationist approach.

Unsurprisingly, Martin Gary’s extremist stance on the politicization of South Carolina’s color line proved more pugnacious. Gary’s involvement in state politics between the years 1869-1874 had been largely restricted to his participation in taxpayers’ conventions every few years. During the taxpayers’ convention of 1871, Gary proposed a resolution of “cumulative voting” which was designed to compound the white vote and ensure white delegates would have a place in the state assembly. Gary envisioned this as a method by which democrats could “endeavor to make terms with ignorant and uneducated thieves and robbers” and possibly “secure a respectable minority” amongst the state legislature and Black majority of 30,000.

⁴² Ball, 144. Italics added.

The convention formally adopted Gary's "cumulative voting" proposition, but it met with little support amongst Democrats afterwards and never materialized due to the issues inherent with the very state legislature Gary condemned having to enact the resolution into law.⁴³

Three years later, the South Carolina taxpayers' convention would meet again with the "keen, restless-eyed, ugly antagonist" Martin Gary as a presiding member.⁴⁴ By this time, Gary's impatient nature and emotional temperament had him spoiling for action. After reiterating his support for the "cumulative voting" resolution he advocated in 1871, Gary cemented his reputation as a racial "die-hard" while establishing the cornerstone of his racial ideology and what he perceived to be the state's political battle line in the process. The following is an excerpt from Gary's speech given at the 1874 taxpayers' convention:

there is not one negro in ten that can explain to you the difference between the platform of the Democratic Party and the Radical Party; they are governed only by the instinct and affinity of race...you all know that the negro is united against the white man in this state, while as yet the white men are not united against the black man. Whenever they become so, it then will be only a question of time as to which will control...You, gentlemen, must address your energies to overcome the present negro majority. You must do so, or prove yourselves unworthy members of the Caucasian race—unworthy of the past record of South Carolina.⁴⁵

This radical proclamation that the "negro was arrayed against the white man, rather than against a political party" differentiated Gary from the state's moderate

⁴³ *Edgefield Advertiser*, May 18, 1871; Jones, "The Bald Eagle of Edgefield" Manuscript, 52-53.

⁴⁴ *Edgefield Advertiser*, May 18, 1871.

⁴⁵ Excerpt from Gary's Feb. 19, 1874 speech at the South Carolina Taxpayers Convention in Wallace, "The Life of Martin Witherspoon Gary" Manuscript, 52.

conservative faction led by Wade Hampton.⁴⁶ Gary's proclamation also highlights that the difference between Gary and his moderate counterparts was not only one of tactics, but also of an ideological bent. Moderate conservatives may have been in agreement with Gary when he claimed that South Carolina had been subjected to "the degrading supremacy of the ignorant and corrupt rule of the carpetbagger during the long years of misrule that has thrown its shadow over our state."⁴⁷ Gary's speech, however, implies the occurrence of something his moderate contemporaries had little desire for—all out racial warfare. By 1874, Gary believed racial warfare in South Carolina would be an inevitability if the state's white conservatives failed to become the architects of their own redemption policy.

Partly brought upon by his extremist vision of white supremacy, the social and political climate of Reconstruction South Carolina also compounded Gary's encouragement of racial warfare. Infamously dubbed the "prostrate state" by journalist and ardent Negrophobe James Shepherd Pike, Pike argued that there seemed to be "no positive theory in regard to the future of South Carolina" during Reconstruction.⁴⁸ Gary felt similarly, viewing racial warfare as a means to elevate South Carolina from its downtrodden "prostrate" condition. In the early 1870's, South Carolina's Republican governor Robert Kingston Scott proceeded to "arm them [blacks] as state militia, and refused to arm the white people in the same way." This did not sit well with Gary and other whites, who, according to Pike, "of course felt very anxious upon the subject, hearing companies of colored men drilling and

⁴⁶ Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 16.

⁴⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 19, 1876.

⁴⁸ James S. Pike, *The Prostrate State: South Carolina Under Negro Government*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 9.

training every night in each village of two or three thousand inhabitants, where the people were perfectly unprotected.”⁴⁹ Whites responded to this perceived threat by placing a greater emphasis on the formation of localized, all-white militia groups. By 1872, Gary’s resident county of Edgefield had taken the lead in the militia-forming movement. Here, such groups “offered no pretenses about their purpose, aiming to cow, and if necessary destroy the nearby militia units under local blacks Richard Bullock and Ned Tennant.”⁵⁰ Characterized by their militant structure, organization, and hierarchy, these groups later became a vehicle Gary would utilize to spread his radical brand of white supremacy throughout the state. Particularly to Edgefield whites, a “war of the races was seen as always imminent...and that fear remained a persistent part of the white psyche for long after Reconstruction was underway...the fears gave a license for white responses and to overt violence” because every “uprising was based on excuses and explanations of black military operations...every race riot with stories about black conspiracies.”⁵¹ Gary’s repeated emphasis on unadulterated white supremacy and his advocacy of racial warfare reflects this mindset.

Martin Gary believed white unity would prove insurmountable should South Carolina’s fortunes necessitate resolution by martial conflict. Any attempts by black militia to arrest white individuals would be met with violent retribution, in many cases bordering on the extreme. One such instance took place in Chester, South

⁴⁹ Ibid, 226.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Zuczek, 139; Francis Simkins, *The Tillman Movement in South Carolina*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1926), 46-50.

⁵¹ Mark Wahlgren Summers, *A Dangerous Stir: Fear, Paranoia, and the Making of Reconstruction*. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2009), 66.

Carolina, as “timid, ignorant negroes, after firing one volley threw away their guns and ran, with the whites pursuing them and killing all they could.”⁵² According to Pike, even governor Robert K. Scott, who commissioned the state’s black militia, was “certainly in the army too long to suppose that his militia would be effective in any contest with the white people of South Carolina...he knows that they are of no consequence for that purpose.”⁵³ The *Pickens Sentinel* described blacks’ prospects in an all-out physical altercation against whites as follows:

all experience since the war proves that the negroes cannot make a successful stand against the whites in these irregular and internecine conflicts...they have, as at Vicksburg and elsewhere, been ready enough to begin a fight, but they always get the worst of it, because they are badly led by designing knaves who lead them into trouble only to desert them in the moment of action.⁵⁴

Although this excerpt from the *Pickens Sentinel* seems to belie any fears Gary may have had of blacks mounting a successful insurrection or revolt, the “indignities” of eight years of “negro rule” and both the present and future consequences of South Carolina’s black majority would continue to permeate Gary’s mind. In these concerns lay the foundation for his radical response to what he deemed South Carolina’s penultimate issue during Reconstruction: “the question of race, not politics.”⁵⁵ While Wade Hampton and other moderate conservatives accepted the realities of qualified black suffrage, Gary could not be swayed from his view that

⁵² Ibid, 258.

⁵³ Pike, 227.

⁵⁴ *Pickens Sentinel*, October 26, 1876.

⁵⁵ Benjamin Tillman, *The Struggles of 1876: How South Carolina was delivered from Carpetbag and Negro Rule. Address Delivered at the Red Shirt Reunion, Anderson, SC, August 25th, 1909.* (N.P., 1909); Budiansky, 266.

“nothing but bloodshed and a good deal of it could answer the purpose of redeeming the state.”⁵⁶ Any effort made by moderate conservatives to even partially “attempt to elevate the black man to the social and political status of the white race is to trifle with the decrees of Heaven” said Gary.⁵⁷

Religious and historical rationalization were another means by which Gary dramatically propagated the necessity for his political platform in the name of radical white supremacy. Incomplete without overt references to creationism and historical fact, Gary’s rhetoric strove to elicit an emotional, impulsive response from South Carolina whites regarding to their feelings on the essentiality of white supremacy. Gary’s speech at Ridge Spring, given on October 18th, 1876, emphasizes Gary’s sacred, ethnocentric version of religion and history combined:

the leaders of the North have made blunders...by suddenly striking the shackles of four million slaves at once clothing them with all rights and privileges of the Caucasian race, a race superior in physical, moral, religious, and intellectual development, a race that god created in his own image...champions of liberty and the standard-bearers of a progressive civilization...the original Constitution excluded Negroes and Indians from becoming a part of the body politic...the wisdom that they exhibited in this exclusion of inferior races is shown by contrast with the opposite action of those who, in the year 1824, framed the Constitution of the Republic of the United States of Mexico...they now have a mongrel population that has inherited the vices of the different races.⁵⁸

Although South Carolina conservatives “again and again showed this tendency to root hierarchy in the facts of creation that no human fiat could change,” Gary’s

⁵⁶ Budiansky, 225.

⁵⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 9, 1868.

⁵⁸ *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 19, 1876.

rhetoric differed from that of his moderate conservative contemporaries in its emphasis on taking action instead of being used as a tool for common-sense persuasion.⁵⁹ After Gary and Wade Hampton joined forces in a tenuous political alliance to “redeem” South Carolina during the state gubernatorial election of 1876, the contrast in each man’s solution to the “exigency of Black domination” became even more apparent. Hampton attempted to mollify whites’ hardened racial attitudes by rhetorical means, and his campaign speeches are hallmarked by their appeals to both Blacks and whites for reason, calmness, and rationality.⁶⁰ Such qualities are evident in the majority of Hampton’s numerous campaign speeches. In a speech given at Abbeville on September 16, 1876, Hampton argued “the only way to bring about prosperity in this state is to bring the two races in friendly relation together...I pledge it for those gentlemen who are on the ticket with me that as far as in us lies we will observe, protect, and defend the rights of the colored man as quickly as any man in South Carolina.”⁶¹ Here, Hampton presented himself and his followers as the purveyors of a moderate social and political order, even if he stopped short of presenting Blacks as “equals.” Hampton’s desire for this orderly and just society in South Carolina stemmed from the “paternalistic” values of moderate conservatism. While there has been much debate over the sincerity of Hampton’s claims, according to one source, “every piece of evidence indicates that Hampton did not concur” with Martin Gary’s ideology of racial extremism.⁶²

⁵⁹ Poole, 83.

⁶⁰ DeWitt Jones, “Wade Hampton and the Rhetoric of Race: a Study of the Speaking of Wade Hampton on the Race Issue in South Carolina, 1865-1878.” Ph. D. diss., Louisiana State University, 1988, 170.

⁶¹ *Charleston News and Courier*, September 17, 1876.

⁶² Jones, “Wade Hampton and the Rhetoric of Race,” 170.

On the other hand, Gary believed that South Carolina's Reconstruction woes could not be solved by any moderate rhetorical approach. The roots and core of this belief originated in Gary's hardline white supremacist ideology. Gary assumed that "blacks were incapable of responding to rational persuasive appeals and therefore fashioned a campaign of fraud and intimidation" as a means to supplant Reconstruction South Carolina's black majority and fully restore "white man's government" throughout the state.⁶³ Gary's emphasis on fraud and intimidation was reinforced by the grandiose biblical and historical references he made throughout his speeches. Gary offered no pretenses about the schematics of his "plan of campaign" in 1876. "We must make the campaign," he declared, "an aggressive one and prosecute it with great vigor and try to get up all the enthusiasm we can among the masses."⁶⁴ Coupled with "religious rhetoric, pseudoscientific evidence, and the 'manifest lessons of history,'" Gary's rhetoric was intended as a formidable tool in order to garner this said enthusiasm amongst the white masses.⁶⁵ In his emotive appeals to South Carolina whites, Gary ridiculed Hampton's moderate "milk and cider, 'peace and prosperity,' flattery of Negroes policy" exhibited throughout Hampton's campaign speeches.⁶⁶ Gary also had an equally strong distaste for the "tendency of Hampton and his followers to speak favorably of the freedmen and to suggest the possibility that the emancipated slaves had a place, albeit a subordinate one, in South Carolina's social and political order."⁶⁷ In one of Gary's campaign

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Martin Gary, "No. 1 Plan of Campaign." Martin Gary Papers, SCL.

⁶⁵ Carter, 148.

⁶⁶ *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, January 10, 1877; reprinted in Sheppard, *Some Reasons Why*.

⁶⁷ Poole, 119.

speeches at Aiken, described by the *Cincinnati Gazette* as a “specimen speech of the negro and Union-haters of the South,” Gary’s bold appeals for action and white solidarity are on full display:

my friends, I tell you there are certain men you must put out of the way—men you must kill...they must be killed; for they are the leaders of the negroes and if you get rid of them we can carry things as we want them...we met them on the field once, and we are ready to meet them again...go in masses, armed, and try to force the negroes to vote our ticket...shoot them down and cut off their ears, and I warrant you this will teach them a lesson...even if we are not elected we will go to Columbia in force, surround the statehouse, and tear it down, and show them we will rule.⁶⁸

Although Gary himself would claim that the speech was an “extemporaneous one, and had been grossly misrepresented,” he did not deny advocating “shooting the corrupt carpetbag leaders, miserable white scalawags, and black leaders.” When further pressed about the contents of the speech, Gary backtracked some and said that he “was unwilling to hurt a hair upon the head of the Negro masses.”⁶⁹ The sincerity of this statement, which was printed in the *Charleston News and Courier*, is doubtful. Gary’s white supremacist ideology implies otherwise; so does the censorship of his speeches by moderate conservatives within the Democratic Party who were clearly bothered by his extremism.

In the days before Gary gave his “specimen speech” at Aiken, Edgefield resident L. M. Jordan wrote President Ulysses S. Grant about the content of Gary’s speeches. According to Jordan, “General Gary is advising the rifle clubs to attack United States soldiers...he says in all of his public speeches that he would not

⁶⁸ *Charleston News and Courier*, September 22, 1876.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

hesitate to lead a company of men to attack them and kill the last one of them...General Gary said the other day that he intended to carry the election, or he would fill every street in Edgefield with dead negroes.”⁷⁰ Due to their extremist and violent nature, Gary’s speeches were eventually censored by the State Democratic Committee. Chairman of the State Democratic Committee and Hampton’s campaign manager Alexander C. Haskell described Gary’s speeches as “directly contrary to the spirit of our party and to our whole campaign...it is a great peculiarity of the man that he uses violent language very often, and he was asked to modify it.”⁷¹ Gary eventually held his tongue over criticizing Hampton’s “milk and cider, peace and prosperity” policy of racial moderation for the sake of white Democratic victory in 1876. But shortly after Wade Hampton’s ascension to the governor’s office, Gary once again began disparaging the Hampton administration’s moderate stance on race. Rumors of Hampton dining with Blacks at Claflin College and personally witnessing a desegregated militia parade through the streets of Greenville proved more than Gary could handle. Even Gary’s political confidants, well aware of the “Bald Eagle’s” dedication to white supremacy, requested he tone down his rhetoric if he were to have any hope at future political success. “Venture on a strong speech, strong as you can for straight-out democracy, but I think I would not come down too heavy on the race issue...it is better not to proclaim such sentiments from the house tops,” wrote Gary’s friend Joshua H. Hudson of Marlboro county.⁷² Martin Gary,

⁷⁰ Testimonial of L.M Jordan, printed in *Testimony as to the Denial of the Elective Franchise in South Carolina at the Elections of 1875 and 1876, Volume III*. (Washington: Gov. printing office and misc. documents of the Senate of the United States, 1877), 91-92.

⁷¹ Jones, “Wade Hampton and the Rhetoric of Race,” 171.

⁷² Joshua H Hudson to Martin Gary, September 7, 1878. Martin Gary Papers, SCL.

however, could not foresee South Carolina's future any other way before, during, or even after the election of 1876. Hampton's moderate paternalistic notion of whites being in charge and providing blacks with minimal welfare, social, and political rights remained an unacceptable ideal to Gary. The *Yorkville Enquirer's* statement that "inspired by the intense and brutal hatred of the negro as a freedman and voter, there exist a considerable number of reckless white men accustomed to arms and deeds and violence over whom the restraints and sentiments of the better and more conservative classes of society have little or any power" would eventually prove true in the case of Martin Gary's dedication to his uncompromising white supremacist racial ideology.⁷³

⁷³ *Yorkville Enquirer*, Aug 17, 1876.

CHAPTER TWO

“CIVILIZATION OF THE MOB” - EDGEFIELD, HAMBURG, AND UPCOUNTRY MILITIA GROUPS

Described by Gary’s posthumous hagiographer William Arthur Sheppard as “the cesspool of South Carolina’s political sewer,” Edgefield County is frequently perceived as the most violent, explosive, and unstable region in Reconstruction South Carolina.⁷⁴ Gary’s volatile personality seems to be a microcosm of such an atmosphere. Although he was born in Abbeville County located farther north, Gary’s fiery temperament required he “belong” to Edgefield and its local tradition of violence, extremism, and audacious “statesmen, soldiers, adventures, and daredevils” that epitomized the county both during and after Reconstruction.⁷⁵ Edgefield County’s local newspaper and Gary’s major press vehicle *The Edgefield Advertiser* regularly claimed that any attempts by whites to invoke the law in the county were met with scorn by corrupt Republican judges and illegitimate black militia. Edgefield’s black majority of some 2,000 coupled with Gary’s hardened racial attitude and brash persona would provide the impetus for his belligerent encouragement of white supremacy and the aggressive, militant underpinnings evidenced throughout his “No. 1 Plan of Campaign.”⁷⁶ This same impetus and underlying motivation that drove Gary to develop his “No. 1 Plan of Campaign” also

⁷⁴ Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 24; for further descriptions of Edgefield, see essay in Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 67-90; Kantrowitz, 54, 75; Simkins, *Tillman Movement*, 23-24; Zuczek, 141-142, 190.

⁷⁵ Ball, *State That Forgot*, 22.

⁷⁶ South Carolina Census of 1875, reprinted in *Testimony as to the Denial of the Elective Franchise in South Carolina, Volume III*, 73.

ideologically estranged Gary from South Carolina's moderate conservative leadership.

Racial tension culminated in the Hamburg Massacre, which occurred on the nation's Independence Day centennial. The "bloody affair at Hamburg" soon became a rallying cry for Gary's extremist brand of politics. More prudent conservatives expressed their disgust with the "bloody affair;" they also became disgruntled with incumbent Republican governor Daniel Chamberlain's alleged effort to utilize the massacre as a *casus belli* by which he could bring more federal troops to the state and secure his successful reelection in 1876. While moderates came to the realization that South Carolina Democrats needed to unite politically and support a one-party ticket in order to oust Chamberlain, Gary and his extremist followers were satisfied with giving South Carolina's black and Republican population reason to fear the possibility of an indiscriminate campaign of violence against them.⁷⁷ To make this perceived threat of violence omnipresent, Gary would utilize all-white militia groups and rifle clubs that had been formed in the South Carolina upcountry as early as 1872 in the wake of the Ku Klux Klan's disbandment. After Hamburg, Gary became even more instrumental and enthusiastic in organizing all-white militia groups. This would eventually result in Gary formally drafting his "No. 1 Plan of Campaign" and distributing it to white militia throughout the state. Moderates, Wade Hampton foremost among them, sought to distance themselves from the violent, rowdy, mob-like qualities of Gary's Edgefield militia and instead advocated a "bloodless coercion" by campaign parades and demonstrations that showcased

⁷⁷ *Yorkville Enquirer*, August 17, 1876.

orderly white solidarity.⁷⁸ Edgefield County would harbor the most vocal opposition to Hampton's moderate stance on race and become the stronghold of Gary's extremist brand of Democratic "straight-outism," disavowing Republican fusionism by any measures deemed appropriate.

In Reconstruction Edgefield, Gary acolyte William Arthur Sheppard claimed, "the black militia roamed the county daily, becoming more insolent and intolerable; moonlight drums sounded on the summit of high hills, and filled the countryside with hideous clatter...here civilization of the mob reflected in the court room, and hope had faded for immediate relief from an overwhelming Negro majority."⁷⁹ Although Sheppard wrote this description some sixty years after Gary's death, Gary shared a similar perspective in regards to Edgefield County's Reconstruction-era woes. Having practiced law in Edgefield since the conclusion of the Civil War, Gary spent some eight years living in what he considered a "insolent and intolerable" environment imposed by the decrees of Congressional Reconstruction. Residing in such an environment amplified Gary's staunch advocacy of a political platform defined by its overtly white supremacist outlook. After attempts at Democrat-Republican fusionism had failed in the state gubernatorial elections of 1872 and 1874, Gary remained firm in his stance that the only alternative "was to free the county of its vicious element."⁸⁰ Republican judge Thomas J. Mackey, who "joined the ranks of the scalawags" in 1872 but by 1876 "pledged himself to Gary's objective

⁷⁸ Andrew, 379; Zuczek, 167.

⁷⁹ Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 25-27.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

of honest government under native white men,” described this “vicious” element in Edgefield County as follows:

the government of Edgefield has been for eight years a festering ulcer upon our body politic, and a diligent attempt is now being made to hide with “the bloody shirt” the appalling wrongs committed by the Republican party on the white population of that section...there have been three county treasurers, all Republicans, appointed in Edgefield since 1868...the government is wholly composed of negroes elected on the race issue...the very doors of the temple of justice have been slammed by a Republican judge in the face of the white people of Edgefield when they invoked the law to protect them in their rights.⁸¹

Gary endorsed Judge Mackey’s assertion with his prototypical emphasis on antiquity and its invaluable lessons. “Her [Edgefield’s] citizens have been smarting under wrongs and oppressions,” he declared in a speech at Aiken in 1876, “that have no parallel in history, as Judge Mackey has positively expressed it, since the Saxon wore the collar of the Norman.”⁸²

To Gary and his fellow white Edgefield residents, a feeling of “degeneracy” seemed to have permeated their resident county. Fueled by the continual threat of “Negro rule” and worsening Republican financial and judicial corruption, this feeling of “degeneracy” became the ammunition Gary needed to incite the emotions of poor, rural Edgefield whites who would become the rank and file members of his radical straight-out campaign.⁸³ Due to the intense racial hostility in Edgefield, Gary believed any attempts at white-Democratic fusion with Radical Republicans and

⁸¹ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 16, 1876; Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 5, 108.

⁸² Gary speech, delivered at Aiken, S.C., October 20, 1876, printed in *Testimony as to the Denial of the Elective Franchise in South Carolina, Volume III*, 628.

⁸³ See Andrew, xv-xvi, for a definition and implications associated with the term “Negro rule.” The term was used by Gary as a byword for his White Supremacist cause. I do not endorse nor agree with the connotations inherent to the term, hence the quotes.

African Americans would prove futile in bringing “white man’s government” to South Carolina in the extent he deemed necessary. And Gary found a scapegoat for Edgefield’s affliction in incumbent Republican governor Daniel Chamberlain, who he claimed “is bloody guilty...from the treachery to his race, his party, and the poor confiding Negro, I have supposed he was the Great Grandson of Judas Iscariot...sometimes I think he must have sprung from the Ishmaelite family, as his hands are in everybody’s pockets, and everybody’s hands are against him...Daniel has an itching palm.”⁸⁴ Gary’s radical “straight-out” Democratic ideology associated the scourge of Republican fusionism with Edgfieldian debauchery, and he and his supporters argued that if fusion were attempted the whole of South Carolina could end up in a state of decadence similar to that in Edgefield County as a result of “Negro rule” and Republican corruption.

One incident in particular would become paramount in cementing Gary’s ardent support of anti-Republican fusionism and white supremacist straight-outism: the “bloody affair at Hamburg.”⁸⁵ Described by one historian as “undoubtedly the turning point in the course of political affairs in Reconstruction South Carolina,” the Hamburg massacre of July 8, 1876 would become representative of a violent, racially oppressive spirit that had lay dormant in South Carolina since Ku-Kluxism diminished as a result of the Klan Enforcement Act of 1871.⁸⁶ Located in the far western part of South Carolina’s former Edgefield district, the now desolate town of Hamburg is situated on the Eastern border of the Savannah River, with neighboring

⁸⁴ *Testimony as to the Denial of the Elective Franchise in South Carolina, Volume III*, 630.

⁸⁵ Walter Allen, *Governor Chamberlain’s Administration in South Carolina*. (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1888), 318; Brown, *Strain of Violence*, 88.

⁸⁶ Allen, 312.

Augusta, Georgia to the West. The town itself seemingly encapsulated the “degenerate” Edgefield characteristic Gary was all too familiar with. According to one former white and pro-Democratic Edgefield resident, “Hamburg had been infested so long and so terribly with Negro thieves, and with harlots of the baser sort that wagoners had ceased to camp within eight or ten miles of the place.”⁸⁷ Here, on July 4th, 1876, the “insolent behavior” of a black militia company parading in downtown Hamburg delayed two white individuals attempting to drive their carriage through the town’s streets. The white men eventually passed by the roadblock the militia had created, but not before a standoff ensued in which the black militia brandished their bayonets and the two white men had drawn their pistols.⁸⁸ Both parties filed affidavits of legal complaint, resulting in descriptions of the event that were highly contradictory. The leader of the black militia, Captain Doc Adams, “noted that there was ample room on either side of the company for the men to pass.” The two whites, Henry Getzen and Thomas Butler, remained furious about black individuals refusing to yield them the right of way, regardless of the fact that these black men were members of a uniformed militia. To Gary and the white men of Edgefield, the very idea of a “black militia was an oxymoron...an assembly of armed black men could only be a lawless mob.”⁸⁹ On July 8, 1876, another hearing between the two parties was scheduled. Matthew Calbraith Butler, Gary’s friend and a fellow Edgefieldian and former Civil War compatriot, and lawyer of Henry Getzen and Thomas Butler [no relation] arrived early that afternoon with a white

⁸⁷ John Chapman, *History of Edgefield County from the Earliest Settlements to 1897*. (Spartanburg: The Reprint Company Publishers, 1980), 261.

⁸⁸ *Charleston News and Courier*, July 10, 1876; Kantrowitz, 65-66.

⁸⁹ Kantrowitz, 67.

mob in hand, belligerently demanding an official apology from the black militia for their “insolent behavior.” Butler also told the “negro leaders...that their arms must be given up, for there was no necessity for them in that place, and that they had no business with them.”⁹⁰ Members of the black militia refused to acquiesce, and instead “entrenched themselves in a large brick structure, known as Sibley’s building,” and supposedly provoked the whites.⁹¹ Matthew C. Butler and his mob returned later that evening, fully armed and dressed in makeshift shirts fashioned from red flannel (the “red shirts” that would later become the unofficial uniform and namesake of white militia groups throughout the state) and “surrounded the building, and at half-past seven o’clock opened fire upon it...this was returned by the Negroes, and a constant fusillade was kept up for over two hours.” In the ensuing fracas, one white man, T. McKee Merriwether, and three blacks were killed.⁹² Butler’s mob seized control of the building and captured fourteen members of the black militia; a subsequent search of the town resulted in “the finding of fifteen more negroes, making twenty-nine in all.” In retaliation for Merriwether’s death, seven “ringleaders” from the black militia, hand-picked by Henry Getzen, were summarily executed. Mob leader Matthew C. Butler assigned this task to Getzen because Getzen lived within close proximity to Hamburg, and he reportedly had enough familiarity with the members of the black militia to select the “meanest characters” in their ranks accordingly.⁹³

⁹⁰ *Charleston News and Courier*, July 10, 1876; Orville Burton, *A Gentleman and an Officer: a Military and Social History of James B. Griffin’s Civil War*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 51-52.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.* Spelled as McKee, McKie, or Mackey depending on source.

⁹³ *Ibid.*; Budiansky, 230-235.

The inspiration and enthusiasm for the Hamburg riot did not stem entirely from Butler or Getzen, however. Although he did not actually participate in the riot, Martin Gary played a key role in deliberately provoking the “passion-stirring event at Hamburg.” Gary, Matthew C. Butler, and George Tillman, who was supposedly “the most excited of those engaged in the disturbance and among the last to leave the scene,” were all in agreement “upon the wisdom of letting the whites demonstrate their superiority by killing as many Negroes as possible.” Given Gary’s extremism, this claim seems less dubious than it would otherwise.⁹⁴ Martin Gary and his brother William T. Gary would later be among the defense lawyers for those members of the white mob accused of murder at Hamburg. The trial never took place, however, because, in the words of one Abbeville newspaper, the popular view was that the Radical Republicans were “responsible for the misguided colored men killed at Hamburg.”⁹⁵

In the aftermath of the Hamburg Massacre, Radical Republicans and Edgefield’s Black majority saw the riot as a harbinger of what was to come. Acknowledging he was “powerless to subdue such a local disturbance,” Governor Daniel Chamberlain claimed that the resulting effects of the massacre “have caused widespread terror and apprehension among the colored race and the Republicans of the state while a feeling of triumph and political elation has been caused by this massacre in the minds of many white people and Democrats.”⁹⁶ Radical Republicans

⁹⁴ Budiansky, 219, 225; Simkins, *Tillman Movement*, 45. Ben Tillman identified Gary as one of the leaders in provoking the massacre in *The Struggles of 1876*. Although Tillman idolized Gary and his white supremacist ideology, his identification of Gary as one of the leaders behind the massacre seems believable given Hamburg’s location and Gary’s political mantra.

⁹⁵ Jones, “Bald Eagle of Edgefield” Manuscript, 85-86.

⁹⁶ *Yorkville Enquirer*, August 17, 1876.

in Edgefield began acquiescing to perceived threats of militant white solidarity and intimidation by recommending Democrats for county offices, voluntarily declining themselves to run for office in the upcoming elections of 1876, and choosing between the more moderate of Democratic candidates to fill these newly vacated positions.⁹⁷

Gary may well have envisioned this reaction amongst Radical Republicans and Blacks as a major incentive for provoking the Hamburg riot. Post-Hamburg, Radical Republican sentiment seems to have proven Gary correct in his assumption that “one ounce of fear was worth a pound of persuasion.”⁹⁸ And much to Gary’s approval, South Carolina’s black population now “had reason to wonder if Hamburg was only the beginning of a terror campaign against Negroes and Republicans.”⁹⁹ Gary himself capitalized on the highly politicized nature of the Hamburg affair in that any “mounting fury” from moderate voices regarding the injustices committed by Butler’s mob the night of July 4 were quickly “drowned by the uproar of agitation and vilification” from the old Edgefield district.¹⁰⁰ With Hamburg, the benefits of Gary’s radical “straight-out” plan of campaign in ensuring Democratic victory in 1876 were seemingly reaffirmed. Gary desperately needed an excuse to put his “No. 1 plan of campaign” into action before the November election to coerce upcountry whites into enthusiastically supporting it. Hamburg therefore served as the proving ground for Gary’s radical “straight out” ideology while simultaneously forcing any

⁹⁷ Julian Mims, “Radical Reconstruction in Edgefield County 1868-1877.” (Thesis: Newberry College, 1964), 68.

⁹⁸ Ben Tillman, *Struggles of 1876*, 28.

⁹⁹ George C. Rable, *But there was no Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 168.

¹⁰⁰ George Brown Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes 1877-1900*. (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1966), 12.

Edgefield whites who were hesitant to join his campaign to see just how effective his tactics of violence and intimidation could be. Such political sentiment came at the behest of Gary's doing, for he had directly taken aim at blacks and Republicans and "denounced the radical rascality to their faces." Gary hoped that fear of indiscriminate violence would result in both blacks and Republicans forgoing voting in South Carolina's upcoming gubernatorial election. While "passion-Stirring" to the rural whites of Edgefield, the events at Hamburg simply demonstrated Gary's arguments since 1868: that any attempt to compromise with Republicans, Black or white, would prove futile in realizing the Democrats' hope to "redeem" South Carolina for its native whites. With Hamburg, the violent tenets of Gary's "No. 1 plan of campaign" became both "popular and possible."¹⁰¹

The moderate conservative press, however, condemned the "bloody affair" at Hamburg and attempted to distance itself from any extremist implications of the massacre. South Carolina's largest newspaper, the *Charleston News and Courier*, declared its support for a platform of "fair dealing, honesty, and peace" towards Blacks in the state but did not deny Black culpability with regard to provoking the massacre. This platform of "fair dealing, honesty, and peace" was tinged with the racism characteristic of Wade Hampton's moderate approach and embodied those qualities towards the freedmen which Martin Gary despised as being too subtle. In an article published one week after the Massacre, "the Hamburg Affray and its Consequences," the *Charleston News and Courier* examined what it saw as the reasoning and motivation behind the riot.

¹⁰¹ Zuczek, 165.

There appears to be no doubt that the militia captain, Doc Adams, was insolent to the two gentlemen who encountered his company on the fourth...we cannot see, however, that the conduct of either Adams or his men gave the white citizens of Aiken and Edgefield any legal or moral right to demand the surrender of arms of the militia...the Hamburg militiamen, so far as the published accounts show, had given no special offense, and certainly had committed no such overt act as would justify the onslaught of the men from Edgefield...their offense lay, we fear, in being negroes and in bearing arms.¹⁰²

Further, the *Charleston News and Courier* went on to affirm that “such violence has not the sympathy or the approval of the vast majority of the democracy of the state.”¹⁰³

But moderate conservatives also disapproved of Governor Daniel Chamberlain’s request to United States president Ulysses S. Grant that federal troops be posted at all county seats during the elections of 1876 as a result of the massacre. Chamberlain noted the “lines of race and political party which marked the respective parties to the affair at Hamburg,” and argued that Hamburg was “only the beginning of a series of similar race and party collisions in our state, the deliberate aim of which is believed by them to be the political subjugation and control of the state.” Chamberlain therefore asked the Grant administration to “exert itself vigorously to repress violence in this state...whenever that violence shall be beyond the control of the state authorities?”¹⁰⁴ Moderate conservatives, however, were not buying Chamberlain’s rhetoric. Chamberlain’s letter to Grant was perceived by South Carolina Democrats as an “attempt to overawe the Democracy,

¹⁰² *Charleston News and Courier*, July 11, 1876.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 9, 1876; *Yorkville Enquirer*, August 17, 1876.

take advantage of a local disturbance, and prop up the waning fortunes of South Carolina Republicanism” by securing the polls and deterring the Democratic vote.¹⁰⁵ While Democrats pointed the finger at Chamberlain, Martin Gary continued to utilize Hamburg as an argument for his own brand of extremist, white supremacist “straight-out” Democracy. General Samuel McGowan, himself a moderate, claimed that “the unhappy affair at Hamburg will be made such use of in the canvass [by Democrats] that no alternative would probably have been left us than to ‘take it straight.’”¹⁰⁶

Waging a political campaign with racial violence as a centerpiece also ran counterintuitive to Wade Hampton’s conciliatory appeals for honest government. If Radical Republicans opted to “operate on the cry of outrages on the part of their opponents to cover the state with troops,” moderates would elect to respond accordingly, “avoiding the slightest appearance of force or violence.” According to Hampton Jarrell, this creed became the “ruling idea among the wise heads who were guiding the action of the party.”¹⁰⁷ Gary and those who supported his political ideology were not among this group of “wise heads,” so ironically, the Democratic canvass envisioned by Chamberlain is more representative of Gary’s extremist ideology than the moderate view espoused by Hampton. Gary always remained on the fringes of the Democratic leadership during 1876 due to his extremism; in fact, the State Democratic Committee never officially adopted his “No. 1 Plan of Campaign.” Undeterred, Gary waged his own campaign centered around Edgefield

¹⁰⁵ *Charleston News and Courier*, July 20, 1876.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*; *Yorkville Enquirer*, July 13, 1876. I have added the bracket insert.

¹⁰⁷ Jarrell, 53, n.40.

and its surrounding counties while Hampton and his moderate followers advocated “a unanimous white effort combined with conciliatory appeals to the Negro voters.”¹⁰⁸ These “dual campaigns” waged by Gary and Hampton indicate there existed a tangible difference in the political strategies and ideologies of the two men regardless of which one claimed and believed he was primarily responsible for the outcome of 1876.¹⁰⁹

While the Lowcountry’s moderate conservative press sought to “dull the edge of the knife” sharpened by Hamburg, Martin Gary rejected any repudiation of the massacre outright. In Gary’s eyes, any repudiation of the massacre equated to racial treason. Shortly after the *Charleston News and Courier* condemned the “bloody affair,” Gary and the *Edgefield Advertiser* passed resolutions “abusing” the lowcountry newspaper “without stint.”¹¹⁰ While such moderate sentiment had little practical use in the racially charged atmosphere of Edgefield County; Gary claimed the *News and Courier’s* “sensational accounts” of the Hamburg Massacre “furnished weapons to be used against the Democratic Party” there.¹¹¹ In defending the extremist, white supremacist variety of “straight-outism” evidenced at Hamburg, Gary further widened the fissure between himself and South Carolina’s moderate leadership by his public statements. “If a man deserves to be threatened, the necessities of the times require that he should die—a threatened Radical [Republican] or one driven off by threats from the scene of his operations is often

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ David Duncan Wallace, “The Question of the Withdrawal of the Democratic Presidential Electors in South Carolina in 1876.” *Journal of Southern History*, (Vol. 8, No. 3, Aug., 1942), 375-376.

¹¹⁰ *Charleston News and Courier*, July 22, 1876.

¹¹¹ *Charleston News and Courier*, July 20, 1876.

very troublesome, sometimes dangerous, always vindictive.”¹¹² Such violent rhetoric and the aggressive nature of Gary’s “Plan of Campaign” was in fact on full display at Hamburg a month before the campaign of 1876 officially began. To continue the implementation of this strategy, Gary’s relied heavily on Edgefield’s white rifle clubs whose combative credo had been evidenced both at Hamburg and in the altercations leading up to the “bloody affair.” Gary had no qualms with using the all-white militia to “seize the first opportunity that the Negroes might offer to provoke a riot and teach the Negroes a lesson” for the sake of white Edgefield and the “necessities” of radical straight-outism.¹¹³

Gary’s political ideology and “No. 1 plan of campaign” was further solidified by the eventual formation of all-white militia groups, agricultural clubs, and rifle clubs in Edgefield and its surrounding counties. The precursor to these organizations, the Ku Klux Klan, provided the initial blueprint for their operation and purpose. The Klan, in fact, by the early 1870’s, had become an increasingly relevant, if somewhat disorganized vehicle utilized by South Carolina whites for racially inspired violence. Klan activity in South Carolina was largely restricted to the upcountry, where there existed a nearly equal balance between black Republicans and white Democrats. Representative of “the first major offensive of elite white men and their allies against Republican Reconstruction,” the Klan was also “designed to serve the purposes of almost all groups in the South Carolina upcountry white community.” Upcountry white elites, including “doctors, lawyers,

¹¹² “No. 1 Plan of Campaign,” Gary Papers, SCL.

¹¹³ Tillman, *Struggles of 1876*, 28.

merchants, teachers, and preachers,” often persuaded poor and lower-class whites to join the ranks of the secret society by appealing to their resentment of the emancipated freedman’s political and economic status.¹¹⁴ The Klan’s poor white membership has become a defining characteristic of its perceived mob-like, ruffian qualities. This structure of Klan hierarchy is also evident in Gary’s “No. 1 Plan of Campaign” in that it was geared towards the white masses with white elites assuming leadership roles. Gary’s plan required that “every Democrat”—meaning the poor white masses—“see that Negroes do not vote, and feel honor bound to control the vote of at least one Negro by how he may best accomplish it.” While poor whites tended to resort to the violence and intimidation specified in Gary’s “plan of campaign,” Gary and other Edgfieldian elites such as Matthew C. Butler would take command of Democratic military clubs, “get up all the enthusiasm we can upon the masses,” “visit various clubs and explain the Plan of Campaign,” and orchestrate mass meetings at the Edgefield courthouse when necessary.¹¹⁵ While there seems to be no specific evidence linking Gary or Butler to Klan activity, both men touted their ability to influence and mobilize Edgefield’s white masses for violent purposes. Moreover, leaders such as Gary and Butler “refused to use their influence” to suppress an outbreak of Klan violence in 1870 which resulted in the assassination of three Radical Republicans, including one white individual. Running

¹¹⁴ Stephen Kantrowitz, “One Man’s Mob is Another Man’s Militia: Violence, Manhood, and Authority in Reconstruction South Carolina” in Jane Dailey, Glenda Gilmore, and Bryant Simon, eds. *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics From Civil War to Civil Rights*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 67-83; Herbert Shapiro, “The Ku Klux Klan During Reconstruction: The South Carolina Episode.” *Journal of Negro History*, (Vol. 49, No. 1, Jan., 1964), 34-55; J. C. A. Stagg, “The Problem of Klan Violence: The South Carolina Up-Country, 1868-1871.” *Journal of American Studies*, (Vol. 8, No. 3, Dec., 1974), 303-318.

¹¹⁵ Gary’s “No. 1 Plan of Campaign,” SCL. Sections numbered 3, 11, 12, 14, 16, 26.

for Lieutenant Governor during that same year, Butler himself “told the Congressional select committee that he would not act to stop the terror until Governor Scott appointed trial justices acceptable to the Democrats and disarmed the black militia.”¹¹⁶ Gary did not take issue with Klan activity, especially if it resulted in Democrats and his fellow Edgfieldian M.C. Butler garnering state offices by means whose roots lay in racial violence. Gary’s moderate contemporary Wade Hampton, on the other hand, took a different stand on the Klan. As the Chairman of the 1870 Democratic Committee, Hampton asked Black and white South Carolinians to:

unite in reprobating these recent acts of violence by which a few lawless and reckless men have brought discredit on the character of our people...join us in the effort for the preservation of peace, the supremacy of law, and the maintenance of order...let us all...however we may differ in politics, devote all our energies to maintain the good character of our State and to promote a better feeling among our whole people.”¹¹⁷

Although Hampton’s role in actively suppressing Klan violence is somewhat questionable due to his assistance in raising legal funds for South Carolina Klansmen put on trial in 1872, there is no direct link between Hampton, the organization of the Klan, or its violent protocol. Much like the aftermath of Hamburg, Hampton believed that the “Klan issue was fundamentally political,” in that he believed that continued Republican political corruption had inspired Klan activity that could be exploited by Republicans in order to maintain their political foothold in the state.¹¹⁸ This perspective differs from Gary’s in that it separates political antagonism from racial

¹¹⁶ Shapiro, 52.

¹¹⁷ *The Daily Phoenix* (Columbia SC), October 23, 1868.

¹¹⁸ Andrew, 343, 364-365.

extremism. While Hampton disavowed the Klan as a tool for establishing white supremacy, Gary would be inspired by the Klan's *modus operandi* in forming paramilitary organizations aimed at waging a racial battle "with such determination and violence as to make all republicans feel insecure in their lives, their homes, their rights, and property."¹¹⁹

While Klan members frequently participated in personal acts of vengeance and retribution, the organization was generally "regarded as a political device...most of the Klan's depredations were intended to deter their victims from voting, or exert their political influence in behalf of the Republican Party."¹²⁰ Upon the federal government's enforcement of the Ku Klux Klan Act in 1872, all-white "rifle clubs" began forming in Edgefield at a rapid pace. The Klan's existence, however, had blurred the line between the motives of the Klan itself, rifle clubs, and democratic clubs. An Abbeville Klansmen claimed to have perpetrated "the work of intimidation and violence" in broad daylight without any hooded robes for disguise, and claimed he knew of "similar organizations" that adopted this method in Edgefield and Laurens counties.¹²¹

After the Klan was formally disbanded at the behest of the Grant Administration in 1872, the all-white rifle clubs became the de facto political vehicle of the Democratic Party in Edgefield County. By 1872, rifle clubs in Edgefield had already begun to reorganize; this reorganization "carried enthusiastically" into

¹¹⁹ Jas O. Ladd to State of South Carolina, November 12, 1876, in *Testimony as to the Denial of the Elective Franchise in South Carolina, Volume III*, 39.

¹²⁰ Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 114-115.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

1873. Radical whites deemed the existence and continued support of white rifle clubs as a necessity. These clubs, they believed, not only represented functioning political units, but also stood ready to combat black militia and prevent a black uprising should Martin Gary's prophecy of "racial warfare" come true in South Carolina. The Edgefield Rifle Clubs, ditching the Klan's disguises and mystique, actively sought to continue the political and racial intimidation carried out by the Klan prior to its dissolution. The mere existence of black militia in Edgefield district became a rationale for these rifle clubs, a tool to provoke moderate whites into joining them by stimulating racial paranoia. Rifle Club members often told moderate whites that black militia members had made "incendiary remarks or suggested threats in retaliation for acts or language perpetrated or used by white people against them or someone of their race."¹²² In Edgefield, Martin Gary envisioned the complete and forcible disbandment of the state's black militia and subsequent coercion of the black vote as the only logical and viable strategy for securing a "white man's government." By the Fall of 1876, there existed some thirty five rifle known clubs in Edgefield county—some with as many as fifty members, which was by far the most rifle clubs in any one county throughout the state. There is a high probability Edgefield contained even more rifle clubs, but a survey compiled from the state's executive office claimed it was impossible to secure

¹²² Vernon Burton, "Race and Reconstruction: Edgefield County, South Carolina." *Journal of Social History*, (Vol. 12, No. 1, Autumn, 1978), 40.

“definite information for the county—had the object of inquiries been suspected, the life of the inquirer would have been endangered.”¹²³

The success of Gary’s “plan of campaign” hinged upon the proper organization and leadership of Edgefield’s rifle clubs. Gary, M.C. Butler, and other radical whites were well aware that the unorganized nature of the Ku Klux Klan had contributed heavily to its dissolution. Only by maintaining a less chaotic façade and having a set of formalized operational principles could Gary’s militia units remain a permanent fixture in Edgefield and nearby counties in the South Carolina upcountry during the campaign of 1876. Gary would remedy this prior lack of organization exhibited by earlier white extremist groups in South Carolina by distributing his “No. 1 Plan of Campaign” in writing. Gary’s plan may have been “born of desperation,” but it was also “nurtured of experience” and “hedged about by legal precautions.”¹²⁴ Gary could not afford for his Democratic rifle clubs to acquire the sentiment of ill repute that hallmarked the Ku Klux Klan because of its members’ frequent acts of personal retribution. Gary’s militia units were thus given specific instructions as to how to conduct themselves throughout the campaign of 1876. Gary’s emphasis on a militant, tightly organized structure appears in the third section of his “No. 1 Plan of Campaign:”

Democratic Military Clubs are to be armed with rifles and pistols and such other arms as they may command. They are to be divided into two companies, one of the old men, the other of the young men, an experienced commander to be placed over each of them. That each company is to have a 1st and 2nd Lieutenant...the

¹²³ “List of Rifle Clubs in South Carolina” printed in *Testimony as to the Denial of the Elective Franchise in South Carolina, Volume III*, 499-509.

¹²⁴ “No. 1 Plan of Campaign,” Martin Gary Papers, SCL.

number of ten privates is to be the unit of organization...each Captain is to see that his men are well armed and provided with at least thirty rounds of ammunition...three days rations for the men are to be stored on the day before the election in order that they may be prepared at a moment's notice to move to any point in the County when ordered by the Chairman of the Executive Committee.¹²⁵

The “exciting canvass opened in Edgefield County” on August 12, 1876, and it reflected Gary’s emphasis on how regimental organization could benefit the campaign for white Democracy.¹²⁶ On that same day, a Republican meeting convened in Aiken, South Carolina. Gary and fellow Edgfieldian Matthew C. Butler commanded “about six hundred mounted whites who rode up with a large crowd and demanded half of the time for Democratic speakers.”¹²⁷ Gary’s rifle clubs crowded the stage, heckling the Republican speakers, “avowing a determination to do everything lawful to break the meeting up.” During a speech given by Republican Judge T.J. Mackey endorsing the incumbent governor Daniel H. Chamberlain, the entire stage collapsed. At this point, everyone on the stage “fell flat,” except for one man, Matthew C. Butler, who allegedly “remained perched on the only point standing.” Much to Gary’s pleasure, this Display of organized democratic might resulted in “the negroes being terribly frightened, they did not dare to show fight...Republican speakers also felt ill-satisfied with the look of things.” Such were the types of victories Gary believed his assertive brand of organized, militant “straight-outism” could achieve. Gary claimed this victory was the result of “lawful”

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 14, 1876.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

action, and also stated he would carry the county peaceably if he could—but carry it he would.¹²⁸

As Gary put his “No. 1 Plan of Campaign” into action during August of 1876, the differences between the roots of Gary’s campaign to “redeem” his home state and that of his moderate contemporaries became ever more apparent. Stemming from his ideological devotion to radical white supremacy and experience residing in Reconstruction-era Edgefield County, Gary’s justification of the Hamburg Massacre and of racial warfare contributed to his developing a plan that challenged the traditional moderate conservative notions of peace, order, and racial paternalism. Gary’s plan for “carrying” South Carolina in such a manner was also intensified by the precedent set in Mississippi one year earlier, where Democratic “redemption” had proven successful due to the willingness of white Democrats to utilize similar methods that were in accordance with Gary’s own political ideology.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

“CHARTERING A COURSE FOR ‘REDEMPTION’” - MISSISSIPPI’S “STRAIGHT-OUT”

BLUEPRINT AND THE CONSERVATIVE SCHISM

Mississippi’s successful Democratic “redemption” in 1875 also proved influential in the development of Martin Gary’s “No. 1 Plan of Campaign.” The precedent set in the state of Mississippi became a feasible blueprint for Gary and his advocacy of a radical “straight-out” political platform rooted in a violent, white supremacist ideology. Mississippi was described by one upcountry South Carolina newspaper as “the least law abiding state in the country,” for white Mississippians “declined to enter into combinations with either the carpet bagger or the Negro politician.” This example provided Gary with tangible evidence of how a Radical Republican majority could be overcome by “carrying the election with intimidation, fraud, and bloodshed.”¹²⁹ Gary’s emphasis on “intimidation, fraud, and bloodshed” was further solidified by his correspondence with two white Mississippi Democratic leaders, James Z. George and Sam W. Ferguson, the latter a native-born South Carolinian. To Gary, the details of the “Mississippi Plan” provided by both George and Ferguson showcased the effective role that tactics of violence and intimidation could have in South Carolina’s upcoming election of 1876. Such tactics appealed to the volatile Gary, who had been encouraging South Carolina whites to embrace a political campaign based on racial solidarity as early as 1868. Gary fully embraced the “Mississippi Plan,” which eventually resulted in it becoming widely known as the

¹²⁹ *Pickens Sentinel*, November 25, 1875; *Charleston News and Courier*, August 14, 1876.

“Edgefield Plan” or “Shotgun Policy” throughout South Carolina.¹³⁰ Keys to implementing the “Edgefield Plan” were mobilizing not only the preexisting all-white militia groups throughout the South Carolina upcountry, but also the poor, rural white masses who took up Gary’s “strike for white supremacy” call with enthusiasm. Gary’s alignment with the “common man” represented a rebuke of South Carolina’s traditional conservative aristocracy and the beginnings of a transformation of the state’s political makeup. Gary’s desire for Democrats to adhere strictly to the “Edgefield Plan” widened the schism between himself and moderate conservatives, who were repelled by Gary’s political ideology, his desire to implement the “Mississippi Plan” in South Carolina, and his mobilization of the upcountry’s rural population for violent purposes.

During the evening of January 6, 1876, the Democratic State Central Executive Committee held its first meeting of the year in Columbia. Here, white Democrats attempted to come up with an appropriate plan of action and political platform for the upcoming gubernatorial election of 1876.¹³¹ During this convention, some two years after Martin Gary proclaimed South Carolina’s future boiled down to a “question of race, not politics,” he again reiterated his position that “the failure to redeem the state and break up the radical rule has been due to the fact that we have not appealed to the white man as a white man; that he would respond to no other call with enthusiasm; and that nothing but a Straightout white

¹³⁰ *Abbeville Press and Banner*, October 11, 1876.

¹³¹ *Newberry Herald*, January 5, 1876.

man's ticket run on the Mississippi plan of campaign could redeem the state."¹³² Hoping to convince his Democratic contemporaries to eschew Republican fusionism, Gary argued for a straight-out Democratic ticket "from governor to coroner." By doing so, Gary established himself as the leader of a "very active minority" that espoused the need for whites to support "straight-out" Democracy at all costs, regardless of the state's nearly 30,000 Black majority. Moderate conservatives, however, did not initially heed Gary's call to action, believing their numerical inferiority required them to operate under the pretense of compromise with incumbent Republican governor Daniel H. Chamberlain.¹³³ The much-read *Charleston News and Courier*, "with state-wide circulation and dominating influence, worked with all its mighty power for compromise and cooperation with Chamberlain, publishing daily plausible, incisive, telling editorials from Captain F.W. Dawson," himself a moderate whom Gary accused of "making an asidious [sic] attempt to convert the white people of the state to the Republican party" via his press organ. Dawson took issue with Gary's accusation, claiming it was "grossly unjust as well as wholly untrue."¹³⁴ The feud between the two men culminated in the hot-tempered Gary formally challenging Dawson to a duel that never took place. Both Gary and Dawson subsequently claimed moral victories, with Dawson dismissing Gary's stunt as "empty and cheap bravado" and Gary scoffing at Dawson's perceived cowardice.¹³⁵

¹³² David Duncan Wallace, *The History of South Carolina: Volume III*. (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1934), 306.

¹³³ Jarrell, 47.

¹³⁴ Gary's accusation as quoted in Williams, *Hampton and his Red Shirts*, 32, 52; *Edgefield Advertiser*, July 13, 1876; *Charleston News and Courier*, July 17, 1876.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

The Gary-Dawson feud encapsulates the fundamental division that existed among South Carolina Democrats during the tense months of 1876. On June 28 of that same year, Gary informed Hampton in person that he intended to nominate his former Civil War commander for governor on the straight-out ticket, “actively bringing old war memories and loyalties to harmonize and support the [“straight-out”] movement.” The ambitious Gary had “long planned” to nominate Hampton, realizing that his eminent standing among South Carolinians made Hampton “the one man who could unite and reinvigorate the party.” To his moderate Democratic contemporaries, Gary’s “sudden inspiration” seemed to have “knocked up in a minute all our plans in Charleston to run Chamberlain for governor with a mixed ticket.” According to Gary, “this was no offhand move in regards to the straight-out ticket; [Matthew C.] Butler and myself and other men of Edgefield and the state had deliberately and maturely considered the plan to run a straight-out ticket, but I had suddenly concluded to run Gen. Hampton for governor and that we would elect him.”¹³⁶

Although Gary and Hampton agreed upon the need for a straight-out Democratic ticket, Gary’s political ideology clashed with Hampton’s moderate approach. The two former generals construed the appropriate meaning of the term “straight-out” quite differently. While Gary and Hampton shared the ultimate goal of Democratic victory in 1876, both men had their own ideas as to how this endgame could be achieved. Gary and his followers from Edgefield and its surrounding counties believed “wanton political fraud and violent intimidation

¹³⁶ Wallace, *History of South Carolina: Volume III*, 306; Simkins and Woody, 490, n. 43; Andrew, 374; Gary as quoted in the *Charleston News and Courier*, August 15, 1878.

offered the only means of restoring home rule and self-government.”¹³⁷ To be “straight-out” in the Gary sense was to be united not only politically, but also more importantly by way of race and the sword. In contrast to this stood Hampton’s conceptualization of straight-outism, as one defined by Democratic solidarity via the combined votes of “responsible” Blacks and whites. Although the vast majority of South Carolina Democrats were white, Hampton claimed a “color line fight in all that the term implies would not be good for the state” and instead hoped to get “enough blacks to act with us as to secure the success of our ticket, elect a good Legislature, and drive the plunderers that have so long spoiled us from power.”¹³⁸ Hampton held steadfast in his belief that “the campaign [of 1876] could be won by a unanimous white effort combined with conciliatory appeals to the Negro voters.” State Democratic Committee Chairman Alexander C. Haskell planned Hampton’s campaign around this brand of political “straight-outism” while barring Gary from the organization due to his extremism, even though he was the “most active” of the straight-outs in the radical Edgfieldian sense.¹³⁹ Thus while Hampton “pursued the plan of appealing to the Negroes to desert the radicals [Republicans],” Gary remained firm in his conviction that true “straight-outism” required supporting the “Mississippi Plan to its uttermost—ruthless use of the strong hand.”¹⁴⁰

On August 16th, 1876, leading South Carolina Democrats held a secret session at the State Democratic Convention to decide on the party’s ticket for the upcoming gubernatorial election. Still under debate were the merits of fusion with

¹³⁷ Poole, 119.

¹³⁸ *Charleston News and Courier*, September 18, 1876.

¹³⁹ Jarrell, 53-54.

¹⁴⁰ Wallace, “Question of Withdrawal,” 375-376; Williams, 83.

Republicans versus the adoption of an all-Democratic political platform. The *Charleston News and Courier* described the session and its results as follows:

It was half-past 11 o'clock when the convention went into secret session, and the doors remained closed until half past 6 with a recess of about one hour for dinner. The debate is said to have been long and exciting, but was conducted in the best spirit. Speeches were made by Gen. Butler and Gen. Gary in favor of an immediate nomination, and by Major E. W. Moise of Sumter, Gen Conner and others, in favor of postponement. At about half past 6 the doors were thrown open and the following resolution was announced as adopted by a vote of yeas 88 nays 64: that this convention do now proceed to nominate candidates for Governor and other state offices. Gen. Butler then arose and nominated Gen. Wade Hampton for governor amid the cheers of the delegates.¹⁴¹

Now that the decision in support of a “straight-out” ticket had been formalized by the relatively slim margin of 24 votes, moderate conservatives began “calling upon all of our fellow citizens, irrespective of race or past party affiliation to join with us in restoring the good name of their state, and to again elevate it to a place of dignity and character among the Commonwealth of this great country.” The moderate platform also denounced “all disturbances of the peace of the state, and all instigators and promoters thereof” while hoping to “exercise goodwill and cultivate forbearance irrespective of party lines.”¹⁴² Formerly an advocate of Republican fusionism, the *Charleston News and Courier* promised to “do its part to defeat the radicals, one and all, and to elect the Democratic candidates...the task is one of stupendous difficulty, but it is not impossible of achievement...by unity, systematic

¹⁴¹ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 17, 1876.

¹⁴² *Charleston News and Courier*, August 18, 1876.

work, by a lavish use of means, Democracy can win at the polls in November.”¹⁴³ The moderate *Charleston News and Courier*, however, was one step behind Martin Gary. Gary himself had been trying to encourage “unity, systematic work, and a lavish use of means” among South Carolina Democrats since the early months of 1876. The connotations of these terms meant something quite different to Gary and the *Charleston News and Courier* and its moderate editors, however. In defining these terms as they related to his “No. 1 plan of campaign,” Gary would utilize Mississippi’s successful “redemption” in 1875 as an example of how a “lavish use of means” could be properly employed to secure Democratic victory in 1876.

Supposedly keen on political affairs, Gary followed the events preceding and during Mississippi’s 1875 election with a watchful eye. William Arthur Sheppard, Gary’s requisite hagiographer, sets the stage as to the development of Gary’s “No. 1 plan of campaign” when he first noted the similarities between the political situation in South Carolina and Mississippi:

Since the winter of 1873, when he [Gary] became convinced that the difference between the parties in South Carolina was one of race, the Negro against the white man, and determined upon the destruction of this power the Republican Party, the library had gradually lost its compact orderliness...here were huge tomes in sheep, Constitutions, and statues. The problem at hand required these precautions, but Gary had secured material from revolutionists who wore the ermine of success. The State of Mississippi boasted masters such as these; and Gary pondered correspondence from General James Z. George and his lieutenants...pushing diligently through the mazes of legal lore and the notes of practical men, the master of Oakly Park chartered a course for redemption of the State.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 17, 1876.

¹⁴⁴ Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 45.

To Gary, Mississippi Democrats appeared to have overcome an African American majority of five to one in striking fashion by “carrying the election with intimidation, fraud, and bloodshed.”¹⁴⁵ Gary initiated contact with one General James Zachariah George, chairman of the Mississippi State Democratic Committee, during 1875 to inquire about the campaign tactics Democrats had utilized in that state’s redemption campaign. George and Gary seemingly had much in common at the surface level. Like Gary, George was a former Brigadier General in the Confederate Army and a leading attorney in Mississippi. He was “wealthy and owned large plantations, but remained at heart the poor man’s friend.” Gary shared both of these characteristics with George, and would-be Gary biographer David Duncan Wallace claims that “although his [Gary’s] tastes led him into the company of the rich and cultivated, his impulses and sympathies were genuinely with the masses.”¹⁴⁶ Described by one source as a “blunt and tactless man who did not possess charm and courtliness,” George presented himself as the “friend and champion” of Mississippi’s rural farmers.¹⁴⁷ George even “prided himself on his title of ‘the commoner,’” a title rural upcountry South Carolinians were keen to bestow on Gary.¹⁴⁸ The similarities between George’s and Gary’s personality in terms of the “common man” mantra both men cultivated also suggests a similar ideological

¹⁴⁵ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 14, 1876; James W. Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi*. (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1968), 375-393.

¹⁴⁶ Willie D. Halsell, “The Bourbon Period in Mississippi Politics.” *Journal of Southern History*, (Vol. 11, No. 4, Nov., 1945), 524; Wallace, “Life of Martin Witherspoon Gary” Manuscript, 130, 145. According to Wallace, “Gary was widely referred to as the people’s man and ‘the poor man’s friend;” Orville Burton, *In my Father’s House are Many Mansions*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 78. Gary began cultivating this “common man” image as early as 1860.

¹⁴⁷ Halsell, 524-525.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*; Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman*, 94.

background. But Gary's impetus for communicating with George was mainly rooted in practicality. By contacting George, Gary's ambitious support of radical straight-outism could be associated with a strategy that had already proven successful in a state suffering from similar woes, what Gary dubbed "the scepter of adamant Negroism."¹⁴⁹ With the successful Mississippi campaign in hand, Gary could mold it to South Carolina's political circumstances and his own political ideology as he saw fit, "asserting the rights and privileges" deemed necessary to "defend the good name of the white Democracy of South Carolina."¹⁵⁰

These points were also endorsed by Gary's Edgefield supporters. According to the *Edgefield Advertiser*, General James Z. George of Mississippi "organized victory...to him more than anyone else are the people of Mississippi indebted for deliverance from negro-Radical perdition." The *Edgefield Advertiser* also claimed that George had shown the same zeal for campaign planning that was evident in Martin Gary's preparation for 1876:

Gen. George for months devoted his entire time and attention to the election...his energy and courage infused life and confidence, his judgment and discretion gave shape and success to the efforts made...by constant correspondence with all parts of the State -by receiving and imparting information and advice, he kept in hand and directed the canvass, until the whole people of Mississippi moved like one man and by the power of will and the mastery of moral force fully exerted, saved the state."¹⁵¹

Gary envisioned a similar campaign in South Carolina, one in which he could inspire rural upcountry whites to follow his "practical and thorough" lead by distributing

¹⁴⁹ Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 30.

¹⁵⁰ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 16, 1876

¹⁵¹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 10, 1876.

his “No. 1 Plan of campaign” throughout Edgefield and its surrounding counties.¹⁵² With a formalized plan in hand, there would be no confusion as to how whites could obstruct and prevent the black vote. George’s redemption canvass exhibited strategies to assist in fraud that would prove useful to Gary: “Democratic clubs met regularly...the clubs rode night and day, and left no stone unturned to influence the colored people...the white men were in earnest and ready for any emergency...on the day of the election, every white man spent the day at the precinct from early in the morning until the sun set” in the hopes Republicans would refuse to go to the polls and cast their votes.¹⁵³ Such intimidation and the organizational strategies culled from George’s “Mississippi Plan” would become the defining characteristics of Gary’s radical “No. 1 Plan of Campaign.” For Gary, the example of Mississippi highlighted “what thorough organization of Democrats, under proper leaders, can effect.”¹⁵⁴

Another leading Democrat of Mississippi, General Sam W. Ferguson, would also influence Gary’s written “No. 1 Plan of Campaign.” A native South Carolinian, Ferguson moved to Mississippi at the end of the Civil War, established his own law practice, and became “the most prominent citizen in his county.”¹⁵⁵ On August 13, 1876, Edgefield Democrats held a mass meeting at the county courthouse with Matthew C. Butler and Martin Gary presiding; the keynote speaker was General Ferguson of Mississippi. Ferguson had been brought to Edgefield to “give practical instruction in the ‘Mississippi Plan’ of carrying elections in the face of a hostile

¹⁵² Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 45.

¹⁵³ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 10, 1876.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Garner, 311.

majority.”¹⁵⁶ Met with marked enthusiasm, Ferguson reassured his audience that the assertions “as to intimidation, fraud, and bloodshed being used to carry the election in Mississippi were utterly false and unfounded.”¹⁵⁷ According to Ferguson, every white man in the state of Mississippi “*worked, and worked, and worked, night and day*, and showed the radicals by honest means that they could not and should no longer delude the ignorant negro by their lies...how confidence had been restored between the races under a determined feeling to root out all carpet-baggers and scalawags who would engender strife in the country.” One year earlier, Ferguson had given testimony to an investigative congressional committee in which he described Mississippi blacks as severely lacking in education, “insolent in their behavior,” as purveyors of high taxes and the “terrors of the community in which they lived.”¹⁵⁸ Martin Gary, of course, would have described South Carolina’s black majority in a similar manner, just as he sincerely believed that Mississippi Democrats had been successful in overthrowing their state’s Reconstruction government in 1875 through a “consentaneous [sic] and united conflict with their barbarous foe.”¹⁵⁹

Ferguson’s denial of intimidation as it applied to the “Mississippi Plan” was of course not genuine. To Ferguson and Gary, “honest means” meant winning the election by any means necessary, including the intimidation, violence, and fraud that Ferguson had denounced in public. Some months earlier, Gary had obtained a letter written by Ferguson to the prominent Charlestonian Theodore Gaillard Barker

¹⁵⁶ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 29, 1926.

¹⁵⁷ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 14, 1876.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, italics are present in article; Garner, 305-314, 408-410.

¹⁵⁹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 10, 1876.

describing the elements central to the Mississippi Plan's success. In it he claimed that "the success of our plan depended upon our being in condition to make a fight if necessary...to accomplish this, a thorough organization and arming was essential...we determined in the event of any blood being shed in the campaign to kill every white radical in the county; we made no threats, but we let this be known."¹⁶⁰ Another major component of the Mississippi Plan involved "insulting Republican leaders to their faces grossly and constantly to destroy confidence of the Negroes in both their character and courage."¹⁶¹ Here, in Ferguson's own words, was the more "practical" instruction Gary fully embraced in order to draw up his own "No. 1 Plan of Campaign," or "Edgefield Plan" as it would later become known. One passage in Ferguson's explanations particularly jumped out at Gary: "a dead radical is very harmless. A threatened Radical or one driven off by threats from the scene of his operations is often very troublesome, sometimes dangerous, and always vindictive."¹⁶² Although Ferguson claimed that the Mississippi Plan did not openly condone "intimidation, fraud, and bloodshed," the willingness of Ferguson and other white Mississippians to employ tactics of violence and intimidation is clearly evident. White unity and militant organizations provided Democrats with a system to implement violence should the election not go their way by "honest means." In 1875 Mississippi, the use of threats and violence proved more successful than any moderate Hampton-type of persuasion. Instead, Democrats drilled, fired cannons, enrolled Black Republicans in "dead books," broke up Republican meetings by

¹⁶⁰ Jones, "The Bald Eagle of Edgefield" manuscript, 88.

¹⁶¹ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 29, 1926.

¹⁶² "No. 1 Plan of Campaign," Gary papers, SCL.

violent heckling and attacks, and remained willing to support each other “physically and morally whenever the emergency demanded aid.” This campaign of intimidation and violence “involved directly thousands of young men and boys of all classes, a large part of the poor white element, and many local political leaders of some importance” who banded together to achieve victory by arms if necessary.¹⁶³ Gary’s “No. 1 Plan of Campaign” followed these tactics exactly.

Three days prior to Ferguson’s speech at the Edgefield courthouse, the *Edgefield Advertiser* noted the similarities between the democratic campaign in 1875 Mississippi and 1876 South Carolina:

The people of Mississippi had just as great odds against them as the people of South Carolina have, but the leading editors and orators of the former state, no wise daunted themselves, sought to inspire the masses with a courage equal to their own. Their success was enormous as it was most gratifying, and demonstrated the great fact that a minority of white men, when united in a common purpose, never fail to drive from power a semi-barbarous majority.¹⁶⁴

While Mississippi’s successful redemption had inspired Gary and his followers to make a more determined effort to thwart Radical Reconstruction in South Carolina, it was Gary’s personality and political ideology that rallied many upcountry whites. Akin to the “leading editors and orators” of Mississippi, Martin Gary—an individual “lately of the Confederate army and whose character and Democracy was equally above reproach” would use his social prestige among upcountry South Carolina whites to establish his own leadership role within the radical “straight-out”

¹⁶³ Vernon Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi: 1865-1890*. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1947), 187-188.

¹⁶⁴ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 10, 1876.

movement.¹⁶⁵ Gary's leadership status within the straight-out movement stemmed partly from his ability to "inspire the masses," those poor white South Carolinians who previously had had little say in the state's political affairs. Further, his outspoken conduct prior to 1876 and provocative appeals to those who were "spoiling for action, impatient with those who would compromise or surrender, and ready to strike for white supremacy" established his reputation as one representative of the common white folk. In Martin Gary, rural whites saw the embodiment of a "proud, brave, free man, who will act and cannot be bound."¹⁶⁶ To these rural whites, Gary became the premier figurehead of the redemption crusade in South Carolina, the "grimly practical politician quietly superintending the machinery of the movement whose power was in his organizing genius."¹⁶⁷ And much like Sam W. Ferguson's plan in Mississippi, Gary's successful organization and implementation of radical straight-outism hinged upon the "masses of obscure whites—farmers, merchants, mechanics—that were hostile to black aspirations." These whites would "constitute the manpower" for the upcountry's rifle clubs and militia groups that utilized intimidation tactics to prevent blacks from voting.¹⁶⁸ In doing so, Gary's followers would be able to claim their participation in Gary's radical campaign had "saved the state from Negro rule."¹⁶⁹

To moderate conservatives, Gary's emphasis on the Mississippi Plan seemed both misguided and overzealous. Much like Gary's violent rhetoric, the fraud and

¹⁶⁵ Thompson, 3.

¹⁶⁶ Budiansky, 223-224; Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman*, 94.

¹⁶⁷ Bowers, 515; Burton, *A Gentleman and an Officer*, 306.

¹⁶⁸ Robert Cruden, *The Negro in Reconstruction*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), 90.

¹⁶⁹ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 15, 1878.

intimidation tactics inherent to the plan's execution were seen as "contrary to the spirit" of the State Democratic Committee's desire to wage Hampton's campaign on the basis of convincing blacks and whites alike to peacefully "cooperate with the common cause of good government."¹⁷⁰ Moderates were indeed "united and determined to carry the election," even going as far to adopt a policy of what Wade Hampton apologist Hampton Jarrell dubs "force without violence."¹⁷¹ According to Lewis P. Jones, "such a distinction is a fine one," though "Gary seemed less concerned as to whether force might possibly result in violence."¹⁷² Distancing themselves from Gary's encouragement of violence, moderates hoped that blacks would be willing to vote Democratic. In a campaign speech at Abbeville that included blacks in the audience, on September 16, 1876, Wade Hampton offered the following declaration: "if you trust the white people of South Carolina once, and then if you find any of your rights impaired, you are strong enough in the state to turn them out of office...we cannot be elected without the aid of the colored people."¹⁷³ One week later, in a speech at Darlington, Hampton again reiterated this viewpoint:

we wish to show the colored people that their rights are fixed and immovable, and furthermore, we would not abridge them if we could...I pledge myself solemnly, in the presences of the people of South Carolina and in the presence of my God, that if the democratic ticket is elected, I shall know no party nor race in the administration of the law...we stand upon that platform, and not one single right enjoyed by the colored people today shall be taken from them.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Jones, "Wade Hampton and the Rhetoric of Race," 171; Wallace, *History of South Carolina Vol. III*, 306-307.

¹⁷¹ *Charleston News and Courier*, September 14, 1876; Jarrell, 63-75.

¹⁷² Jones, "Bald Eagle of Edgefield" manuscript, 102.

¹⁷³ *Charleston News and Courier*, September 17, 1876.

¹⁷⁴ *Charleston News and Courier*, September 24, 1876.

Such reasonable appeals reflected Hampton's desire for "honest government" and were a far cry from Gary's vision of how the campaign should be executed and won. In advocating racial cooperation instead of the "Mississippi Plan" Gary believed Hampton was merely "singing Psalms to a dead mule."¹⁷⁵

Even before South Carolina Democrats nominated a "straight-out" ticket for the gubernatorial election of 1876, moderates realized the detrimental implications of fully embracing the "Mississippi Plan." In July of that same year, the moderate *Charleston News and Courier* warned that "when democrats in South Carolina advise that the State be carried on the 'Mississippi Plan,' the popular understanding is that the democracy shall elect their candidates by force and violence." The *Charleston News and Courier* even implicated the culpability of poor upcountry whites in supporting the plan, claiming that "to the unthinking masses in such a county as Edgefield, the Mississippi Plan is the Hamburg plan...the rank and file, who are told day after day that they can carry the state, fall naturally into the error of thinking that the easiest way of making a negro vote right is to knock him on the head."¹⁷⁶ This separation of Hampton's moderate contingent and the "unthinking masses" would become symbolic of the social and ideological division among South Carolina Democrats during their "redemption" campaign, and was magnified at the behest of Gary and his political ideology. Both during and in the months leading up to the election canvass, moderates diagnosed Gary's radical brand of straight-outism as "a distinctly Edgfieldian disease."¹⁷⁷ The roots of such a diagnosis had been existent

¹⁷⁵ Andrew, 374.

¹⁷⁶ *Charleston News and Courier*, July 13, 1876.

¹⁷⁷ Wallace, "Life of Martin Witherspoon Gary" manuscript, 64-65.

since the early days of South Carolina, seen in the recurring sectionalist battle over upcountry and lowcountry political representation and long defined as “a conflict between fabulously rich lowcountry rice planters and yeoman farmers of the upcountry.”¹⁷⁸ Gary and Hampton may have agreed that Democratic unity was critical to success in 1876, but tension and division within the party remained a constant issue. And as Gary and Hampton each pursued their radical or moderate “straight-out” campaigns, the “old rancor of upcountry poor white farmer against lowcountry planter and city man of wealth was doubtless always latent...not long after the election was over, factionalists in the Democratic party began to refer to fusionist and aristocrat on one hand and straight-out and man of the people on the other.”¹⁷⁹ Although Gary’s “No. 1 plan of campaign” was never formally adopted by Alexander C. Haskell and the rest of the State Democratic Committee, Edgefieldian radicalism went largely unchecked during the election campaign and resulted in Hampton and his moderate lowcountry contingent becoming the beneficiaries of Gary’s leadership and popularity within the upcountry. This “merging” of Gary’s radical and Hampton’s moderate campaign that influenced the outcome of 1876 does not, however, disguise the fact that their political ideologies were not concomitant with one another; rather it highlights Hampton’s inability to “control the excesses of his own supporters occurring outside his immediate gaze” and their devotion to Gary and his white supremacist notion of redemption.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Andrew, 464-465.

¹⁷⁹ Wallace, “Life of Martin Witherspoon Gary” manuscript, 59, 64-65.

¹⁸⁰ Andrew, 393.

Upon the initial tabulation of the vote in the election, Hampton appeared to have won the majority—92,261 compared to incumbent Daniel H. Chamberlain’s 91,127, a difference of 1,134 votes. Unsurprisingly, the final tallies in two upcountry counties—Edgefield and Laurens—proved problematic. In a statistical voter analysis of South Carolina’s 1876 election, Ronald F. King claims that “Edgefield in 1876 had nearly 1300 more votes cast for the gubernatorial candidates than voters who signed in that day to vote...assuming that the black defection rate was 7.4 percent, not enough voters signed in to constitute Hampton’s total of 6,267.” In Laurens, Hampton’s vote equaled the exact number of white sign-ins and Chamberlain’s the exact number of black sign-ins. According to King, the total gubernatorial vote in Laurens County equaled the total number of sign-ins, which is, he observes, “completely implausible...election officials in Laurens simply assumed that all of Hampton’s votes came from whites and all of Chamberlain’s came from blacks.”¹⁸¹ Results in both counties and others (Abbeville, Newberry, Aiken, Barnwell, and Colleton) were seemingly dictated by Gary and his followers, suggesting that the fraud, violence, and racial unity essential to his political ideology were what carried the day and secured Hampton’s majority. Republicans contested the vote from Edgefield and Laurens based upon the grounds of fraud and intimidation, which caused the State board of canvassers initially to throw out the results from both counties. Democrats, however, rejected this notion and took their case to the state Supreme Court and obtained a “certified copy of the returns showing them to have received the majority, marched to Carolina Hall, and

¹⁸¹ Ronald F. King, “Counting the Votes: South Carolina’s Stolen Election of 1876.” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, (Vol. 32, No. 2, Autumn, 2001), 182-183, 190.

organized as the only House of Representatives possessing a legal quorum.”¹⁸² As a result, a “dual government” existed with both a Democratic and Republican house of representatives maintaining their claims to victory. This situation came to an end on April 10, 1877, when recently inaugurated president Rutherford B. Hayes elected to remove federal troops from the South Carolina State House, and thus tacitly recognized Hampton’s ascendancy to the governor’s office. Gary, who had “conducted the canvass with such vigor,” claimed that when he went to Columbia immediately after the election Hampton greeted him with the exclamation “well, Gary, Edgefield has saved the state!”¹⁸³ Hampton’s alleged exclamation that day was likely nothing more than a complete fabrication by Gary. For after 1876, Gary would continue to denounce Hampton’s moderate viewpoint towards race relations and the permeation of his aristocratic Lowcountry clique throughout the state government. In Gary’s mind, “the straight-outs brought about his [Hampton’s] nomination in the face of tremendous opposition from within the Democratic Party, and though their courage and skill had much to do with redeeming the state, they have been practically ignored by General Hampton.”¹⁸⁴ Gary’s friend and confidant Hugh L. Farley would later write to Gary claiming “I am afraid the so-called conservative elements will control this state, and those are naturally opposed to you...we can only depend on the young, enthusiastic, and rising generation to call you into power, but even these are largely controlled and influenced by the

¹⁸² Wallace, *History of South Carolina Vol. III*, 315; Zuczek, 195.

¹⁸³ *Charleston News and Courier*, December 15, 1879.

¹⁸⁴ *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, January 10, 1877; reprinted in Sheppard, *Some Reasons Why*, 19.

opposing element alluded to.”¹⁸⁵ Gary’s inability to temper his ideological opposition towards Hampton’s moderation would eventually bring about his own political destruction in the years subsequent to 1876.

¹⁸⁵ Letter from Hugh L. Farley to Gary, September 12th, 1880, Gary papers, SCL.

CHAPTER FOUR

“THE STORM WAS RAISED WITHOUT HIS ASSISTANCE OR AGENCY” - GARY’S POLITICS AFTER 1876 AND THE GARY-HAMPTON FEUD

Victory in the election of 1876 did not ensure tranquility within South Carolina’s Democratic ranks. After 1876, Martin Gary began seeking what he perceived to be his “just rewards” for his alleged role during the 1876 campaign. Gary and his followers from Edgefield and its surrounding counties sincerely believed Gary’s strict adherence to his own “straight-out” ideology hallmarked by white supremacy, the violence evident at Hamburg, and the fraudulent tactics inherent to the Mississippi Plan had indeed saved the state from Radical rule. Accordingly, Gary’s followers claimed that the Bald Eagle should be rewarded with either the office of state governor or United States Senator. With Wade Hampton and other more conservative men now officially in charge of the state, however, such prospects did not seem likely for the extremist Gary. White Democrats being firmly entrenched in the state’s body politic allowed Gary’s hostility towards Hampton’s political moderateness to become even more intense than it had been in the years preceding 1876. No longer concerned with the necessities of redemption, Gary now waged his own campaign rooted in his radical ideology and personal ambition to garner political office. And he continued to antagonize Hampton over the race issue while reiterating his belief that the only acceptable definition of “straight-outism” involved the distinction of a color line, not a political one. Gary waged a full-frontal assault on moderate conservatives, personally attacking Hampton and his aides via public speeches and the press. Due to his abrasive nature

and the continual threat he posed to Democratic unity, moderates effectively shut the door on Gary's political aspirations and Gary died a seemingly bitter man at the age of fifty in the spring of 1881. Gary's violent, white supremacist interpretation of South Carolina's "redemption" endured amongst rural whites throughout the South Carolina upcountry, however, who remained dedicated to Gary's brand of radical white supremacy and unsatisfied that Gary's contributions to the 1876 campaign had gone unrecognized by the state's moderate leadership.¹⁸⁶

During 1878, the contrast between Gary's and Hampton's position on race again came to the forefront of state politics. As the 1878 elections approached Gary set his sights on the United States Senate, aware that South Carolina's state legislature would oust lame duck Radical Republican John. J Patterson in favor of a Democratic candidate.¹⁸⁷ The major obstacle confronting Gary's aspirations for higher office and formal political recognition remained Wade Hampton and the conservative racial policy Hampton sought to maintain in accordance with his platform of 1876. Gary's preponderant influence over his resident county of Edgefield remained a source of tension between moderate and more extreme Democrats. With Gary at the helm, Edgefield continued to advocate an extreme position on the subject of race. Hampton may have been the official voice of the Democratic Party in South Carolina, but Gary continued to renounce Hampton's moderate stance on race with little concern as to how this might affect his political fortunes. Indeed, such was Gary's devotion to white supremacy and his own

¹⁸⁶ For a detailed account of Reconstruction's position in South Carolina popular memory see Bruce Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007),

¹⁸⁷ Cooper, *Conservative Regime*, 54.

“straight-out” political ideology that he had great difficulty making concessions to any type of racial moderation, regardless of Hampton’s preeminent status among South Carolinians or the fact that this might result in his own undoing. At the Edgefield County Democratic convention in April 1878 Gary proposed the following resolutions, which were subsequently adopted by the Edgefield Democracy:

Resolved, that we regard the issues between the white and colored people of the state as an issue of antagonism of race, not a difference of political parties...resolved, that this state and the United States were settled by the white race, the lands now belong to the white race, the white race are now responsible for its government and civilization, and white supremacy is essential to our continued existence as a people.¹⁸⁸

At the same convention, Gary gave a speech in which he discussed the implications of the term “conservative” and how it pertained to his more moderate contemporaries. In prototypical Gary fashion, his speech contains several attempts to justify his reasoning by way of classical education and divine antiquity:

The only fear that I have for the Democracy has been created in the last legislature by those who were formerly fusionists, and who now style themselves ‘Conservative Democrats.’ I have recently consulted Worcester’s Dictionary to see what the word Conservative means. He defines it: ‘one opposed to political changes in the state or government.’ I suspect that some of them who so ostentatiously flaunt this name have ‘put on the livery of the court of Heaven to serve the Devil in.’ According to my understanding of the word, it means ‘straight-out,’ and straight out Democracy means the Democracy that carried the State in 1876 will carry it again in 1878.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ *Charleston News and Courier*, April 25, 1878.

¹⁸⁹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 25, 1878; quoted at length in Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 252-253.

Always quick to renounce Gary's extremist viewpoints, the moderate *Charleston News and Courier* offered its own retort to the resolutions Gary brought forth at the Edgefield convention. According to the newspaper, such resolutions were "not in keeping with the state platform of 1876...this [in reference to the Edgefield resolutions] is going to extremes...the platform does not involve the idea of an antagonism of race in such a manner as to demand that colored people be excluded from politics or public offices."¹⁹⁰ Taking the *Charleston News and Courier's* lead, moderate conservatives would soon find themselves in what historian Hampton Jarrell described as a verbal battle of the "who won the-war" type with Gary over whose tactics had proven more pertinent in influencing the outcome of 1876.¹⁹¹ To moderates, Gary's championing of a conflict that "arrayed race against race" represented a clear and hazardous deviation from the Hampton standard.¹⁹² With white Democracy firmly established, moderate conservatives realized that Gary's incendiary remarks could pose a threat to Democratic unity if unchecked. Underneath the veneer of Gary's harsh language was the looming implication that the upcountry's "rural, unthinking masses," as *Charleston News and Courier* editor Francis W. Dawson once referred to them, if allowed to create a political organization that furthered their cause, could overtake the state Democratic Party. Gary's opposition also believed that his continued animosity over the race issue was ill advised; for to moderates the establishment of "Hampton Democracy" meant "the honest and unreserved concession to the colored people of

¹⁹⁰ *Charleston News and Courier*, April 25, 1878.

¹⁹¹ Jarrell, 145.

¹⁹² Gary uses this terminology in an attempt to explain his viewpoint in the *Charleston News and Courier*, August 29, 1878.

all their public and private rights, of person and of property.”¹⁹³ Concerned about Gary and his political ideology, moderates therefore began their campaign to oust Gary from the official party ranks after the spring of 1878.

Gary’s sincere belief that Democratic adherence to the “Mississippi Plan” had shifted Radical Republican majorities to Democratic ones in the upcountry counties of Edgefield, Laurens, Abbeville, and Newberry and thereby saved the state provoked disdain from moderate conservatives. Although they acknowledged that “there is no doubt the grand majority for the Democratic candidates in Edgefield County, where General Gary worked, were a vast help to the Democratic cause,” they also declared the campaign of 1876 was not modeled upon Gary’s version of “the Mississippi Plan, but was, on the contrary, a plan in which the leading ideas were moderation and liberality.” Gary rejected this viewpoint in a speech he delivered during late August, 1878, in the city of Greenville. In Gary’s own personal retelling of 1876, the pursuit of moderation and liberality by “persuasion, reasoning, and political speeches” was indeed adopted by moderate conservatives on the State Executive Committee, but had “significantly failed in counties such as Richland, Fairfield, Kershaw, Sumter, and every county where it was tried.”¹⁹⁴ In reaffirming his claim that victory in 1876 had been won by his party’s obedience to the color line and its willingness to implement fraud and violence where deemed appropriate, Gary sought to rally the more extreme elements of South Carolina’s Democratic party around him in support of his bid for higher office. With Radical Republican opposition virtually nonexistent during the canvass of 1878, Gary became “public

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

enemy number one” to Hampton and other moderate Democrats in state offices who desired a politically unified, orderly government. While Hampton’s moderate government sought to reestablish the values and mores of antebellum society sans slavery by taking a “paternalistic” approach to the race question, Gary became the figurehead of the extremist camp within the Democratic Party that sought to completely marginalize the political and social rights of Blacks. When moderates condemned this position, Gary remained firm in his conviction and “ridiculed” any black “aspirations to social equality,” repeating his argument that “white supremacy was the only safeguard of our civilization.”¹⁹⁵ Gary’s “heroic” reiteration of 1876 as a victorious battle in the name of white supremacy also highlighted his desire to mobilize the rural white masses and bring about their own representation within South Carolina’s body politic; many of these same whites partook in Gary’s “straight-out” campaign during 1876 and shared his subsequent sentiment that the Hampton government maintained too moderate a position on race. Gary hoped upcountry whites, who he believed had valiantly followed the “Edgefield Plan” in 1876, would lay the foundation for his own political cause. Such hopes proved to be a grave miscalculation on Gary’s part in regards to his own political fortunes, however, since the majority of white upcountrymen remained committed to Hampton in mind, if not in spirit. Gary’s opposition to Hampton remained unpopular “more because of Hampton’s high personal standing in the state than because of any grass-roots opposition to Gary’s views.”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Jarrell, 127.

During the canvass of 1878, Gary had not yet become disgruntled enough with politics to fashion himself as a formal independent challenger to the state's Democratic leadership, for he was still hoping to claim a Senate chair in Washington. Initially, Gary therefore sought to challenge the Hampton government by reforming the state ticket and "surrounding Hampton with better advisers." In a letter written to his close friend Hugh Farley in April of 1878, Gary suggested a laundry list of possible candidates and their appropriate positions; these included A.G. Sporis of Darlington for lieutenant governor, B.W. Ball of Laurens for attorney general, and John Butler of Fairfield for comptroller general. Gary made these recommendations on the basis that "all of these men were straight-out," unlike Hampton's "fusionist" cabinet. Gary requested that Farley, who was the editor of the *Carolina Spartan*, "get some friends to put them [Gary's "better advisers"] in your paper and some Charleston or Greenville papers." Asking Farley to "attend to this matter at once," Gary hoped his early attempt to reform the state ticket would net him political support in higher places.¹⁹⁷ His letter to Farley also reflected his continued discontent over Hampton's supposed misconstruing of the term "straight-out." Henry Farley, brother of Hugh and editor of the pro-Gary *Columbia Straight-Out Democrat*, later highlighted some of the reasoning behind Gary's dissatisfaction with Hampton's regime. Although the excerpt below was printed in an 1880 edition of the *Straight-Out Democrat*, it reflects Gary's sentiment in 1878:

What is this government of South Carolina called? Is it ever spoken of as the Democratic Government of South Carolina? On the contrary, it is always spoken of as "the Hampton Government" ... the pet measures of this

¹⁹⁷ Letter from Gary to Hugh Farley, April 6, 1878. Gary Papers, SCL; Cooper, 55.

government are to educate the negro and pay the state debt, hence its popularity with the negro and the Yankee...Hampton was called from his retirement to head a movement which was prepared for him, and one in which he had no hand in bringing about [in reference to 1876]...the storm was raised without his assistance or agency"...If Hampton is a true Democrat...he will use his power and influence to put a true Democrat in his place.¹⁹⁸

Gary, of course, considered himself a "true" Democrat in the strictest sense of the word. This viewpoint is somewhat ironic considering that Gary's adherence to radical "straight-out" Democracy branded him the main agitator within the Democratic Party in South Carolina during the late 1870's. Gary's desire to gain political clout at the expense of Wade Hampton, the figurehead of Democracy in South Carolina, seemed contrary to Democratic principle. As Gary continued to oppose the "fusionist" policies of the Hampton Government, he simultaneously began casting himself in the image of an independent whose political and ideological views resided somewhere outside of South Carolina's Democratic Party. This "independentism," which was seen as rank treason to the "true" Democrats by the Hampton camp, would eventually result in Martin Gary's political undoing.

The problem for Gary was that his inexorable opposition to Hampton ensured there was little hope of his establishing a viable political platform to present a genuine challenge to moderates regardless of its party affiliation. Hampton could silence any legitimate support Gary garnered nearly at will due to his distinguished standing throughout the state. An article titled "Independents" printed in the September 18, 1878 edition of the *Charleston News and Courier*

¹⁹⁸ Clipping dated 1880 from *Straight-Out Democrat*, Gary Papers, SCL.

indicates this clearly even though it does not refer to Gary directly by name. According to the article, it “matters not if he is a Straight-out Democrat in the strictest sense of the word in every other respect, if he is running for office outside of the party he is an Independent and as such is arraying himself among the enemies of South Carolina.” The article goes on to state that this definition of what constitutes an “independent” is “generally understood and almost universally acted on throughout South Carolina, but there are here and there individuals either incapable of comprehending of how little importance they are in the political economy of the State, or else so basely selfish as to be willing to sacrifice everything for their own aggrandizement.”¹⁹⁹ Given the *Charleston News and Courier’s* moderate leanings coupled with Gary’s extremism being seen as a major threat to Democratic unity in 1878, there can be no doubt that the individual in question is Martin Gary. Gary’s pursuance of his own political agenda, it seemed, had thus begun “arraying him among the enemies of South Carolina.” Gary himself would have regarded this as sheer nonsense, for he believed his political vision simply reaffirmed the white supremacist “straight-out” standard whose machinations he personally had set into motion during 1876. According to historian David Duncan Wallace, Gary’s vision of white Democracy differed from Hampton’s in three key ways: his desire to “break the power of the aristocratic oligarchy, to exclude the Negro from all participation in politics, and to go directly to the masses of the white people.”²⁰⁰ Such objectives were not characteristic of the incumbent “Hampton Democracy,” and Hampton soon made his viewpoint known to the public, taking the

¹⁹⁹ *Charleston News and Courier*, September 18, 1878.

²⁰⁰ Wallace, “Life of Martin Witherspoon Gary” manuscript, 146.

Charleston News and Courier's article one step further by denouncing Gary and his political agenda openly and pointing out dangers of his independent leanings.

On the same day the *Charleston News and Courier* printed its article denouncing “independents,” Wade Hampton delivered a speech in Greenville in which he specifically refuted Gary’s interpretation of 1876 as well as Gary’s political agenda. The speech was a particularly lengthy one, and marked Hampton’s first campaign speech in over a month—Hampton’s speech represented a great exertion on his part as “broken down by confinement, responsibility, and anxiety,” he had also been “stricken down by illness” in the weeks prior to his arrival at Greenville. The large upcountry crowd, the *Charleston News and Courier* reported, “testified their sincere gratification in view of his return to the state and improved health,” and Hampton utilized the occasion to take issue with Martin Gary’s speech in August at the same location, the one in which the “Bald Eagle” had advocated white supremacy as the only “safeguard” of his resident state’s future civilization, once again reiterating the effectiveness of the Mississippi Plan.²⁰¹ Early in the speech, Hampton commended the “honest and conservative men of all parties and both races in the last great struggle,” thereby effectively repudiating what he deemed to be Gary’s distorted, sensationalistic white supremacist version of 1876. Continuing on this theme, Hampton declared:

I must enter my most emphatic dissent to the views expressed by General Gary at the recent meeting here...these views I believe to be inconsistent with the true policy of the Democratic Party...they do not represent the opinions of your standard-bearers, nor of

²⁰¹ *Charleston News and Courier*, September 18, 1878; *Charleston News and Courier*, August 29, 1878.

the Democratic party of South Carolina, and he was not authorized to speak for your nominees.²⁰²

To Hampton, Gary's aggressive rhetoric in the name of violence and white supremacy contradicted the State Democratic Committee's guiding principles of a moderate, "paternalistic" approach to the race question. Although the proverbial dust had settled upon the 1876 state election and South Carolina's native whites had regained the political majority within the state, Gary remained unwilling to acquiesce to any sort of racial moderation espoused by Hampton and other conservatives, which is why in concluding his August speech at Greenville, Gary declared the touchstone of "Hampton Democracy" involved two specific events that had occurred in the months and weeks prior: "the honor of having brought about the first instance where *colored* troops have marched in line with the *white* citizen soldiery of South Carolina" and "Hampton's wining and dining with the colored brothers and sisters" at Claflin College, which had been designated as an all-black school of higher learning due to Democrats' refusal to integrate South Carolina College in 1877.²⁰³

Gary's accusation of Hampton's "wining and dining" with Blacks referred to a particular incident which "covered the state in rumor" during the summer months of 1878. The incident was as follows. Sometime prior to Gary's August indictment of Hampton and his policies, Hampton and the state superintendent of education, Hugh S. Thompson accepted an invitation to dinner by Claflin College president Edward Cooke, who was himself white. Unbeknownst beforehand to Hampton and

²⁰² *Charleston News and Courier*, September 19, 1878.

²⁰³ *Charleston News and Courier*, August 29, 1878; Tindall, 227.

Thompson, two African Americans, an ex-judge of the state Supreme Court, Jonathan J. Wright, and Professor T.K Sasportas would also be in attendance. Upon entering the dining room, there seemed to be some initial confusion. “Wade looked at me, and I looked at him,” claimed Thompson. After this initial hesitation, Hampton and Thompson seated themselves at the same table as Wright and Sasportas, who, according to Thompson’s account, acted like “perfect gentlemen” during the course of the meal.²⁰⁴ Rumors of the occurrence spread by word of mouth and eventually reached Martin W. Gary and his agents via the South Carolina press. The situation may have been uncomfortable and merely “tolerable” at best for Hampton; to Gary, however, Hampton’s reported willingness to share a meal with Blacks equated to a repudiation of the white supremacist cause. Gary endeavored with his “wining and dining” comments to use the incident to stir up similar feelings among South Carolina’s white masses. Although he did not refer to Hampton directly by name with his “dining” comments, there was no mistaking who his harsh words were directed at, especially given the fact that the rumor of Hampton’s dining with African Americans had been “flying like wild fire around the state.”²⁰⁵ But with Hampton’s reputation firmly entrenched in the lore of the South Carolina public, this proved yet another miscalculation on Gary’s part.²⁰⁶ And Gary seemingly recognized as much; for after having pointed the finger at Hampton he momentarily backed away from criticizing the venerable governor in public and kept his grudges against Hampton and his lack of dedication to the white supremacist cause

²⁰⁴ Cooper, 91; Tindall, 31; Wallace, *History of South Carolina Vol. III*, 329.

²⁰⁵ Henry Farley to Gary, September 23, 1878. Gary Papers, SCL.

²⁰⁶ Andrew, 435-436.

private.²⁰⁷ Gary may also have done this at the recommendation of his friend Henry Farley, who realized Gary was treading in dangerous waters. As Farley advised Gary, “you cannot be too careful in dealing with the ‘negro dining’ matter...if the charge is directly made it will afford Hampton an opportunity to explain and the blame will be thrown on Cooke [the white president of Claflin College whom had invited Hampton to dinner].”²⁰⁸ Gary’s other confidants would advise him similarly in the wake of the “dining” incident and his Greenville speech.

Even Gary’s own inner circles of “straight-out” Democrats, state politicians, newspaper editors, and county judges expressed disapproval of the harsh accusations of racial “fusionism” he levied at Hampton. Writing to Gary nearly a week after his Greenville speech, Gary’s friend Joshua H. Hudson told him in regards to the race issue: “I regard you as orthodox, but a little in advance of the straight-outers, and far in advance of the fusionists and policy makers.” Hudson echoed Gary’s sentiment that “the issue in this and other southern states involves white supremacy and civilization,” but, dedicated to Gary’s campaign for white supremacy as he was, he remained a pragmatist; he knew Gary’s political fortunes hinged upon his willingness to adopt at least a semblance of moderation even if that was uncharacteristic of the “Bald Eagle.” Thus while Hudson may have been in agreement with Gary on his racial platform, he cautioned him about the content of his speeches, advising him to “omit some parts which too roughly proclaim the

²⁰⁷ See various documents in the Gary Papers, SCL. Gary frequently accuses Hampton of being a “fusionist,” and supporter of “miscegenation” and “mongrel civilization,” highlighting the difference between the two individuals and their political ideologies. These direct accusations towards Hampton were never published as their repercussions would have likely proven severe in regards to Gary’s political career.

²⁰⁸ Henry Farley to Gary, September 23, 1878. Gary Papers, SCL.

inferiority of the Negro.” Hudson went on to say that Gary’s Greenville speech “excited unfavorable comment as being too harsh on the Negro.”²⁰⁹ Gary, for his part, aware that his political ambition and adherence to radical white supremacy clashed with Hampton’s moderation, envisioned however another solution. Instead of toning down his rhetoric, he decided to formally separate himself from the “Hampton Democracy.”

In Gary’s political ideology lay the genesis of an independent movement, one which Hampton was well aware could prove a threat to Democratic unity should he not, as South Carolina’s “standard-bearer” of Democracy, denounce it in full. Towards the end of his Greenville speech, a fatigued Hampton therefore saw fit to “say one more word upon the dangers which are threatening our party.” And the greatest threat to the Democratic Party he indicated was an independent movement, which though he did not mention him by name, he clearly associated with Gary.²¹⁰ But unlike the aggressive, assertive Gary, instead of provoking confrontation and risking a backlash among South Carolina’s upcountry whites by explicitly stating Gary’s politics were contrary to the conservative Democratic ideal, Hampton warned his listeners to be leery of following the type of individual lurking within the Democratic ranks:

He who sets up his own individual judgment as a rule of action, and refuses to act in full and perfect accord with our platform, in spirit as well as in letter, is an Independent, and an Independent at this crisis in our affairs is worse than a Radical. He places himself, by his own action, outside of our party, and he should be ruled out of the party...he who is not with us, is against us,

²⁰⁹ Joshua H. Hudson to Martin Gary, September 9, 1878, Martin Gary Papers, SCL.

²¹⁰ *Charleston News and Courier*, September 19, 1878.

and should be ranked among our opponents...if we allow ourselves or any men to set up false gods or indoctrinate us with political heresies and lead us from the straight road which led to victory in '76...the party will be scattered as these leaves now shimmering above us will soon be scattered by the blasts of October.²¹¹

Gary obviously embodied the “independent” qualities of which Hampton spoke; his refusal to comply with or hold his tongue over the “Hampton Democracy’s” moderate leanings and policy of racial conciliation, his insistence on the color line he had so firmly advocated in 1876 in his “No. 1 Plan of Campaign” made him a threat to Democratic unity.

Although Gary’s criticism of Hampton had become more acute in the months prior to Hampton’s Greenville speech, the “feud” between the two Democratic stalwarts had been partially cemented by each man’s varying interpretation of 1876 and their method of participation in that election canvass. As evidenced in his Greenville speech, Hampton attempted to set the record straight in regards to 1876 not by referencing violent heroism or the re-establishment of white supremacy but “the straight road that led to victory” in 1876. Hampton’s utilization of the term “straight” may even hold something of a double meaning, signifying his adherence to political—not racial—“straight-outism” in the wake of Gary’s August proclamation that this moderate strategy failed to affect the election significantly. Gary’s understanding of 1876—one based in the triumph of white supremacy instead of a “struggle for honest government” as Hampton and other moderates alleged—seemingly held more water for many South Carolinians than Hampton’s recounting

²¹¹ Ibid.

of a moderate campaign rooted in pacifism.²¹² Particularly susceptible to this narrative were those who had followed Gary's lead in 1876; or as one author claimed, the "unsophisticated and unlettered group who would have stuck together unanimously on the issues of the 'Great Schism' that runs throughout South Carolina history," siding with Gary in vehemently opposing "the rich, the aristocracy, the Lowcountry, the businessman, scientific humanism, and [perhaps most ardently] advancement of opportunity for the Negro."²¹³

Not only did Gary's claims as to how Democrats won the election in 1876 have factual merit, they also embodied exciting, sensationalist qualities that endured because of their appeal among poor whites—so-called "rednecks"—many of whom had for the first time been roused into political action by Gary's call to arms in 1876.²¹⁴ Thirty five years after 1876, William Watts Ball of Laurens County [located in Gary's stronghold] recalled the seminal campaign in a manner that both reaffirmed and echoed Gary's interpretation of the event:

General Hampton and others appealed to the Negro voters, but I doubt if the appeals were effective. I do not believe that General Hampton understood the nature of the campaign...he was a sincere man, and was convinced that the negroes could be persuaded to vote for him...his idea was that conciliatory approaches could restore the old time feeling between former slave and master, and I suspect that he believed throughout his life that the negro largely contributed to the election of his ticket...the white people obeyed him because the

²¹² Andrew, 373-374; Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman*, 78.

²¹³ Jones, "Bald Eagle of Edgefield" manuscript, 177. I have added the bracket insert.

²¹⁴ As Rod Andrew notes, "It is virtually certain, in retrospect, that Gary was correct as to how Hampton got his majority of votes...Red Shirt intimidation, the stuffing of ballot boxes, and other Democratic frauds, particularly in the counties where Gary's tactics were the most prevalent." (Andrew, 414-415).

feeling for him was a fervent and yet somewhat far off adoration.²¹⁵

Although Ball downplays the role of violence in his recollection of the 1876 campaign, he claimed that the Democrats “rested their case solely on the assertion of the natural right of the superior race to rule, on the ancient ground that it is legitimate to fight the devil with fire.”²¹⁶ Ball’s sentiment highlights the preponderant influence Gary’s dramatic retelling of 1876 had upon upcountry South Carolinians in the decades subsequent to its conclusion.²¹⁷ Had Gary abandoned his white supremacist ideological bent and made concessions on the race issue at the request of Hampton and other moderate conservatives after 1876, his influence might well have largely diminished. Instead, Gary’s personal and ideological opposition to Hampton resulted in the “Bald Eagle” continually propagating his “version” of history to those South Carolinians who could ensure his political success. By persistently making reference to 1876 in his post-Reconstruction political speeches, Gary hoped to once again galvanize his upcountry followers into supporting a political movement that denounced racial moderation, thus positioning itself against one of the overarching tenets of “Hampton Democracy.” Gary remained keenly aware that the key to forming his own independent political platform were the white masses; and if traditional, aristocratic, and conservative

²¹⁵ William Watts Ball, *A Boy’s Recollections of the Red Shirt Campaign of 1876 in South Carolina*. (Columbia: State Co. Printers, 1911), 13, 20.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Baker, 34, 107.

Democrats would not allow this group to be mobilized and represented in the body politic, he believed he could utilize their discontent to his advantage.²¹⁸

Personal ambition and finances aside, Gary's sympathy for the white masses seems to have been genuine. Gary's devotees dubbed him the "great commoner, leading the battle against the aristocrats and capitalists." References to Gary as "the people's man" were not uncommon; traditional conservatives, moreover, were themselves cognizant of the differences between Gary's sentiment and their own. Historian David Duncan Wallace provides the following anecdote in regards to Gary's qualities that appealed to the "rougher" whites of South Carolina:

The older governing class were from the first keenly aware of the difference. As one of them remarked to me, Gary "belonged to the other crows;" and when I pointed out that by ancestry Gary was himself an aristocrat, he replied, "at least he made his appeals to that element." Though more of an aristocrat than most of them, he was not of the species. "Yes," one of them assented, "Gary is an upcountry gentleman," with just enough stress on the upcountry to indicate relative values.²¹⁹

Given Wade Hampton's firm entrenchment in South Carolina lore, however, the legitimate existence of Gary's political platform faced an uphill climb. While he had continued to endear himself to a large number of rural whites, the majority of Gary's potential followers were unwilling to align themselves with him at Hampton's expense. With the differences between Gary and Hampton's political ideologies coming to the forefront of state politics, South Carolinians began to debate over whether Hampton's conservatism or Gary's straight-outism represented the "true

²¹⁸ Burton, *A Gentleman and an Officer*, 62.

²¹⁹ Wallace, "Life of Martin Witherspoon Gary" Manuscript, 145-146; *Charleston News and Courier*, December 15, 1879.

policy” of the state. While Hampton remained concerned that Gary and his followers would “inject some new plank into the platform,” the Edgefield Democracy, led by Gary, claimed they “were willing to stand upon the platform of 1876, according to our interpretation of it.”²²⁰ This interpretation obviously stood in marked contrast to the one espoused by moderate conservatives, and eventually resulted in Hampton formally silencing Gary’s position as a speaker within the Democratic Party.

After his August speech in Greenville, Gary would find himself “gagged” by Hampton and the State Democratic Executive Committee. Hampton’s denunciation of him in September effectively shut the door on his political campaigning throughout the state. Originally, Gary had “planned to use the canvass of 1878 as an opportunity for speaking in many South Carolina communities.” However, in late September, State Democratic Executive Committee chairman John Kennedy informed him that Hampton would no longer speak where Gary was invited; and that Gary would be receiving no more official speaking assignments from the Executive Committee.²²¹ Initially, there seemed to be some confusion on Gary’s part over this issue. In a letter dated October 2, 1878, State Executive Committee chairman Kennedy wrote to Gary that: “on my way to Columbia this morning, Judge Bacon informed me that you had stated that a member of the Executive Committee told you that no resolution had been passed by the Committee directing the designation of speakers at the mass meetings held under our authority in the several counties.”²²² Some two weeks earlier, Gary had received a letter from

²²⁰ Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 258.

²²¹ Cooper, 60-61.

²²² John Kennedy to Gary, October 2, 1878, Gary Papers, SCL.

Kennedy's secretary, Judge John E. Bacon, asking Gary if he could speak at Aiken County on September 20.²²³ Written two days before Hampton's Greenville speech, this would be the last speaking assignment Gary would receive from the State Executive Committee. As "letter and telegram cancellations of Gary's invitations to speak throughout the state began pouring into Oakly Park," Gary was presumably caught off guard, although he knew his opposition to Hampton's moderate platform would put his aspirations for higher office in jeopardy.²²⁴ Chairman Kennedy told him: "I will take pleasure in giving you the resolution itself, as in all of our intercourse, we have been frank with each other, and I have no desire to be otherwise."²²⁵ Gary, who had in early September claimed he was "sincerely flattered by his chances for election," now realized that he had virtually no chance to garner higher office. Notwithstanding his "network of friends all over the state" and their "hard work" in spreading the word to "straight-out newspapers," the State Executive Committee effectively banned Gary from all Party-related speaking events.²²⁶ As Gary came to this realization, the feud between himself and Wade Hampton became even more publicized, pronounced, and bitter. After taking a "rest" from South Carolina's political scene in early 1879, Gary reared his head again in the later months of the year, rekindling his personal and political feud with Hampton. By the end of 1879, the *Abbeville Press and Banner* referred to the feud as an "old, old story."²²⁷ Gary said of Hampton: "it is bitter prejudice and hatred to me, no doubt,

²²³ John Bacon to Gary, September 16, 1878, Gary Papers, SCL.

²²⁴ Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 266.

²²⁵ John Kennedy to Gary, October 2, 1878, Gary Papers, SCL.

²²⁶ Gary to Hugh Farley, September 8, 1878, Gary Papers, SCL.

²²⁷ *Abbeville Press and Banner*, December 24, 1879.

that has and will continue to induce him to believe that I am the author of every article that dares to criticize his public acts...everyone in South Carolina knows that he hates, and has long hated me.”²²⁸ The ongoing feud even caused the usually reserved Hampton to criticize openly Gary’s character flaws when he was quoted in the *Charleston News and Courier* as saying “that I consulted with General Gary during any canvass has entirely escaped my recollection...it may have been my misfortune that I have not done so, but I have always regarded his views as narrow, unwise, and dangerous; I have studiously avoided asking his advice or acting on his suggestions.”²²⁹ Hampton’s statement would prove to be the final nail in Gary’s political coffin. Try as Gary might to deemphasize the feud in the early 1880’s by claiming he had been the unwarranted recipient of “slander and gross mistreatment,” the undercurrent of Hampton’s rebuke always remained, thus undermining Gary’s attempt to form a legitimate political following rooted in his own radical “straight-out” politics that might elevate him to higher office.²³⁰

Gary’s 1878 Senate campaign resulted in failure not only due to his conflicts with Hampton’s regime; but also the willingness of South Carolinians to “give” Hampton the Senate seat based on his personal standing within the state should he desire it. Two years later, Gary decided to make a run for the office of state governor, this time on an independent platform that “promised homesteads, common schools, and self-sufficiency, all built on the foundation of 1876.”²³¹ Along with the expected endorsement from the *Edgefield Advertiser*, various rural

²²⁸ Undated newspaper clipping [presumably late 1879] in Gary Papers, SCL.

²²⁹ *Charleston News and Courier*, December 15, 1879.

²³⁰ Jones, “Bald Eagle of Edgefield” Manuscript, 224.

²³¹ Kantrowtiz, *Ben Tillman*, 95.

newspapers supported Gary's bid for the governorship. The *Camden Journal* argued "the *harmony* of South Carolina demands that Martin W. Gary should be our next governor...our first, second, third, and last choice for Governor is all Gary...the thundering voice of a grateful people now turn and will pay honor to whom honor is due." The *Marion Star* followed suit, expressing its support of Gary's "character, political sagacity, and real statesmanship" since his bid for the U.S. Senate in 1878.²³² During the early stages of the campaign, Gary's longtime friend Joshua Hudson wrote to Gary, that he was "hoping to see some favorable turn in the tide of popular sentiment in your favor." This changing of the guard, however, was not to be, as Hudson acknowledged: "it grieves me," he wrote, "to see that tide setting strongly in favor of your chief opponent."²³³ Gary's opponent was Johnson Hagood, a former Hampton advisor and comptroller general who supported Hampton's "conciliatory" policies of 1876—Hagood even claimed that in one particular instance he rode "twenty miles and back one day to put a stop to rifle club demonstrations."²³⁴ Shortly after Hagood won the election, Gary retired to private life. Some five months later, Gary passed away at his Oakly Park home in Edgefield, never receiving the official recognition or the higher office he so fervently sought, notwithstanding the fact that he, in the words of the *Edgefield Advertiser*, "more than any one man, saved South Carolina from the 'organized hell' and barbarism of Reconstruction."²³⁵

²³² *Camden Journal*, October 16, 1879; *Marion Star*, January 23, 1878.

²³³ Joshua Hudson to Gary, May 20, 1880, Gary Papers, SCL.

²³⁴ Simkins and Woody, 498, 504.

²³⁵ *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 14, 1881.

With the political ascendancy of fellow Edgefieldian Benjamin Ryan Tillman and Hampton's waning from state politics in the late 1880's and early 1890's, the Gary legend became cemented in South Carolina's public consciousness. Tillman propagated the white supremacist version of 1876, claiming that "Gary preached the only effective doctrine for the times" and that "Edgefield's majority alone gave Hampton a chance to claim to have been elected...Hampton has his monument and the people of South Carolina love to honor his memory, but Gary is entitled to equal, if not more credit for the victory of 1876."²³⁶ It is surely no coincidence that four surviving members of the Gary family and Gary's longtime friend Hugh Farley all held office during Tillman's gubernatorial administration.²³⁷ For Tillman eventually overthrew the traditional "conservative" leadership that Gary attacked, vindicating Gary's political manifesto in the process. He thereby ensured South Carolina's reputation as a bastion for white supremacy became "his most insidious success, a negative reference so potent it still clouds our vision" in regards to the history of the state.²³⁸ Some two decades after his death, Gary, it seemed, had finally gotten his due as Hampton's conservative "politics of moderation" too fell by the wayside.

²³⁶ Tillman, *Struggles of 1876*, 28-29.

²³⁷ Simkins, *Tillman Movement*, 154.

²³⁸ Kantrowtiz, *Ben Tillman*, 308.

CONCLUSION

“THE MAN WITHOUT WHOSE AID ALL OUR EFFORTS WOULD HAVE PROVED A FAILURE”

During the autumn of 1895, South Carolina’s Edgefield Democracy called a mass meeting at the county courthouse “to consider the question of raising a monument to the Bald Eagle of Edgefield.”²³⁹ Even in Gary’s former stronghold, however, his legacy was not met without controversy. Members of the Edgefield Democracy remained confused about Gary’s political leanings; the byword of “independentism” seemed to hover over the proceedings. The most ardent supporter of the monument was Benjamin Ryan Tillman, longtime friend and confidant of Gary who channeled Gary’s racial credo and fiery personality to great political effect at both the state and national levels. Tillman argued that his “dead friend deserved the honor more than any other of redeeming the state.” According to Tillman, both Gary and his enduring legacy had been “swindled by Hampton, Butler, and Hagood,” and that if Gary had run as an independent in 1880 “it would have been nothing more than he ought to have done after being swindled and cheated by that crowd.”²⁴⁰ In the end, “Senator Butler and his friends prevented action from being taken” and the purported monument dedicated to the “Bald Eagle” was deemed inappropriate due to “suspicions and mutterings about Gary’s independentism, or leanings in that way.”²⁴¹ Considering the popularity of Gary and his interpretation of “straight-out” democracy in Edgefield, it is somewhat

²³⁹ *Charleston News and Courier*, September 17, 1895.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* The word “independentism” seems to have been coined by Tillman.

²⁴¹ *Charleston News and Courier*, September 15, 1895.

surprising that Gary's resident county never fashioned a monument to cement his legacy in that corner of the state. Although Gary remains a controversial and suppressed figure today because of his radical politics, the 1890's Edgefield Democracy may have viewed his opposition to the leading Democratic figures of the time as the more pressing issue. Paradoxically, Gary's politics seemingly blurred the lines between "straight-out" and "independent." Those who hoped to create a monument dedicated to Gary's legacy remained unsure how to handle the issue, and also hesitant over whether or not they were implicitly reaffirming "straight-outism" or "independentism" with Gary's commemoration.²⁴²

In determining the origins and eventual development of Gary's "No. 1 plan of campaign," several overarching themes become apparent. Although he has become notorious for his strict adherence to radical white supremacy, Gary's plan of campaign and political ideology were both constructs encouraged by several other factors, including his disdain for the Lowcountry planter aristocracy (and more specifically Wade Hampton III), Mississippi's successful "redemption" in 1875, the "degeneracy" of Edgefield encapsulated by the Hamburg Massacre, and the tradition of meeting out justice via paramilitary organizations throughout the South Carolina upcountry. These factors also suggest a certain amount of "independentism"—as Ben Tillman might say—to Gary's politics—a characteristic that set him apart from South Carolina's moderate conservative faction that seized the state governorship in 1876 and eventually ostracized Gary from politics largely because of his radical views. It is important to reassess Gary's historical significance with these things in

²⁴² Baker, 65-66.

mind, instead of letting Gary's prior "heroic" or "villainous" historiographical reputation, his volatile personality, and his championing of white supremacy mold him into something representative of a simple caricature. Gary's influence in regards to the outcome of South Carolina's gubernatorial election of 1876 is not quantifiable due to the extensive amount of voter fraud that took place during the election. There is a high probability, however, that much of this fraud in Edgefield district came at the behest of Gary and his followers—in the words of one Gary sympathizer, it indeed seemed strange that by 1880 South Carolina's Bourbon regime had denounced Gary, "the man without whose aid all our efforts would have proved a failure, and General Hampton would not have been Governor today."²⁴³

Gary's politics, however controversial, have had a lasting effect on the psyche of native South Carolinians and their understanding of Reconstruction.²⁴⁴ Said Gary: "you could put a soldier in front of every cottage in South Carolina, but you cannot prevent the return of South Carolina to her own people."²⁴⁵ To Gary, these "people" were South Carolina's regular, native white population—not the moderate conservative leadership whom Gary had diametrically opposed in political practice, policy, and ideology since the beginnings of Radical Reconstruction. Had Martin Gary acquiesced to "fusionism" or the more conservative approach towards race adopted by Hampton and his policymakers, his legacy—and the memories of 1876 as a violent struggle in the name of white supremacy might have dwindled, as moderates would not have been forced to combat this narrative and the political

²⁴³ Sheppard, *Red Shirts Remembered*, 193.

²⁴⁴ Baker, 157.

²⁴⁵ *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, March 8, 1946.

sectionalism that became amplified by Gary's political ideology. Instead, Gary's lasting influence lived on vicariously through Ben Tillman, who espoused his hero's mantra with resounding effect while proclaiming any moderate view on race as antiquated and out of step with South Carolina's new political leadership.

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