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Remembering Meriwether: White Carolinian Manipulation of the Memory of the Hamburg Massacre of 1876

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REMEMBERING MERIWETHER: WHITE CAROLINIAN
MANIPULATION OF THE MEMORY OF THE HAMBURG
MASSACRE OF 1876

A Thesis
Presented to
The Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts
History

by
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Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the manipulation of the memory of the Hamburg Massacre of 1876. During the massacre, one white Carolinian and six black Carolinians were killed. Forty years later, in 1916, a monument was erected in North Augusta, South Carolina to honor and remember Mckie Meriwether, who was described as the only person killed during the massacre. The monument does not mention the true horrific history of the white terrorism against black Carolinians. After white Carolinians reclaimed power in the state, they were able to alter the memory of the Hamburg Massacre from a horrific to heroic event.

By utilizing newspapers from the era, this thesis examines how the memory was manipulated starting from immediate reactions to the massacre in 1876 to the creation of the monument in 1916. The memory was changed through the political rise of the white Carolinians involved, most significantly Matthew Butler and Ben Tillman. Once white Carolinians had control over state politics, they were able to use their influence to overshadow the real horrors of the massacre. The same type of manipulation took place throughout the South and continues to impact southern history and identity.

DEDICATION

To my dad who sparked my passion for history
and continues to challenge my ideas every day

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. Paul Anderson. Dr. Anderson first introduced me to my topic during his class on Reconstruction. Throughout this process he has helped to encourage, question, challenge, and support me. Dr. Anderson spent countless hours reviewing my writing and without his help my thesis would not be what it is today. I would also like to thank my other committee members Dr. Rod Andrew and Dr. Vernon Burton. Dr. Andrew's class, "Major Problems in Southern History", helped me to better understand the historiography of southern history. While Dr. Burton's class, "Southern Identity", provided many secondary sources that helped to influence my thesis. Dr. Burton helped me to better understand the study of memory and how it continues to change our understanding of history.

I would like to thank my family for supporting me throughout my research and writing, especially my mom who spent hours listening to my ideas and research. My mom always believed in me and encouraged me to follow my dreams no matter how difficult they seemed. And finally I would like to thank Matt for his constant reminders that I can do whatever I put my mind to. I would not have been able to finish this process without him supporting me during this long process.

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INTRODUCTION

MEMORY IN THE SOUTH

For almost a century, the McKie Meriwether monument in North Augusta, SC served as the only reminder of the Hamburg massacre. It still stands today in J. C. Calhoun Park, but now represents the manipulation of southern memory by white Carolinians. According to the inscriptions on the monument, it honors the *only* resident who was killed during the Hamburg controversy. And it argues that Meriwether was a hero of his time whose memory deserved commemoration for future generations. Like most histories in the South, there was another side to the story besides the one described on the monument. Meriwether was the only *white man* killed at Hamburg on July 8, 1876. Six black men were also killed: James Cook, Moses Parks, Allan Attaway, David Rivers, Hampton Stephens, and Albert Myniart. These black men were murdered for the political gain of whites, four of them publicly executed, and the memory of Hamburg was deliberately overshadowed and silenced as a substantive part of the commemoration of Meriwether.

In 2011, a plaque that describes the fuller history of Hamburg was dedicated. It was at first displayed at First Providence and Second Providence Baptist churches in North Augusta. The initial plans were to place the plaque on the Fifth Street Bridge in North Augusta, but the Heritage Council of North Augusta, the non-profit organization which sponsored the creation of the plaque, feared it would be vandalized. Instead it was

placed near another historic marker by the historic Carrsville Community.¹ Yet today the issues of South Carolina history are still controversial. As historians (and Carolinians) begin to reassess their understanding of southern history, it is important to note that a great deal of Carolina history was altered to honor white Carolinians and silence the history of black Carolinians. At Hamburg, for instance, memory was changed by white Carolinians through political elections and the promotion of public figures who had roles in the event. After the massacre, the white Carolinians used Hamburg as a tool to help reclaim dominance over politics and society. The white men who participated in Hamburg used their participation as a platform to boast of. Not *in spite* of the white Carolinians' participation in the murder of six black men, but because of it, they won election to political offices. Once they were in power, the whitewashed stories of Hamburg were perceived as factual, and blacks had no power to question or argue the white claims. The creation of the Meriwether monument marks the attempt to create a permanent historical acceptance of the white Carolinian memory of Hamburg.

The event at Hamburg was one of the planned attacks used by white Carolinians to regain political power. On July 4th 1876 the city of Hamburg celebrated Independence Day with a parade. After the war, blacks used these national holidays to celebrate their freedom.² The black militia, led by Doc Adams, was marching in the street for the parade when Thomas Butler and Henry Getzen, two white farmers from Edgefield, South

¹ The Carrsville Community is a historic site in North Augusta, SC. The site consists of a Society Building which was built in 1930 as the Young Men's Union Society. Carrsville was formed after the city of Hamburg disappeared and the majority of the residents were blacks.

² W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 65.

Carolina, tried to ride their buggies through the ranks. The militia refused to break ranks and move out of the way. The white men argued with the militia and forced their way through the street. The white men could have taken a different route through the city or gone around the militia, but these men were looking for a reason to start trouble. Later Butler and Getzen went to the black town justice, Prince Rivers, to press charges against Adams for blocking the street. Butler and Getzen were supported by their attorney, Matthew C. Butler. Adams countersued the whites with interfering with the militia drill. The trial was set for July 8, 1876.

On July 8th, several hundred rifle club members came into Hamburg in support of Butler and Getzen. White southern men created rifle clubs as a way to gather together and own weapons since they refused to participate in the local militias because of the black members. The trial itself was postponed which Rivers and Matthew Butler negotiated with one another. Matthew Butler requested that the black militia turn over their guns to him, but Adams refused. Rivers tried to keep the situation under control by working with both groups, but the white men were clearly looking for the opportunity to cause violence. The militia refused to turn over their arms, and instead stationed themselves inside a warehouse. The whites followed and positioned themselves as an army ready for battle. They even brought a cannon with them. Soon shots were fired and one white man, McKie Meriwether, was killed. Two black men, Jim Cook and Moses Parks, were killed while trying to escape the warehouse. The white men captured many of the militia and held the men as captives. Five blacks, Allan Attaway, David Phillips, Pompey Curry, Albert Myniart, and Hampton Stephens, were called out from the group

to be killed. All of them were executed in cold blood except Pompey Curry, who managed to escape and hide from the whites.

The terror of Hamburg helped result in the overthrow of Reconstruction when Wade Hampton was elected governor three months later. None of the white men at Hamburg were convicted for the murder of innocent blacks; instead these men became prominent leaders in South Carolina. In 1916, a monument was created in North Augusta, S.C. to honor Meriwether's death during the massacre, which whites referred to as a riot. The creation of this monument is the focus of this thesis. Through the rise of political leaders, especially Ben Tillman, the memory of the Hamburg Massacre was altered in order to uplift white southerners.

In recent years the study of memory and history has been a topic of debate, especially in the South because of the division between history and white-manipulated history. The division creates two separate histories of the South, one told from the black southern perspective and the other told from the white southern perspective. Modern historians acknowledge this problem, as James C. Cobb argues. "Nowhere is this division more obvious than in the never-ending conflicts over the Confederate flag, Confederate monuments, and other symbolic reminders of slavery and segregation," he writes.³ The separation hastened by misrepresentation includes the symbols of Reconstruction. While Reconstruction is often overshadowed by the white memory of the Civil War, how Southerners remembered Reconstruction changed how the South evolved.

³ James C. Cobb, *Away Down South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 290.

Southern history is currently undergoing a revolution that questions the way it is represented in society. Various historians and public history professionals argue that the kind of Southern history represented in books, schools, monuments, buildings, and road names does not properly represent the region's fullest history. Many of these scholars and activists want to change the representations, especially in public spaces, to more accurately depict Southern history. For instance, on the campus of Clemson University, students, staff, and faculty are currently debating the memory of Ben Tillman, a pro-lynching racist leader of South Carolina, who also participated in the massacre at Hamburg. The most iconic building on Clemson's campus is named after Tillman, who had a founding role in the creation of the university. The building, which was originally named Old Main, was changed to Tillman Hall in 1946—just at the beginning of the era which C. Vann Woodward has called the “Second Reconstruction.” While some students, faculty, and alumni support keeping Tillman's name on the building, since he was involved in the creation of Clemson, others want it removed because of his lasting and infamous legacy with race. Controversies like these show no signs of abating. But even talking about it is breaking a silence long meant, deliberately, to empower white memory by erasing or enshrouding black memory. This is an especially important dynamic in South Carolina, where African-American history has been and continues to be vital in understanding the state. For most of the state's history, in fact, most Carolinians have been black. In order to better understand South Carolina history, Carolinians should acknowledge the evolution of their history to better recognize a discriminatory landscape.

Christopher A. Cooper and H. Gibbs Knotts argue that three different memory movements are occurring in the contemporary South: de-Confederation, re-Confederation, and African-Americanization. The de-Confederation of the South involves an effort to remove the symbols of the Confederacy and the replacing of Confederate names on buildings, roads, and highways. The removal of the Confederate flag is probably the best-known example of how southerners want to step away from their connections with Confederate history. For Southerners demanding de-Confederation, the Confederacy does not represent Southern identity, but instead symbolizes white supremacy and pro-slavery ideas. De-Confederation allows for African-Americanization, which supports a black identity within Southern history and focuses on elevating black memory. African Americanization not only wants to rid the Southern landscape of Confederate symbols, but wants to rename buildings, roads, and highways from a perspective based in black history. The opposite approach is taken by Southerners involved in re-Confederation, a movement which consists of southerners who want to continue to honor Confederates as heroes of the South.⁴

The existence of these three movements suggests an ongoing struggle as black and white southerners confront their shared past. The difficulty of the struggle is evident in the evolution and transformation of the memory of Hamburg. The white Carolinians involved at Hamburg did not want to be remembered as violent racists; instead they wanted their lasting legacy to be heroic. And for a long time their desires prevailed. As

⁴ Christopher A. Cooper and H. Gibbs Knotts, "Declining Dixie: Regional Identification in the Modern American South," *Social Forces* 88.3 (2010): 1083-101.

stories of heroic white Southerners such as those engaged at Hamburg were passed down over time, new generations of white southerners sought to honor their ancestors.

Through this kind of filio piety, white Southerners were always remembered as heroes, even as the filio piestic element encrusted the memory in deeper and deeper layers of tradition. But black Southerners were either not talked about or biasedly represented.

Such a divide in Southern memory creates a racially divided history rather than a shared past. Unless Southerners can come to terms with both sides of history there will always be conflict not just over events such as Hamburg—but over who, and what, is a Southerner.

Those questions are important, too, in public history. As views broaden, the public is urging public historians to interpret and integrate both the white and black versions of history at museums and historical sites. A couple of examples offer illustrations. At Clemson University, in South Carolina, new movement known as See the Stripes is focused on educating students, faculty, and alumni on the University's troubled racial past. Most of the public attention has been focused on the movement's attempt to rename Tillman Hall, an example certainly of de-Confederation and possibly of African Americanization. A less well-known but equally important focus of the movement's demands involves the history taught to guests at Fort Hill. Fort Hill was the home of John C. Calhoun and later Thomas Green Clemson, founder of Clemson College, but it was fundamentally a plantation big house: the University is built on a former plantation, which most students do not realize before coming to the University.

Nor are they really taught. Fort Hill is known for its variety of antiques and original artwork and its focus on Calhoun as a political leader; it does little to expound on

the existence of slavery on the plantation. The tour guide and manual provide details on the lives of the Calhoun and Clemson family, and even describe each piece of furniture in the house. Very little however is said about enslaved people. The only information included is on a couple house slaves, though hundreds of enslaved worked on the plantation. As Orville Vernon Burton argues, “when slavery is left out, the history is distorted; and when history is distorted, people feel justified in harboring anger, bitterness, and resentment.”⁵

The same feelings accompany public monuments. Monuments serve as a permanent reminder of the past. In the South, however, almost every monument in a public space represents only white history, with most of these honoring Confederate soldiers. As with issues over race in historical houses such as Fort Hill and at historical sites generally, monuments should be re-evaluated in light of both black and white history. In 2000 a controversy occurred in Caroline County, Virginia over the memorialization of a slave, Gabriel. Supporters of a more inclusive Southern history wanted to create a monument in honor of a failed slave revolt of 1800. The group wanted to honor and remember those slaves who were killed because of their rebellion, but also the rebellion’s leader, Gabriel. The county board rejected the creation of the monument because it did not want a monument that “glorified violence and inflamed racial tensions.”⁶ It is ironic that Southern towns and cities are filled with memorials of the

⁵ Orville Vernon Burton, "The South as "Other," the Southerner as "Stranger"," *The Journal of Southern History* 79.1 (2013): 14.

⁶ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Contentious and Collected: Memory's Future in Southern History," *The Journal of Southern History* 75.3 (2009): 751-66.

Confederacy, which was founded in violence to protect a system of slavery based in violence, but reject memorials to honor slaves who suffered under the restraints of a violent system. “Until we accept Gabriel,” Cleo Coleman, an advocate for the monument, argues, “we accept the myth that slaves were content with their condition, had no interest in freedom, and were not entitled to it.”⁷

Many southern blacks criticize the misrepresentation of history supported by monuments around the South. “For many black southerners,” Cobb argues, “the widespread assault on Confederate icons and symbols went hand in hand with the creation, preservation, or renovation of a new set of icons and monuments memorializing the crusade to free the South from the racial system constructed on the ruins of Confederate legacy.”⁸ With all the controversies that are occurring throughout the South, and especially in South Carolina, attention needs to be brought to the Meriwether monument that still stands in North Augusta. Raised as a legacy to the heroism of white Carolinians, it is hard to see the monument today as much more than a monument to the terrorism inflicted on blacks Carolinians. A full history, though, is not so much a victims’ history as it is a shared history of Southerners. “The black southerner and the white southerner are locked to the land and to the history,” as Maya Angelou claims, “a painful history of guilt and cruelty and ignorance. It clings to us like the moss on the trees.”⁹ Brundage puts it another way. “To understand fully the significance of these controversies,” he argues, “we should pay attention to the history that southerners have

⁷ Brundage, 751-66.

⁸ Cobb, *Away Down South*, 302.

⁹ Burton, “The South as “Other”, The South as “Stranger”,”13.

valued, the elements of their past they have chosen to remember and forget, the ways that they have disseminated their past, and the uses to which their memories have been put.”¹⁰

The manipulation of the memory of Reconstruction was supported by contemporaries, but it was legitimated as history by the earliest of professional scholars at the turn of the twentieth century. William A. Dunning, a professor at Columbia University, pioneered the professional study of Reconstruction. Under his influence, the Dunning school of scholars argued that Reconstruction was a tragic, failed period of American civilization because the South was overrun by carpetbaggers and freedmen who corrupted its institutions. White southerners were the victims in this history. An example of it is historian Henry T. Thompson’s *Ousting the Carpetbagger from South Carolina*, which appeared in 1926. Not only did the book glorify white Carolinian history; Thompson actually dedicated it to the Red Shirts of 1876. Thompson described South Carolina after the war as a land of destruction and devastation. Towns and farms and even cities had been burnt to the ground; its (white) people were sufferers. He blamed the radical Republicans and freedman for misrule and corruption, and for all the other dislocations facing white Carolinians during Reconstruction. He even attempted to manipulate the memory of national leaders such as Abraham Lincoln, who might otherwise be remembered for Union victory and emancipation but who, in Thompson’s telling, was no different than Andrew Johnson—a hero of sorts to the unreconstructed. Lincoln and Johnson would not have allowed newly freed blacks to gain political power, Thompson wrote: “Thus it will be seen that neither Lincoln nor Johnson regarded as

¹⁰ Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 3.

necessary to Reconstruction the giving of universal suffrage to the recently freed negro . . . In fact, both publicly declared they did not favor doing so.”¹¹

Thompson argued that white Carolinians had few options to protect themselves against violence committed by Carolina blacks, and for the intimidation and violence supposedly used by Republicans to steal elections. White Carolinians created the Ku Klux Klan in self-defense and in civil defense—the protection of democracy. Any violence that occurred thereafter was because white Carolinians were defending themselves and heroically defending civic virtue. “During all the years of Reconstruction.” Thompson wrote, “and particularly in the sections of the State where they were in a great majority, the negroes, under the guidance of their designing leaders, had practiced the most brutal forms of intimidation and had perpetrated all kinds of frauds at the ballot box.”¹² The savior of Reconstruction was Wade Hampton. Thompson claims that the “ousting” was redemptive: under Hampton, not only was civic virtue and white democracy restored, but so was peace and good order. These twin victories were staples of the white triumphal view as first cast in professional history by Dunning scholars. It nevertheless was a biased view of history that altered the way the South, and the nation, viewed Reconstruction.

Just as historians supported and documented the white version of history in their books, white women in the South uplifted white Southerners as heroes. Women’s groups such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) or the Ladies Memorial

¹¹ Henry T. Thompson, *Ousting the Carpetbagger from South Carolina* (Columbia: The R. L. Bryan Company, 1926), 13.

¹² Thompson, *Ousting the Carpetbagger from South Carolina*, 133.

Association (LMA) existed across the region; their activities stressed the heroism and valor of white men despite the devastation of Confederate defeat. “The UDC accomplished in peacetime what their Confederate forebears had failed to achieve during war,” Karen Cox argues. “The Daughters did so by memorializing dead Confederate soldiers and the society that they had fought to preserve.”¹³ In fact, where white men in the South often had to toe a fine line, for fear of inviting retaliation or increased Federal vigilance, women were able to preserve heroic ideals of the South after the war because the North did not view them as a political threat. The North did not recognize the type of permanent influence these women’s ideas would have on the memory of the South. But in fact, in sustaining a heroic memory, they helped make essential the heroic ideal that underlay the violence of Reconstruction and ultimately the manipulation of its narrative.¹⁴

Brundage argues that women’s control of public memory was a feature unique to the South. In England, Germany and France, governments controlled public space and therefore the shape of public memory. These governments made sure that the public memory honored the aristocratic families. But because state and local governments did not step in to help control the memory of the South, women were able to fill a vacuum. “Throughout the nineteenth century state governments abjured responsibility over historical memory because it fell within that area of the public realm,” as Brundage

¹³ Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), xii.

¹⁴ Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 40.

argues, “where their authority ended and the traditional authority of home and church began.”¹⁵

The most influential method by which women shaped southern memory was in the creation and raising of monuments. LMA organizations established many monuments in cemeteries, but the UDC placed monuments in towns and cities across the South. Monuments served as a “daily reminder” of the past. Even those who could not read were influenced by the visual presence of the monuments.¹⁶ “The stone soldiers who stand sentinel in southern towns pay homage to white heroes who were revered as both loyal southerners and American patriots, for their defense of states’ rights.” Cox argues.” Significantly, southern blacks, who had no stake in celebrating the Confederacy, had to share a culture landscape that did.”¹⁷

Blacks, however, were not silent. They attempted to preserve and promote their memory, but instead of creating monuments they organized and participated in celebratory events. Kathleen Clark argues that in order to fully understand the manipulation of Southern memory, one must recognize the different white and black memorial movements during Reconstruction and the different forms they took.¹⁸ Blacks honored days that represented freedom, such as the Fourth of July and Emancipation Day. Typically, though, and especially after Reconstruction, these were celebrated in spaces set apart, such as black churches. Public space could be denied to them either by

¹⁵ Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 18.

¹⁶ Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past*, 142.

¹⁷ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 49.

¹⁸ Mills and Simpson, *Monuments to the Lost Cause*, 48.

the intimidation of the landscape itself, or by the outright refusal of whites to allow blacks any type of celebration or remembrance in spaces they controlled. White southerners used threats and violence to cease all types of black advancements and celebrations. It was during one of these celebrations on July 4, 1876, on the public street in Hamburg, that led to the murder of the six black men in the town several days later. As was deliberately intended, black memorialization was, and still is, often “forgotten” because they did not leave a physical imprint on the South like white southerners.

The Lost Cause was the main device used by white southerners to alter the memory of three periods in Southern history that became one within the mythology: the antebellum South, the Confederate experience during the Civil War, and Reconstruction. Historians have defined the Lost Cause in a variety of ways, but each definition stresses its idealization of the white South. And no matter their emphases, all would agree with Karen Cox’s central contention that the Lost Cause was “an idealized portrait of the antebellum South, one that romanticized white paternalism and African American slavery and glorified the valor of Confederate soldiers.”¹⁹

The Lost Cause myths created a racialized Southern history even as it made white society organic, without social division. All white men were courageous and supported the Confederacy, all Southern belles were proper, and all slaves were faithful. These mythologized types became embedded in popular culture—another form of public space—in famous movies such as *Birth of a Nation*. “In this way, the plantation legend, taken over by the emerging culture industry, ceased to be exclusively a myth of the

¹⁹ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, xi.

South,” Wolfgang Shivelbusch claims. “Instead, it became a part of the escapist dream factory that would ultimately appropriate all periods of human history and that would later be known as Hollywood.”²⁰ For southerners the best vindication after the war was the national acceptance of the Lost Cause. Novels about the South became very popular in the North since they described a type of mythical land that public audiences enjoyed reading about. However, even though these stories were not true, they evolved into the widely accepted history of the South, in part because they also complemented the histories of the Dunning school. The harsh reality that blacks experienced in these periods were either not included or, more often, the stereotypes simply imposed on them

More importantly, the Lost Cause was a form of power. White southerners used the ideas of the Lost Cause to justify white supremacy. The defense of antebellum slavery, for example, was used to justify segregation and impose stability and “order.” White southerners argued that blacks were dependent on the restraints of slavery and that they would need restraints to function outside of slavery. Janney claims, “By imaging the interracial place of the ‘Old South’ and the ‘blackness of Reconstruction,’ Southern whites rewrote their history to make their white supremacist laws seem not only natural, but necessary.”²¹ By changing the history of the race relations in the antebellum South, southerners disenfranchised the future for blacks.

Historians tend to focus on the impact of the Lost Cause on the memory of the Civil War, but it is important to emphasize its influence on the memory of

²⁰ Wolfgang Shivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (New York: Picador, 2001), 97.

²¹ Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past*, 139.

Reconstruction. During Reconstruction, Lost Cause ideas were used to justify the violent actions of white Southerners. In the Lost Cause version of Hamburg, for example, white Carolinians claimed they were innocent victims of the black militia's harassment. The Meriwether monument represents a permanent memory of this, a preeminent Lost Cause version of history. And as David Blight shows, the Lost Cause was also used as the vehicle by which the white Americans, North and South, reconciled themselves in the thirty years following the war. Both sides agreed that the common valor of both, and not issues of race or slavery or emancipation, were the war's worthiest legacies. In that way the Lost Cause prevented the nation from fully understanding the problems blacks faced in the South. It has and in some ways continues to obscure the nation's view of African-American history/ The South, in particular, has still not fully confronted the issues involved in how to remember blacks in its history. For Southerners to move past the problems of race, David Goldfield argues that whites and blacks need to create a common memory, and in order to create this memory, whites and blacks must accept each other's past. "What is needed is not so much a merger of Robert E. Lee and Martin Luther King Jr.," Goldfield writes, "as a better understanding of both, an appreciation that one can accept the past without distorting it or denigrating others."²²

During the 1960s historians began to question the meaning of the white monuments in modern society. This might be considered the beginning of de-Confederation. This new research created a backlash that consisted of white Southerners refusing to let go of Lost Cause memory. These Southerners pushed for *more*

²² Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002),296.

memorialization of the Civil War, especially since the 1960s was also the centennial period of commemoration. The contest, in some ways, is ongoing. The backlash continues to be evident in modern examples of re-Confederation; de-Confederation is most evident in the resistance to it, but especially in black-led movements that push for the inclusion and the memory of black history. Perhaps the best-known example is in Richmond, Virginia, the capital of the Confederacy, with the creation of the Arthur Ashe Memorial on Monument Avenue. The monument honored a black tennis player on what had been a boulevard dedicated to the heroic marble memorials to Southern white valor: Robert E. Lee, J.E.B Stuart, Stonewall Jackson, and Jefferson Davis. More recently, though only in response to a violent racial tragedy with echoes of Hamburg, the state of South Carolina has taken down the Confederate flag that had flown on the State House grounds for more than 60 years. As de-Confederation and perhaps African-Americanization continues, more monuments like Ashe's might be created, and older monuments to white supremacy might be reinterpreted. As Cynthia Mills argues, "With preservation has come the opportunity to reinterpret the monuments and make decisions about how they can continue to function."²³

In order for the South to overcome the racialized versions of memory, Southerners have to confront and accept the past, both black and white. As South Carolina in particular deals with current racial tensions as well as its separate pasts, Carolinians should educate themselves on how the memory of the past was often altered. Memory, as Charles Reagan Wilson argues, "brings attention to the issues of social

²³ Mills and Simpson, *Monuments to The Lost Cause*, xxv.

identity, cultural legitimacy, power and political norms.”²⁴ As the issues of southern past still haunt southerners today, it is important for southerners to accept the past, understand it, and learn from it. “Part of the tangled knot of race is the way the country remembers Reconstruction,” Burton argues, “which is probably more important to public memory than memory of the war itself.”²⁵

The following two chapters analyze the white manipulation of the memory of the Hamburg massacre. The first chapter follows the immediate reaction of the event in 1876 to the political rise of Benjamin Tillman due to his outspoken support of his participation of the murders. The chapter uses newspaper accounts from around the nation to describe the different perspectives of how the story was told in the South compared to the North. The nation initially condemned the white Carolinians actions, yet other regions which did not support the national government’s involvement in the safety of the black Carolinians. Without the support of the national government the white Carolinians were not charged for terrorism; instead several of the men involved used Hamburg as a political platform. The two most influential leaders involved at Hamburg who were elected were Matthew C. Butler and Ben Tillman. Both men boasted of their actions at Hamburg which helped them gain support in subsequent elections. The chapter examines how white Carolinians used their political power to alter southern memory.

The second chapter analyzes the creation of the McKie Meriwether monument. Similar to the first chapter, it relies on newspapers to examine how white Carolinians

²⁴ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980), xiii.

²⁵ Orville Vernon Burton, "The South as "Other," the Southerner as "Stranger", *The Journal of Southern History* 79.1 (2013): 7-50.

supported their version of history. By the 1900s southerners viewed the Hamburg event as a heroic moment. Tillman's national race talks served as an initial proposal for a monument dedicated to the heroes of Reconstruction. Throughout his speeches he praised and justified the actions of white Carolinians, especially the Hamburg event. J. P. DeLaughter suggested for the creation of the monument in 1912. After support from the state, the monument was erected in 1916 as a reminder to all southerners of the sacrifices made by white Carolinians during Reconstruction. However, the monument purposely leaves out the true story of the Hamburg event.

White Southerners changed the history of this period to uphold white supremacy. The Meriwether monument exemplifies the manipulation. By 1916, Hamburg was an event white Southerners honored and commemorated. As Cynthia Mills argues, however, "the meaning of public sculpture is not fixed but changes as audiences' experience and beliefs grow increasingly distant from original understandings."²⁶ The memory of Hamburg should not be forgotten, but its meaning need not be fixed. The Meriwether monument should represent the violence that blacks faced during Reconstruction, and it should become a tool to help Southerners end the struggle over race and memory.

²⁶ Mills and Simpson, *Monuments to the Lost Cause*, vx.

CHAPTER ONE

FROM HORRIFYING TO HEROIC

White Carolinians manipulated the memory of the Hamburg massacre in order to support the reestablishment of white Democratic control within South Carolina. The event was a national headline and areas outside the South were shocked by the blatant racial violence. White Carolinians however refused to let the nation criticize their behavior, so they created justifications for their actions. Through these justifications white Carolinians placed the blame of the violence on the black militia. Several of the white men argued that the black militia taunted them and initiated the conflict, which led to the murder of six black men and one white. Newspapers throughout the South tended overwhelmingly to support the white Carolinian view by only publishing the white memory of the event. These newspaper reports provide a clear picture of how white Carolinians manipulated the memory of Hamburg to belittle black men and uplift whites as heroes.

Immediately after the massacre, black Carolinians sought help from the United States government for protection, but the government refused to send federal troops to South Carolina because it did not view the massacre as a national issue. Black Carolinians understood that the violence represented more than just racial hatred: it was political violence. The type of violence separated the massacre from other forms of violence around the nation. Their violence was a form of terrorism. White Carolinians used it in order to regain political power within the state.

As southern whites reclaimed power, South Carolina blacks lost control over the advancements made during Reconstruction. White southerners used the power they acquired to change public memory. The white Carolinian memory became more dominant as the white men involved at Hamburg were elected to public office. Just a few years after the massacre, white politicians of South Carolina boasted over their involvement. It became a political platform used by leaders such as Matthew Butler and Ben Tillman. As Fitzhugh Brundage argues, the ones who controlled the memory controlled the public space, and vice versa. Once white southerners had control of South Carolina they were able to alter the memory of the massacre, and impose it not just in history books, but on the landscape.²⁷ As Stephen Budiansky suggests, “The way it made a victim of the bully and a bully of the victim, turned the very act of Southern white violence into wounded Southern innocence, turned the very blood of their African American victims into an affront against Southern white decency.”²⁸ The memory of Hamburg evolved as white Carolinians became increasingly dominant in politics. Ultimately the massacre became a heroic moment for white southerners even as white memory created a false history of blacks which blamed them for the violence.

Many terms were used to describe the event at Hamburg such as the “Hamburg matter,” “Hamburg business,” “Hamburg slaughter,” and “Hamburg affair,” but none of these had a lasting impact. Two very different terms ultimately did, and they encapsulated the struggle for memory. Both were political, because each term created a

²⁷ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 6.

²⁸ Stephen Budiansky, *The Bloody Shirt: Terror After Appomattox* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2008), 5.

contrasting story. *Massacre* was the term of choice for blacks and northern Republicans. *Massacre* suggested the sheer violence of Hamburg. *Massacre* has also become the preferred description for modern historians, for, as Budiansky recently argues, Hamburg was a form of terrorism. White Carolinians came to Hamburg with the purpose of murdering blacks for political gain.

Massacre was frequently used immediately after the event, but as white southerners began to manipulate memory, it was used less. By 1900 *riot* became the lasting white definition. White Carolinians used *riot* in order to justify their violence. The white men involved at Hamburg defended their actions and claimed it was a mere political disturbance, a donnybrook of sorts, because riots were often associated with disorderly political events, such as the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. During the strike, railroad workers fought back against militia who tried to reopen railroad services. Similarly, white Carolinians defended their actions by claiming Hamburg too was a political disturbance. It was not a question of moral culpability but rather a question of political interest and the ability to defend and oppose it. Because reclaiming political sovereignty for white men was a heroic endeavor and because they could associate Northerners and blacks with disorder, the white men who used the term *riot* uplifted their roles as heroes, restorers of peace and order, and not murderers.

Immediately after Hamburg, most national newspapers, including the *New York Times*, called the event a massacre. Many Northerners were shocked by the racial violence that still existed within the South. The term *massacre* insinuates that the perpetrators were uncivilized, which was ironic since blacks were often viewed as

uncivilized. This was sometimes evident in international coverage. “But the whites of South Carolina are men of our own race and religion, inheriting English laws, and belonging to a nation which, in the main, is as full of respect for life as any community in the world,” A London newspaper claimed, “Yet unless they have been grossly maligned, they have done a deed as detestable in its atrocity as many of the murders committed by the half-savage Turkish cital.”²⁹

Still, for most people who used the term, the stakes were political. Moral outrage could not conceal the deeply political purpose of using it in order to keep Southern Democrats from reestablishing power. No better example of this exists than Governor Daniel Chamberlain’s letter to President Ulysses S. Grant. Chamberlain argued, “The recent massacre at Hamburg, in this State, is a matter so closely connected with the public peace of this State that I desire to call your attention to it for the purpose of laying before you my views of its effect, and the measures which it may become necessary to adopt to prevent the recurrence of similar events.”³⁰ For Chamberlain, Hamburg was not just a local problem. It threatened to imperil society as a whole.

Black Southerners promoted the term massacre to expose the racial violence of the South. After a meeting in Charleston in July 1876, a group of blacks sought vindication for the murder of the six men at Hamburg. They argued that “the massacre of colored citizens at Hamburg, S. C., is unworthy of any civilized community, and deserves the censure and condemnation of the civilized world.”³¹ While South Carolina blacks

²⁹ *New York Times*, August 17, 1876.

³⁰ *Yorkville Enquirer*, August 17, 1876.

³¹ *The Anderson Intelligencer*, July 27, 1876.

also emphasized the racial element of the violence, they argued that the violence was a national issue because it influenced political elections. Hamburg, then, could only be defined as a massacre because it was fundamentally political violence.³²

Just as predictably white Carolinians blamed the black militia for starting the riot, and Southern white newspapers created images of riotous blacks to contest black descriptions. These stories uplifted whites as victims who only resulted to violence for self-defense. A paralleled theme existed in numerous newspaper articles that depicted blacks as rioters and whites as peace keepers. For instance, the *Anderson Intelligencer* reported a story about a “riot” in Charleston, also in 1876 “A bloody and disgraceful riot was inaugurated in the city of Charleston by a mob of infuriated Republican negroes, who were determined to kill some colored Democrats who had organized a Democratic Club.” It read, “The white people were informed of the plan, and for the purpose of escorting the colored men home, formed a procession with six white men around each colored Democrat, and marched up King street in safety.”³³ The language is so similar to articles about Hamburg that substituting the word “Hamburg” for “Charleston” would not seem out of place.

In fact, whites called every black disturbance a riot, including the Ellenton Riot, Charleston Riot, and Ned Tennant Riot. In each of these events, blacks were murdered by whites, who were never punished for their actions. And because white Carolinians seized control of the term, just as firmly as they seized control of the state, they were free

³² Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009).

³³ The *Anderson Intelligencer*, September 14, 1876.

afterwards to control the memory of the event. By the turn of the 20th century, of course, white memory had become dominant. The remembrance of Hamburg had evolved to the point where black memory had been largely suppressed. But that was not a given. Suppression was immediately contested.

Immediately after Hamburg, as the massacre was publicized in newspapers around the nation, more attention was brought to the racial violence in South Carolina. Black Carolinians pleaded the U.S. government for help. They also sought justice. White southerners purposely used racial terror as a tool to regain power throughout the South, they argued. “We (black Carolinians) invoke the consideration of this whole nation and the powers of the Federal Government,” some were quoted in the *New York Times*, “to see to it that the equal protection under this Government be maintained throughout this nation. . . so that safety to life and property, and the right to vote as a conscience and dictate to every citizen shall be forever secured to all throughout this freed land.”³⁴ They feared—correctly, as it turned out—that racial violence would ultimately be used to strip them not merely of their political power but of the civil and political rights they had gained during Reconstruction.

Events would show, though, that if Hamburg was a national story, only black Carolinians believed it was a national issue. Black Carolinians used two arguments in trying to convince the nation to provide help. The first was that black Carolinians would be unable to protect themselves against more and maybe bloodier violence without the aid of the federal government; the second claimed that the Hamburg violence would have

³⁴ *New York Times*, July 24, 1876.

a political impact throughout the nation. Black politicians such as Richard H. Cain and Robert Smalls used their positions in order to build a broader platform against racial violence of the South. However, they ran up against other politicians who claimed to be skeptical about involving the national government in so-called “state” issues. This divide would also ultimately influence the memory of the event.

In July 1876, black Carolinians met in Charleston to protest the murders. The speaker, Richard H. Cain, rejected the justifications of whites—that blacks started the violence. Cain, before the war a minister and abolitionist in the North, was a leader of stature who promoted black rights before and during Reconstruction. He moved to Charleston to become involved in the new political system which promised black leaders the chance to become politicians, and from 1868 to 1870 he served in the South Carolina State Senate. In 1872 he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives where he served until 1874. During the Hamburg meeting, Cain pointed out the hypocrisies of the white Carolinians’ justifications. He offered a hypothetical scenario in which two black men interrupted a group of whites on parade. If the black men had tried to push through—as the white men of Hamburg had done—the white men would have refused to let them pass: and would have violently punished the black men for trying. Neither would the white Carolinians have let a group of black men take their guns away like the white Carolinians tried to do with the black militia. And yet the blacks at Hamburg acted completely differently. So, Cain argued, the white men could not possibly think or use these justifications as credible ones.³⁵

³⁵ Thornbrough, *Black Reconstructionist* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 61-62.

The perpetrators needed to be punished. Though Reconstruction was coming to an end, as were the social advancements made by blacks, black Carolinians believed that as a group they could make sure the white Carolinians were held accountable for the murder of innocent blacks. “The negro in this country will not always be docile,” Cain argued. “The rising generation are as brave and daring as white men. Already that spirit is taking deep root in the minds of thousands who have nothing to lose in the contest, and who would rejoice in the opportunity to sacrifice their lives for their liberty.”³⁶ Of course it can be argued that the “rising generation” of daring black men were exactly what Carolina whites feared the most.

Smalls was another influential black leader who brought Hamburg to national attention. Smalls’ life illustrated the advancement of blacks during Reconstruction. He was born a slave in 1839 but escaped during the Civil War. Smalls grew up as a house slave, but learned different skills which allowed him to work a variety of jobs. These had included waiter, lamplighter, stevedore, and foreman in Charleston harbor. While he worked for John Simmons, a rigger in Charleston, Smalls learned how to sail. Despite paying part of his income to his owner, Smalls earned a living performing these special skills, and even saved enough money before the war to purchase his wife, Hanna Jones, and daughter, Elizabeth Lydia. But he never had to use that money because he escaped with his family—famously, in 1862, by piloting a boat called *The Planter* out of

³⁶Thornbrough, *Black Reconstructionist*, 62.

Charleston harbor—to freedom during the Civil War.³⁷ After the war, he served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1874 to 1879 then again from 1881 to 1887.

In 1876 Smalls fought against a bill meant to remove Federal troops from the South and station them instead in the Western states and territories. Smalls argued that troops should not be removed from South Carolina as long as blacks needed protection. To bring attention to the racial violence black Carolinians faced, he read aloud in the House a letter that he received describing the Hamburg Massacre from an eyewitness. The debate over Smalls' proposed amendment was contentious. Predictably, some were not sympathetic to black Carolinians, for instance Congressman Julian Hartridge, from Georgia, who blamed the blacks for the incident. Other Congressmen questioned the validity of the letter because Smalls refused to state the name of its author to protect him from white retribution. Congressman Joseph Rainey, of South Carolina, however, defended Smalls' request by again pointing out the irony of white arguments. *The New York Times* described Rainey's speech: "He charged that nowhere would men be permitted to drive a wagon through the ranks of a military procession, and because a South Carolina militia company would not break ranks to permit two chivalric gentlemen of ancient ancestry to pass, the surrender of their arms was demanded by persons who had no right to make the demand, no authority to receive the surrender, and they were shot down by an armed mob because they dared to refuse."³⁸ Rainey used phrases such as "chivalric gentleman" and "ancient ancestry" to mock the white Southerners who often

³⁷Holt, *Black Over White* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 48.

³⁸*New York Times*, July 16, 1876.

thought of themselves as gallant knights from Sir Walter Scott novels—but who were, in reality, merely leaders and members of “an armed mob.”

For some congressmen the violence in South Carolina was an issue of local law and order, not a political demonstration of terrorism aimed at the heart of Reconstruction. These congressmen claimed that Hamburg was an example of local violence and should be dealt with at a local level. Congressman Omar D. Conger, from Michigan, argued that if the army was divided policing all the violence within states, no army would be left to defend the frontier. They did not notice and maybe by 1876 did not care to notice the impact that racial violence would have on the South politically. However Smalls understood the racial violence would influence black southerners’ rights. Without the Federal government’s help, he believed that more violence would occur in South Carolina, as it did.

When the racial violence at Hamburg and the future of Reconstruction were considered national issues, the context was narrowly political and partisan. Numerous newspapers, for instance, argued that Hamburg was an event of national importance because it would impact the presidential election involving Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel J. Tilden. Republicans used Hamburg as a reason to vote against Tilden since he was in the same political party as the white Carolinians involved at Hamburg. For instance, a writer in the *Ohio Gallipolis Journal* argued, “I do say that the worst wards, the worst States, are the Democratic States. I do say that the Hamburg murderers are supporters of Tilden and Hendricks. I do say that the haters of liberty- the assassins of colored men, women, children- the masked wretches who ride to hunt of the freeman and

shoot him down like a beast, disregarding the prayers and tears of wife and children, I do say that these men are not for Hayes and Wheeler.”³⁹ But the rhetoric of injustice was often deployed as an instrument of political gain, and Democrats were all too happy to point this out. As *The New Orleans Republic* explained, “The massacre of colored citizens at Hamburg in South Carolina continues to excite deeply the public mind, not so much on account of the occurrence itself as because of its peculiar relations and because of the year in which it occurred. . . This is a presidential year.”⁴⁰ Writer E.L. Godkin warned readers in *The Nation* that they should be weary of Republicans “waving the bloody shirt,” which was the colloquial term used to describe Republican attempts to capitalize on instances of violence in the South. Godkin condemned the actions of the white men at Hamburg but claimed that the event should not be used to impact the election. “To vote for Hayes, for instance, without regard to other considerations, merely to show Southerners that we disapprove of such conduct,” he wrote, “would be little short of folly.”⁴¹

Congressman Oliver Morton, of Indiana, wanted to print copies of President Grant’s message about Hamburg to hand out in the Senate, because he was shocked to hear that Tilden had not acknowledged Hamburg in his public letters. But Morton’s tactic only highlighted the political nature of silence. Why should Tilden comment on it, asked the *The Illinois Daily Argus*? America was a violent place. Nothing special attended those deaths. Hamburg was a local problem so Tilden and Hayes did not have to

³⁹ *Gallipolis Journal*, August 24, 1876.

⁴⁰ *New Orleans Republic*, July 29, 1876.

⁴¹ Thornbough, *The Reconstruction Era* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 371.

comment on it. “The reason why Tilden and Hayes made no reference to the Hamburg massacre is that it did not call for a reference from them. The massacre of Custer’s command was a much more serious affair, but Tilden and Hendricks did not refer even to it. The Molly Maguire riots in Pennsylvania were quite as important, and Hayes and Wheeler did not reference them. The Hamburg tragedy was a local affair; it took place in a state over which the two northern governors have no authority.”⁴² Of course, that too was cynically calculating. Those mere “northern Governors” were running for the presidency of the United States, and one would soon be responsible for Reconstruction.

Congressmen who supported the printing of Grant’s response to Hamburg argued that if more people understood what happened, it was more likely that something would be done about it. They argued that the black Carolinians could not defend themselves against white Carolinians without national help because the violence was unlike other violence throughout the country: namely it had a political purpose. “It was true there were murders in the Northern States, sometimes for gain, sometimes for passion, sometimes on account of hate, but there were no murders committed to control the politics of the state,” Senator Allen Thurman, from Ohio, argued.⁴³ Thurman supported Morton’s claim that “these papers showed the importance of spreading the matter before the American people. A terrorism now existed in South Carolina and nearly every other Southern State, which prevented punishment for killing a negro.”⁴⁴

⁴² *The Daily Argus*, August 17, 1876.

⁴³ *New York Times*, August 6, 1876.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, August 6, 1876.

The matter of whether Hamburg should be considered a local or national problem effectively ended after the election of Wade Hampton in November of 1876. Southern Democrats in South Carolina, as elsewhere over time, had “redeemed” their power in state governments, reestablished control over politics, and ultimately eliminated the political, civil, and social advancements of blacks. The outcome that black Carolinians had feared became a reality. They not only had no power to protect themselves from further violence, but none to protect themselves against non-lethal forms of intimidation and discrimination. One of those non-lethal forms was the development of heroic white memory.

As early as 1877 it was common for South Carolina’s white newspapers to judge a white candidate’s qualifications by assessing his role at Hamburg. That trend is most evident in Matthew Butler’s election to the U.S Senate in 1877. While some used the term massacre to condemn him for his actions, those who supported him urged that the event was a riot, and that he was a peacekeeper. It was important locally for his political career that he was at Hamburg, but he also wanted to defend his national reputation. The national backlash against Butler over Hamburg when he attempted to assume his Senate seat even forced him to begin denying his participation to a national audience. The *New Orleans Daily Democrat* defended Butler in terms he would have appreciated. ”Time and again,” the newspaper recorded, “it was fully and clearly shown that General Butler, so far from having instigated the Hamburg riot was in the highest sense a peacemaker, and did all in his power to prevent the bloody affair.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The New Orleans *Daily Democrat*, September 7, 1879.

Indeed, several sitting Senators did not support admitting Butler to the Senate. Senator Roscoe Conkling, from New York, was particularly outspoken in his disapproval. “Conkling, in the forty-first congress, made one of his most daring speeches against the admission of Butler to a seat in the senate, an account of his alleged connection with the Hamburg massacre,” one newspaper reported. “He boldly denounced him as a murderer, and in a manner which sent a thrill through every listener in the crowded galleries, Conkling thundered out: ‘And now he comes here with his hands dripping with human gore, demanding a seat in this body.’”⁴⁶ Other senators supported denying Butler by claiming he was a murderer. Those against him claimed “it may be said that a State has a right to choose any one, no matter how base, to represent it in the Senate. But the Senate has a right to reject criminals, and the right of a State to choose any one it pleases does not include the right to free criminals from the grasp of justice and thrust them into the highest councils of the nation.”⁴⁷

The News and Herald of South Carolina took note of Butler’s controversial national image but defended his actions. “No one supposes that the Democratic Legislature of South Carolina either would or could please the Northern Radicals in their choice of a United States Senator. General Butler is known to us all as one of the most moderate and Conservative men in South Carolina, and knowing this fact, it is not necessary for us to enlarge upon it.”⁴⁸ In reply to the accusations against him, Butler argued, “It is true that I have been charged with instigating the Hamburg riot, by those

⁴⁶ *Press and Daily Dakotian*, February 10, 1881.

⁴⁷ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, June 16, 1877.

⁴⁸ *The News and Herald*, January 4, 1877.

who had a political end to accomplish by so charging me, but I had no more to do with instigating that riot than you had, and no more to do with killing the negroes than you had.”⁴⁹ Another newspaper article quoted a companion of Butler who claimed, “About that affair, by the way, Butler told me that he was not at Hamburg and did not know anything about it till it was over.”⁵⁰ Butler himself was quoted as saying “I had no more control over that mob than I would have over a northeast hurricane. I did try as long as I could to prevent what outrages I could, but it would have been impossible for me or any other human being to control it.”⁵¹ Butler also described an encounter with Governor Chamberlain after the affair in which Chamberlain supported Butler’s claim that he did not participate in the massacre. Butler even defined Hamburg as murder: “Certainly, that is murder. There is not civilized man can justify that thing, but I had no control over it.”⁵²

Of course, Butler’s claim of powerlessness in the face of a “hurricane” was specious. This was no white mob at Hamburg—but a highly organized, paramilitary presence, and also by its quasi-military character the means by which white violence took on the redemptive, heroic quality of saving the State from the black mob. For that matter, crowds of white men apparently could, actually, be controlled. Hampton had famously “controlled” a white mob on the steps of the State House in 1877, and as will be

⁴⁹ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, June 16, 1877.

⁵⁰ *Anderson Intelligencer*, September 23, 1880.

⁵¹ *National Republic*, July 24, 1882.

⁵² *National Republic*, July 24, 1882.

described shortly, Butler and Benjamin Ryan Tillman both did so in Edgefield seventeen years later during a political campaign rally.

By 1894, by which time the shadow of Jim Crow was lengthening, whites were freer to argue over the nature of their heroic narrative. Where fault lines existed in white memory, they tended to involve class issues, and they developed over time. Butler was associated with the chivalric Democratic southern class, elements of which were particularly strong in South Carolina, so he claimed that he showed restraint at Hamburg. But Butler's opponent in the 1894 election for the U.S. Senate, Benjamin Ryan Tillman, took the opposite tack. Tillman *celebrated* his role in the massacre in order to show that he was a heroic man of action—not a peacemaker or a supporter of restraint. He also seized upon the term riot as the proper way to define it. “Have any of you ever heard of the Hamburg riot?” he asked rhetorically at a convention in 1893. “I do not suppose there is a man who has not, because it was heralded all over the Union and held up as a typical southern outrage. . . I am a Hamburg rioter, and I desire to ask if you would take me to be a man who would murder negroes in cold blood and without provocation?”⁵³ By this time, most South Carolina whites supported Tillman's view of the event. One newspaper called out others who still used the term *massacre* as hypocrites. “Those who have harped on the Hamburg and Ellenton riots- massacres, they termed them- may now realize, since the matter has been brought to their own doors that rare antipathy is a real and living

⁵³ Vermont *Phoenix*, November 3, 1893.

issue, and that when the clash comes Northerners are just as apt to kill negroes in riot blood as southerners.”⁵⁴

The Abbeville Press and Banner acknowledged the importance of Hamburg in state politics. “I am very curious to know, “one correspondent wrote, “what will finally become a recommendation for office in South Carolina. Our politics have already reached that point when one’s presence and participation in the Hamburg riot is the *sin qua non* to the highest office within the gift of the people.”⁵⁵ The memory of the event at Hamburg became even more notorious as Tillman and Butler engaged in a spirited contest for the Senate seat in the summer and fall of 1894. “The Democracy of the Palmetto State has never enjoyed such lively times,” the *Arizona Weekly* reported, “since the days of the Hamburg massacre.”⁵⁶ By this time, the white Carolinians involved at Hamburg were viewed as heroes and it was important for Butler and Tillman to remind voters of their actions. The election caught the attention of national newspapers because of the controversial reputation of both men who could have influence over national issues when elected. For instance, the *Arizona Weekly* that captured the campaign’s essence. “The Democratic joint canvass in South Carolina goes on with unabated vigor and theatrical effect,” the newspaper reported. “Governor Tillman misses no opportunity to call Senator Butler various sorts of liar and villain, while the Senator eagerly takes

⁵⁴ *The Watchman and Southron*, October 19, 1898.

⁵⁵ *Abbeville Press and Banner*, July 25, 1894.

⁵⁶ *Arizona Weekly Journal- Minor* August, 29, 1894.

advantage of every occasion to denounce the Governor as a fraud of many different varieties and a hypocrite of innumerable shades and grades.”⁵⁷

Butler and Tillman appealed to different followers. Butler was viewed by Tillman’s supporters as an aristocratic Carolinian who was part of the class that Tillman wanted to remove from power. Tillman’s followers were typically middle-class farmers who were underrepresented before the Civil War. *The Laurens Advertiser* distinguished between the followers humorously: “The men in the audience yelled for Tillman and the pretty women on the piazza clapped their hands and waved their fans for Butler.”⁵⁸

Women on the piazza could be assumed to be stereotyped “ladies,” not hardworking farm wives, who instead of yelling just “clapped their hands and waved their fans.” With that comment the newspaper was making light of the class Butler represented. Stephen Kantrowitz argues that Tillman thought of the aristocratic class as “un-manly, unproductive, urban aristocrats,” who, according to Tillman, “hardly embodied the kind of white manhood that could lead the commonwealth through troubled times.”⁵⁹ Tillman often referred to the Democratic Party that was dominated by aristocrats as “that interesting old lady.” He argued that the “old lady” was hurting the growth of Carolinian farmers. Under his leadership, on the other hand, the party could become a “nurturing household member with an important role in the process of social and economic regeneration.”⁶⁰ Although women could not vote, gender became a way to call attention

⁵⁷ *Arizona Weekly Journal Minor*, August 29, 1894.

⁵⁸ *Laurens Advertiser*, July 24, 1894.

⁵⁹ Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 112.

⁶⁰ Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*, 120.

to each candidate's masculinity, and the question of each man's involvement at Hamburg—the sheer physicality of action there—was intertwined with those dynamics.

Tillman had used his involvement with Hamburg throughout his political career, including his successful campaign for governor in 1890. According to Kantrowitz, it was important for Tillman to remind white Carolinians of his actions during Reconstruction since he did not fight in the Civil War. “In the 1880s,” Kantrowitz argues, “when most leading Democrats could point to a Confederate war record, the memory and legacy of 1876 served Tillman extremely well. Tillman's Red-shirt service became evident of his personal courage, but more important . . . his boundless commitment to white male authority.”⁶¹ At a Farmers Alliance meeting in Charleston in 1888, “B.R. Tillman made a personal and abusive speech . . . that would reflect little credit on anyone,” one newspaper reported, aware that lowcountry, aristocratic Charleston was often a target of Tillman's abuse. “He termed that the people of Charleston arrant cowards, and blamed them for ‘not even killing a nigger,’ boasting that he had participated in the Hamburg affair.”⁶² Tillman indeed boasted at the meeting. “I believe, before Almighty God, that but for that Hamburg riot Chamberlain would have been governor of South Carolina and the state as safe today for the republicans as Vermont or Massachusetts,” he said. “I proclaim it loud that I was one of the Hamburg rioters who dared even the devil to save the state.”⁶³ Tillman's political campaigns helped to memorialize Hamburg as a heroic moment for white Carolinians.

⁶¹ Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*, 120- 121.

⁶² Manning *Times*, September 5, 1888.

⁶³ Columbus *Journal*, September 26, 1888.

Tillman gained a large following during his time as governor and had even established a larger movement and political machine to which he had lent his name. Butler needed to undermine Tillman's reputation in order to compete with him. During their canvass in 1894, Butler claimed that Tillman was not at Hamburg when the fighting began. He also claimed that he had a list of men who supported his accusation. Tillman, Butler said, was "not to be found" when the fighting at Hamburg began.⁶⁴ The accusation was an attack on Tillman's honor, as Francis Butler Simkins argues. "In other words, Tillman was told that he was a coward, a bulldozer, a liar, and a bribe taker!" Simkins writes. "It was a series of insults which thousands of South Carolinians believed could be honorably met only by bloodshed."⁶⁵ (The term bulldozer is derived from the physical abuse of slaves: "bulldozed" blacks were punished with severe beatings or whippings, in "doses fit only for a bull.") Uncharacteristically, however, Tillman remained calm as Butler castigated him, which kept his supporters from rioting against Butler.

Tillman responded by claiming to have a list of fifty men who saw him at Hamburg during the fighting. How effective such lists might have been in establishing credibility is debatable. Most white Carolinians probably supported Tillman's claim because he was always outspoken about his involvement at Hamburg. Unlike Tillman, Butler tried to downplay his involvement in the violence while in the U.S. Senate from 1877 to 1894. As one newspaper described the difference, Tillman "was not ashamed of

⁶⁴ Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*, 161.

⁶⁵ Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944), 269.

having been at Hamburg, though General Butler did get ashamed and denied he had been there when he was trying to get a seat in the Senate.”⁶⁶ The context explains why Tillman did not resort to violence against Butler for making claims against his honor. Tillman understood that it was well established in the community—the ultimate judge of all things honorable and dishonorable--that he had been at Hamburg. He did not have to “take” Butler’s lie. Ultimately, it was not a threat to his reputation and therefore it could not shame him.

Butler’s denial of involvement during the controversy over his assumption of the Senate seat in 1877 hurt him badly in 1894 when white Carolinians partial to Tillman remembered his remarks. At Edgefield, as Butler debated Tillman, a riot almost occurred when an audience member brought the discrepancy into the open. A local newspaper described the tension at the event. “I have seen trouble in crowds before. I have seen the eyes of men dance and muscles quiver,” he wrote. “I have seen the hand go to the pistol pocket, the glimmer of the bright weapon and the smoke clear away after the trigger was pulled, but I have never seen wilder or more ferocious expressions in the eyes of human beings than was exhibited here today. I looked at any moment to see a shot fired and to see the fray commence.”⁶⁷ The *Anderson Intelligencer* also noted the tension. “The trouble occurred during Senator Butler’s speech, and was caused by the denunciation by Butler of a man who had insulted him by saying that he had denied his participation in the Hamburg riot at Washington.”⁶⁸ The crowd was outraged with Butler for calling his

⁶⁶ *The Watchman and Southern*, July 11, 1894.

⁶⁷ *Laurens Advertiser*, July 24, 1894.

⁶⁸ *Anderson Intelligencer*, July 25, 1894.

accuser a liar, but quelled by both candidates before violence ensued. As one newspaper noted, “General Butler quickly recovered his wits and worked masterfully to check the riot which seemed imminent. Tillman did likewise. Each appealed to men of both sides to stop jowring. They begged those trying to get on the stand to stay off and those who were already on to get off.”⁶⁹ Both Tillman and Butler calmed themselves down in order to set an example for the crowd. Butler continued his speech and at the end presented a certificate signed by men who claimed that Tillman was not at Hamburg. In response, Tillman produced his own certificate with names of more people who insisted that he was there. Several men from the crowd, who were at Hamburg but were not on Tillman’s certificate, shouted in support of Tillman. It was obvious to one newspaper that Butler could not compete with Tillman’s supporters.⁷⁰

It is an ironic but also telling aside that Carolinians used the term riot to describe the threat of violence during the debate—a riot here being a political disturbance which reflected positively on the independence of white men and their inability to be bulldozed. “Riot,” of course, had been their preferred term in ennobling their violence at Hamburg and defending their conduct, while blaming “mob violence” on black Carolinians...

Tillman defeated Butler in the election, and served in the Senate until his death in 1918. During his time in office, Hamburg was brought up on numerous occasions. Tillman never denied or belittled his participation. He understood Hamburg’s incandescent memory in South Carolina’s political culture, and he openly celebrated his

⁶⁹ *Laurens Advertiser*, July 24, 1894.

⁷⁰ *Laurens Advertiser*, July 24, 1894.

involvement. And from Tillman's memory of the massacre—one of redemptive, heroic, masculine violence—white Carolinians sought to commemorate Hamburg with the creation of the Meriwether monument in 1916. Though Tillman was not directly involved in the monument, his celebration of Hamburg created a heroic memory of the event that white Carolinians wanted to ennoble permanently, as part of the foundation of white supremacy.

In fact, to focus too much on Tillman and Butler is to obscure what the Meriwether monument ultimately represented. It represented a white story that was remarkably well shaped and durable very shortly after Hamburg, and long before the story became durable as the moment itself. And it was the ordinary white Carolinians who were involved at Hamburg—not just their leaders—who came to be celebrated within the state.

Indeed, despite the calls for justice both locally and nationally immediately after Hamburg, especially those of black leaders like Smalls and Cain, none of the white men responsible for the murders were punished for the crime. A coroner's inquest in August 1876 resolved that E. J. Butler, Henry Getson, Thomas Butler, Harrison Butler, John Lamar, Thomas Oliver, and John Oliver murdered the black men.⁷¹ (A coroner's inquest was the first step of the judicial process; it was used to gather evidence and interview witnesses in order to determine the cause a death within a county. Prince Rivers had organized an inquest on July 9th after finding the bodies of six black men in the

⁷¹ Gasper Loren Toole, "90 Years of Aiken County," *Memoirs of Aiken County and Its People*, http://genealogytrails.com/scar/aiken/aiken_hx2.htm, Accessed March 20, 2016.

streets of Hamburg.) Along with these seven, forty-four men of Aiken County, S.C., thirteen of Edgefield County, S.C., and thirty Georgians were found to have participated in the attack.⁷² The inquest named names: “Moses Parks came to his death at Hamburg, in Aiken County, on the night of the 8th of July last at the hands of Robert J. Butler. That James Cook came to his death at the hands of Henry Getsen, Thomas Butler, and Harrison Butler. A. T. Attaway, David Phillips, Hampton Stevens and Albert Mignard, at the hands of Thomas Oliver, John Oliver and John Lamar and others, unknown to the jury, and that the remaining men were accused generally as being present as accessories before the fact.”⁷³ Eyewitnesses at the hearing included many blacks from Hamburg,

⁷² *New York Times*, August 3, 1876.

⁷³ *The Anderson Intelligencer*, August 24, 1876. The South Carolina Attorney General, William Stone, represented the state in support of the black Carolinians at the inquest. Stone, a white northerner from Massachusetts, had served in the Union Army throughout the Civil War and fought in several major battles including Antietam, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. After the war he worked as a lawyer with the Freedman’s Bureau in South Carolina. Governor Daniel Chamberlain appointed him as the Attorney General in 1876. Not only at the coroner’s inquest, but also in his report immediately after the massacre in 1876, Stone had blamed the violence on white Carolinians. “The facts show,” Stone wrote in his report, “[that] the demand on the militia to give up their arms was made by persons without lawful authority to enforce such demand or to receive the arms had they been surrendered; that the attack on the militia to compel a compliance with this demand was without lawful excuse or justification; and that after there had been some twenty or twenty two prisoners captured and completely in the power of the captors, and without means of making further resistance, five of them were deliberately shot to death and three were severely wounded.” As the *Anderson Intelligencer* noted after Redemption, when Stone lost his position,

including Rivers, the town's Trial Justice, who claimed that he tried to stop the violence by urging the black militia to accept the demands of the white Carolinians.⁷⁴ Maybe he had done so, as well, as a means of self-defense; he must have understood that as a well-known black leader and former Union soldier he was a target. In fact he fled the town before the white Carolinians could harm him, though his house was broken into and vandalized.

If accusing and naming the murderers was a form of fairness and justice, it was also fleeting. At a second hearing the white Carolinians presented a rebuttal in which they introduced into the legal record the same claims they had been making in newspapers and public opinion. They blamed the racial tension that led to the violence on the black militia. D. S. Henderson, who had himself participated at Hamburg, brought three black men to testify that Doc Adams and Allan Attaway had asked them to join the militia with the purpose of killing white men.⁷⁵ George Henderson, one of the black men, claimed that "he and Jerry Merriwether, also colored, were asked in Hamburg by Attaway to join a company he was getting up to kill out the whites."⁷⁶ According to the

"there is no doubt that, for telling the truth about Hamburg, District Attorney Stone had rendered himself especially obnoxious to the leaders of the South Carolina Democracy." See "The Massacre of Six Colored Citizens," A Centennial Fourth of July Democratic Celebration, 15; and *The Anderson Intelligencer*, November 8, 1877.

⁷⁴ Reports and Resolutions of South Carolina in the General Assembly of the Regular Session 1876-1877 (Columbia, S.C.: Republican Printing Company, State Printers, 1877), 398-399.

⁷⁵ Yorkville *Enquirer*, August 17, 1876.

⁷⁶ Clarksville *Weekly Chronicle*, August 26, 1876.

white Carolinians, the militia threatened the whites for weeks before Hamburg. They claimed Doc Adams openly threatened several white men and challenged them to fight.

Once white Carolinians had created a false image of the black militia's menace, they blamed the militia for the deaths that occurred at Hamburg. According to a local newspaper report, white Carolinians argued that "the shooting was commenced by the negroes from the building where they were barricaded, and that young [McKie] Meriwether was killed before a single shot was fired by the whites; that the negroes, for days previous, had thrown out threats of determination to force a fight upon the whites; that ammunition and cannon had been order by the negroes and stored in their armory several days before the collision."⁷⁷ The white men argued that they came to Hamburg only to support Butler and Getzen; they were not there, they said, to create violence. A. P. Butler claimed at the hearing that "shortly after he arrived[,] firing commenced and a general riot ensued, no one in particular leading. The disturbance lasted about one hour and a half; that during the disturbance the deponent, with Gen. [Matthew C.] Butler, did all they could to restrain the mob from violence of all kind."⁷⁸

Newspapers both locally and regionally were already prepared to support this interpretation of events. One claimed, "The testimony shows that the negroes were a band of thieves and murderers; that they had no right to bear arms under the militia laws of the State; that they threatened to kill the whites; that they had for a long time so threatened, and had committed lawless acts; that in this case they defied the summons of a magistrate,

⁷⁷ *The Daily Argus*, August 17, 1876.

⁷⁸ *Anderson Intelligencer*, August 24, 1876.

and went to their armory, fully prepared to shed blood, and that they fired the first shot and drew first blood.”⁷⁹ The *Memphis Daily* argued: “For the attitude of the whites, as the evidence now shows, there was good reason, if, indeed, the disarming of the negroes was not an inexorable necessity, and we trust that the newspapers which laid before the public the statements of the negroes and the evidence taken at the inquest, will, in fairness to the accused, reproduce the later developments at the hearing before Judge Maher last Thursday.”⁸⁰

After hearing their arguments, Judge John Maher ordered the white Carolinians “to give your bail and go quietly to your homes.” Each gave bonds of \$1,000 and went their way.⁸¹ According to *the Anderson Intelligencer*, “everything passed off quietly and peaceably,” [and] “the men, with a commendable degree of decorum and dignity, dispersed towards their homes.”⁸² In fact the white Carolinians were never convicted for these crimes, and never served any time in for them. The charges against them were dropped as part of a general pattern of political deal-making after Redemption. After his contested election as governor in 1876, Wade Hampton created a committee to investigate the corruption of the South Carolina Republican party during Reconstruction. As a part of a deal to drop formal charges of corruption eventually brought by the committee against Francis L. Cardozo, Robert Smalls, and L. Cass Carpenter,

⁷⁹ *Clarksville Weekly Chronicle*, August 26, 1876.

⁸⁰ *Memphis Daily Appeal*, August 18, 1876.

⁸¹ *The Anderson Intelligencer*, August 24, 1876. Maher, raised in Barnwell, South Carolina, was elected Judge of the Second Circuit in 1871. But he was not affiliated or partial to Republican government. “Judge Maher, we are reliably informed, never was a Republican,” a newspaper later reported, “but was a lifelong Democrat and served in the Legislature for several terms subsequent to 1876.” See *The Watchman and Southron*, April 18, 1900.

⁸² *Anderson Intelligencer*, August 24, 1876.

Republicans agreed not to pursue the murder charges against the white Carolinians accused at Hamburg.⁸³

Nevertheless, these hearings and their aftermath allowed the white Carolinians to lay the groundwork of white memory of Hamburg. Newspapers around the South, for example, only reported the false stories put on record by the white Carolinians. Most newspapers in South did not include the black eyewitnesses' points of view, so those accounts were overshadowed by the white memory. Even the reports of the bail-giving Carolinians going "quietly to their homes" after the inquest served a purpose, and distorted the memory of Hamburg even further, since they depicted the white Carolinians as peace-loving and orderly followers of the law. The major elements of the white heroic memory, then, were largely in place in both the legal and historical records, as well as in white public opinion, within six weeks of the Hamburg massacre

Of course the ultimate goal of the white Carolinians, which Hamburg certainly served, was achieved with Hampton's election. The efforts of Smalls and other congressmen who had warned against white Democrats gaining power in South Carolina were futile but prophetic. "It was true," as Senator Morton of Indiana had said, that "there were murders in the Northern states, sometimes for gain, sometimes for passion, sometimes on account of hate, but there were not murders committed to control the politics of the state."⁸⁴ Several of the white Carolinians involved at Hamburg ultimately became political leaders within South Carolina, sometimes by taking the place of men

⁸³Holt, *Black Over White*, 211.

⁸⁴*New York Times*, August 6, 1876.

who had been sympathetic to black justice. Robert Smalls and other black leaders lost their positions.⁸⁵ One newspaper even blamed the massacre on Smalls since it took place in his district. It claimed Hamburg was planned in order that Smalls might unite blacks to gain their votes.⁸⁶

But the counter-revolution of Redemption was not only about office-holding and power. It was not narrowly political. As white Carolinians increased their power and control in the state, they were able to develop and use a story of revolutionary heroism at Hamburg to help elect men who supported the heroic memory of white Carolinians at Hamburg. Blacks found it impossible to challenge or alter the memory that white Carolinians created for Hamburg. With political power, white Carolinians were able to make a contested memory an official one. That memory would be celebrated for years to come with the creation of the McKie Meriwether monument.

⁸⁵ *The National Republic*, January 30, 1878.

⁸⁶ *Somerset Herald*, March 20, 1878. See also Philip Dray, *Capitol Men: The Epic Story of Reconstruction through the Lives of the First Black Congressmen* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 2008), 309.

CHAPTER TWO

CREATING A PERMANENT MEMORY

In 1916 with the creation of the McKie Meriwether monument, the white Carolinian memory of Hamburg was set in stone, figuratively and literally. By this period the southern landscape was brimming with monuments and statues honoring Confederate soldiers. But very few, if any, represented the events or people of Reconstruction. With race relations in the U.S. evolving, and with the start of World War I, white Carolinians sought to retrieve their memory of Reconstruction. It was also the time of the Dunning school, a development in the writing of history that impacted the period profoundly. Dunning school historians, such as Claude Bowers⁸⁷ wrote about the “horrors” the South faced as the defeated region was “overrun” with northern carpetbaggers and eager, office-seeking freedmen.

This version of history, like the version of Hamburg told by Carolina whites in 1876 and 1877, once again painted the South and white Southerners as victims, but the reality was far from that deception. Having been shut out both from history writing and from history as it was remembered in public commemorations, as the historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage has shown. Black southerners were voiceless against the belittling stereotype that was forced upon them from a one-sided history. The Meriwether monument represents how southern history was manipulated in order to uplift the white

⁸⁷ In 1929 Claude Bowers published *The Tragic Era*. Bowers analyzed the struggles faced in U.S politics after the Civil War. He began with the death of Lincoln and the issues dealing with freedmen. The book supports the white southern point of view of Reconstruction by representing it as a terrible period of history.

southerners and forgot the horrors faced by black southerners—both in 1876, at Hamburg, and at the time the monument was dedicated 40 years later.

The white memory of Hamburg became the permanent memory as a new generation of southerners came to power in the late 1890s. David Goldfield describes these men as a generation who venerated their fathers who fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War and did not want that memory to remain untold. “Unlike their fathers and grandfathers,” Goldfield argues, “they had not fought heroic battles, made supreme sacrifices, or redeemed a prostrate region from Yankee and black rule. . . They grew up in the shadow of giants—heroes and Redeemers.”⁸⁸ As Goldfield explains, “Honor was to remember and follow the examples of those who sacrificed,” and white southerners used this sense of honor to create a southern landscape based solely on white experience.⁸⁹

Some events were remembered during this period through large commemorations, such as the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 1913. Northern and southern veterans joined together to honor those who had died at the battle. The importance of this gathering was not what was discussed, but what was overlooked. Slavery’s role in the war, to say nothing of the current issues of race relations, were avoided during this celebration. David Blight argues that the white North and South deliberately put aside the major issue of the war in order to reconcile themselves to the other. “Neither space nor time was allowed at Gettysburg for considering the causes,

⁸⁸ David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 194.

⁸⁹ Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War*, 54.

transformation, and results of the war; no place was reserved for the legacies of emancipation or the conflicted and unresolved history of Reconstruction,” Blight argues. “Because the planners had allowed no space for surviving black veterans, they had also left no space on the programs for a discussion of that second great outcome of the war—the failures of radical reconstruction.”⁹⁰ It seemed that in both northern and southern history there was no place for black memory.

That was partly because the regional story of Reconstruction had become the national one. From 1889 to 1909, for instance, Ben Tillman traveled around the nation and presented his so-called “race talks.” The major theme of these talks was the inferiority of blacks to whites. Francis Butler Simkins quotes Tillman as insisting to his audiences that blacks were “so near akin to the monkey that scientists are yet looking for the missing link.”⁹¹ For Tillman, as Steven Kantrowitz has shown, Reconstruction was not a dead event. It was an ever-present memory because it was ever-present as a renewable threat. Tillman opposed blacks ever again gaining power in the South, especially power over whites. During these talks, Tillman blamed Reconstruction for “demoralizing” the blacks.⁹² He argued that blacks were better off under the restraints of slavery; without it blacks had become more barbaric. “Tillman was firmly convinced that Reconstruction was one of the most horrible experiences recorded in history,” Simkins argues. “It had so demoralized the Negro that he could never recover the virtues of the

⁹⁰ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 9.

⁹¹ Francis Butler Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman, South Carolinian* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944), 394.

⁹² Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman*, 399.

slave.”⁹³ Tillman’s ideas gave him national attention and, even though some may not have agreed with his beliefs, his ideas influenced the memory of Reconstruction.

According to K. Stephen Prince, racial speeches similar to Tillman’s influenced the creation of southern identity. Prince claims that after the Civil War, northerners and southerners created the ideas of the South through stories, whether using literary, theatrical performance, or speeches such as Tillman’s. To control blacks, white southerners created a false image of them in their stories and promoted these stereotypes around the nation. Many of these stories, as Prince points out, were created to entertain northern audiences, and they did. Prince claims, “To fail to recognize the extent to which the nation at large engaged with and participated in the destruction of African American rights is to give the North a pass on one of the most unsavory aspects of American history.”⁹⁴ Tillman’s stories depicted blacks as violent rapists, while whites were viewed as innocent bystanders who only resorted to violence in order to defend themselves. These stories uplifted whites as heroes for protecting other whites, especially women. Of note is that supposed rape or threatened brutality to white women was not used as a justification for Hamburg at the time. Dubious claims such as these, instead, were used later to justify the memory of Hamburg. People around the nation believed these stories, which ultimately helped to support the whitewashing of southern history, especially the memory of the Hamburg massacre.⁹⁵

⁹³ Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman*, 399.

⁹⁴ Prince, *Stories of the South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 210.

⁹⁵ Prince, *Stories of the South*, 2.

In 1909, Tillman recounted the events at Hamburg to a group of fifteen thousand people at the Red Shirt Reunion in Anderson, South Carolina.⁹⁶ His speech was later published as a pamphlet titled *The Struggles of 1876*. The reason for the speech, Tillman said, was his fear of President William Howard Taft's efforts to reconsolidate the South within the Republican Party. Tillman reminded the audience at the reunion of the "troubles" faced during Reconstruction and how the heroic Red Shirts overcame them. "The rising generation has been taught that we have no race problem and that there is no possible danger from the negroes now;" Tillman said, raising the specter of a renewed Reconstruction, "and many young men and some old ones need to be told of the tyrannies, oppressions and robberies to which the white people of the state had to submit because of the bad government put in power by northern bayonets using ignorant negro votes."⁹⁷ Similar to others in the new leading generation of southerners, Tillman was unwilling to let white Carolinians forget the memory of Reconstruction.

By this period Tillman was an extremely popular political leader of South Carolina. *The Country Record* reported that 15,000 visitors came from around South Carolina to hear Tillman speak. The reunion started with a parade at eleven that included four thousand men, women, and children wearing red shirts. The first speaker was former Governor John Calhoun Sheppard, who recalled the brave accomplishments of the Red Shirts to the younger audience members.⁹⁸ Tillman spoke after Sheppard about the

⁹⁶ *The Country Record*, September 2, 1909 (Kingstree, S.C.).

⁹⁷ Benjamin R. Tillman, *The Struggles of 1876: How South Carolina was Delivered from Carpet-Bag and Negro Rule. Speech at the Red-Shirt Reunion at Anderson*, (Clemson University: 1909), 4.

⁹⁸ *The Country Record*, September 2, 1909.

threat of Taft's move to rebuild the Republican party in the South. He then recounted the story of Hamburg. "Senator Tillman was given an ovation when introduced and throughout his speech there was considerable applause," *The Country Recorded* reported "The audience was with him from start to finish and every utterance, especially when sarcasm was used or when an attack was made, brought forth yells upon yell."⁹⁹ The sheer number of the audience suggests how successful white Carolinians had been at manipulating the memory of Reconstruction. Unlike the election debates of the 1890s, nobody questioned or challenged anything the speakers said.

Tillman boldly discussed the plan of the white Carolinians to take back power in South Carolina during Reconstruction by force. "It had been the settled purpose of the leading white men of Edgefield to seize the first opportunity that the negroes might offer to provoke a riot and teach the negroes a lesson;" Tillman said, "as it was generally believed that nothing but bloodshed and a good deal of it could answer the purpose of redeeming the state from negro and carpet bag rule."¹⁰⁰ As with the earliest justifications, Tillman blamed the black militia for instigating the trouble that led to the massacre. He claimed that the militia purposely blocked the road and charged at Butler and Getzen. According to Tillman the white Carolinians only came to Hamburg in support of Butler and Getzen's trial. Tillman argued that it was not until after the trial was postponed that the white Carolinians wanted the militia to hand over their guns in order to restore order in Hamburg.

⁹⁹ *The Country Record*, September 2, 1909.

¹⁰⁰ Tillman, *The Struggles of 1876*, 17.

But what was forthright was Tillman's refusal to belittle that white Carolinians sought violence, or his striking admission that whites both *wanted* bloodshed and even *needed* it for Redemption. Throughout the speech, Tillman's descriptions of the white Carolinians at Hamburg were similar to an elegy for an army. In these remarks, Tillman revealed that it was not just a moment of self-defense, but rather a planned attack. The white Carolinians even had a cannon with them.

As the *Fort Mill Times* stated, "Senator Tillman was particularly interesting in his remarks touching that memorable period in the State's history, and what he had to say was listened to with the closest attention."¹⁰¹ To Meriwether Tillman ascribed both a martyr's death and a soldier's death. Meriwether was a young hero who in Tillman's telling sacrificed himself for his father: he took the place of his father in the front line before the firing commenced. But in the speech Meriwether also became the quasi-Confederate soldier who dies in the war of Reconstruction, "If young Meriwether had not lost his life I do not think any of these last negroes would have been killed," Tillman argued, "but the purpose of our visit to Hamburg was to strike terror, and the next morning when the negroes who had fled to the swamp returned to town (some of them never did return, but kept on going) the ghastly sight which met their gaze of seven dead negroes lying stark and stiff, certainly had its effect."¹⁰² Neither Tillman nor his followers named the six black men who were murdered and no one described the actual horrors that white Carolinians had inflicted on the blacks.

¹⁰¹ *Fort Mill Times*, September 2, 1909.

¹⁰² Tillman, *The Struggles of 1876*, 24.

Tillman was also one of the first Carolinians to suggest the creation of a monument dedicated to the men, like Meriwether, who fought in the war of Reconstruction. As early as 1894 Tillman suggested the creation of a monument to honor those who gave white redemption to South Carolina. Such a monument would be “a fitting capstone to the triumphal arch which the common people have erected to liberty, progress and Anglo-Saxon civilization since 1890.”¹⁰³ In suggesting a monument Tillman was part of a broader effort across the white South to capture and control historical memory in public spaces. Prior to the 1900s, as W. Fitzhugh Brundage has shown, monuments were created to honor Confederate soldiers but were promoted by women’s groups like the Ladies’ Memorial Association and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. By the early twentieth century, the impetus had shifted to men, and white southerners urged state and local governments to build or subsidize monuments. As Brundage describes, “In the first decade of the twentieth century, however, a coalition of white hereditary societies and patriotic groups, historical enthusiasts, and professional historians urged that the state actively promote public appreciation of history.”¹⁰⁴ Unlike Reconstruction, when many Confederate monuments were built, white men had complete control over the government during the early 1900s. This allowed local and state governments to become involved in memorializing southern history based on white experience.

¹⁰³ Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman*, 281.

¹⁰⁴ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 106.

The McKie Meriwether monument was one of these new monuments. It was an idea created by white men but funded by the state. However, the man responsible for the creation of the Meriwether monument was not Tillman but James Pickens DeLaughter, who pushed for the monument in the South Carolina legislature. DeLaughter believed that the life of Meriwether should be remembered as an example of white heroes who sacrificed their lives during Reconstruction.

There is not much available biographical information about DeLaughter, so the memory of his life is tied with the creation of this monument. He was born on October 20, 1866 in South Carolina. His father was James Pickens DeLaughter Sr., a Confederate soldier. Later, he married Lillie Hightower and had four children. At the time of his death in 1915, his oldest daughter was in school at Winthrop College. An obituary later described him: “His rugged honesty, generous nature, uncompromising devotion to duty, whether as a private citizen or a public servant caused Col. DeLaughter to be highly esteemed throughout the county.”¹⁰⁵ Within the Edgefield community, he was a member of the Meriwether Agricultural Club. Another important fact about DeLaughter was his service as the general of the Sweetwater Light Dragoons, a section of the second regiment of cavalry in the South Carolina militia. He was elected colonel of the regiment in 1897, on the eve of the Spanish-American War.

DeLaughter’s life spanned the time that resulted in white farmers seizing political power in South Carolina, and Edgefield was long known for producing state leaders. As

¹⁰⁵ “Find a Grave”, Accessed January 24, 2016, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=39581632&Plpi=108836468>.

Orville Vernon Burton argues, “(Edgefieldians) saw themselves as representative of South Carolina and of the South, and they self-consciously articulated and acted upon what they believed to be the southern ideals.”¹⁰⁶ Edgefield produced two Civil War governors, Francis W. Pickens and Milledge Luke Bonham, two Confederate generals involved in the redemption of Reconstruction, Matthew C. Butler and Martin W. Gary, and two prominent political leaders, Ben Tillman and J. Strom Thurmond.¹⁰⁷ DeLaughter was not as notorious as these other men, but his political success is an example of the political influence of even the lesser-known Edgefieldians.

In 1912, DeLaughter announced his candidacy for the South Carolina House of Representatives, claiming it was due to the “urgent solicitations of friends in all parts of the county.”¹⁰⁸ A newspaper described his campaign, “The high place upon which he pitched his campaign, together with the outspoken and fearless manner in which he discussed the issues then before the public, caused the people to rally about him, the result being that notwithstanding the fact that he resided in a remote corner of the county, he led the ticket, being elected on the first ballot over all competitors.”¹⁰⁹ He immediately began pushing for the creation of the monument. In 1913, he asked the legislature for four hundred dollars to fund it, a resolution eventually passed by both the

¹⁰⁶ Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 6.

¹⁰⁷ Burton, *In My Father's House*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ “Find a Grave”, Accessed January 24, 2016, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=39581632&PIpi=108836468>

¹⁰⁹ “Find a Grave”, Accessed January 24, 2016, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=39581632&PIpi=108836468>.

South Carolina house and the senate.¹¹⁰ The senate commissioned G.W Medlock, W. H Hammond, J. A Butler, George Adams, and J. McKie to supervise the creation of the monument. In order to obtain more funds, newspapers around Edgefield and elsewhere asked for donations. “A member of the commission which was appointed by the legislature has called our attention to the fact that this amount is not adequate for the erection of a creditable monument and has suggested that individual citizens make contributions to this fund,” The *Edgefield Advertiser* reported in 1914. “The Advertiser very heartily endorses the suggestion and we will receive contributions for this purpose and forward to the commission, publishing the names and amounts.”¹¹¹ It was clear, then, that the community supported DeLaughter in the creation of this monument.

More trouble beyond inadequate funding soon appeared. In 1914, Governor Coleman Blease vetoed the four hundred dollars committed by the legislature. It is somewhat surprising that Blease vetoed a monument to support white Carolinian history; no records indicate his reason. But one of the main reasons for his veto may have been his relationship with Tillman. Blease and Tillman feuded often during Blease’s political career, with Blease often referring to Tillman as “a liar and ingrate.”¹¹² After Tillman’s death, the South Carolina Senate published a volume of memorial addresses dedicated to Tillman. Blease vandalized the book and wrote his own opinions of Tillman in the front pages. “I knew him personally from 1888 until his death and was in consensus,

¹¹⁰ *Reports and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C: Bryan Print Co., State Printers, 1913).

¹¹¹ “Should Supplement Fund,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, February 29, 1914.

¹¹² Cole Blease, *Benjamin Ryan Tillman (Late a Senator from South Carolina): Memorial Addresses Delivered in the Senate and House of Representatives, Sixty-fifth Congress* December 15, 1918 (Washington, D.C., 1919)

conventions and personal meetings with him,” Blease wrote on the inside of the book, “and he was always first for self and when he could no longer get favors from any one he would betray them as the records fully show.”¹¹³

Things had not always been this way between them. Early in Blease’s career, Tillman supported and endorsed Blease’s campaign for governor. But Blease supported a different class of white southerners—not Tillman’s farmers. He favored instead the rise of the white male mill workers and other small wage earners whom Tillman kept at a wary arm’s length. Though these were different classes and kinds of white men, Blease and Tillman held similar ideas on white supremacy and the rise of the poorer whites, at least as those classes had been throttled by Carolina aristocrats. If anything, Blease was even more outspoken on his racial ideas and even more vehement in his support of lynching “But whereas Tillman had struggles to protect both white men’s prerogatives and the rule of law,” Stephen Kantrowitz argues, “Blease made no bones about his preference for violent self-assertion.”¹¹⁴

Tillman’s support of Blease began to fade after Blease was elected as governor of South Carolina. Tillman openly rejected the similarities of Tillmanism and Bleasism and attacked the new governor’s political initiatives. In 1914, Tillman fought against Blease’s election for U.S. senator by trying to convince other politicians to run against Blease. When nobody accepted the challenge, Tillman turned to the White House and warned President Woodrow Wilson. He claimed that Blease would cause more problems

¹¹³Blease, *Benjamin Ryan Tillman*.

¹¹⁴ Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 296.

for Wilson than Tillman did for Roosevelt.¹¹⁵ Ellison D. Smith ran against Blease and defeated him in the election. When Blease lost, Tillman gloated in his successful campaign. This was the same year that the state legislature was trying to pass the Meriwether monument bill. Blease's veto might have been because he was fighting against Tillman and did not want to see a monument that honored an event Tillman not only participated in, but wrapped his legacy within. Though the monument's purpose was to honor Meriwether, it also represented the other white Carolinians involved, especially Tillman.

Though Blease tried to stop the monument, he was unsuccessful because of the work of DeLaughter. DeLaughter fought to overturn Blease's veto in the South Carolina legislature. Newspapers reported that he made his first speech in two years in front of the House to support his claim that Meriwether deserved to be remembered. He recounted the events of Hamburg and argued that Meriwether gave his life for South Carolina: "He was a hero. If it were not for him and others of his stripe, democracy and Wade Hampton would not have gained the ascendancy in 1876."¹¹⁶ After his speech, the House applauded him and voted to override the veto 80 to 4. DeLaughter later explained that he would never forget the governor's choice to veto this "small appropriation."¹¹⁷

DeLaughter was re-elected in 1914, even though he missed many campaign meetings due to his health. He suffered from stomach cancer, which caused him many problems over a six- month period. He died on January 14, 1915. Unfortunately for him,

¹¹⁵ Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman*, 502.

¹¹⁶ "His First Speech Yielded Results," *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 11, 1914.

¹¹⁷ "His First Speech Yielded Results," *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 11, 1914.

this was a year before the unveiling of the monument he so proudly supported. Upon his death, his friends and family from Edgefield remembered him as a man with “splendid poise and excellent judgement.”¹¹⁸ The monument not only represents Meriwether, and not only Tillman, but DeLaughter’s life and legacy.

The Own Brothers Marble Company from Greenwood, South Carolina constructed the monument. The company was chosen over many competitors for this project. According to available records, the company built two other monuments in South Carolina. The first was a monument raised in Florence County dedicated to Silas Mercer Keith. Keith was the captain of the Timmons ville Minute Men in Company E of the 8th South Carolina Volunteer Regiment. On February 4, 1862, Keith was killed in a railroad accident. The local branch of the United Daughters of the Confederacy argued that his life should be honored, and raised \$1,600 for the creation of this monument. It was dedicated on June 5, 1914, two years before the unveiling of the Meriwether monument.¹¹⁹ The other monument built by the Own Brothers company was dedicated to the The Gist Rifles Markers. The company of the South Carolina 7th regiment that was a part of Martin Witherspoon Gary’s brigade. The monument is located in Williamston, South Carolina. The idea was also the UDC’s and the group raised \$200 for it.

Although some differences are obvious—the state funded a commemoration of the war of Reconstruction in the Meriwether monument—the monuments designed by the

¹¹⁸ “Find a Grave”, Accessed January 24, 2016, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=39581632&Pipi=108836468>.

¹¹⁹ Robert S. Seigler, *A Guide to Confederate Monuments in South Carolina* (Columbia, S. C.: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1997).

company represented the one-sided history evident in all South Carolina communities. The two Confederate monuments honored soldiers but left no remembrance on the monuments to the racial issues of the war. Such monuments uplifted the white memory of the Civil War, and as Fitzhugh Brundage argues, shaped Southern memory in public spaces by only representing the white side of history. Blacks were deliberately left out of this cultural identity and out of access to public space as a means of shaping it. No monuments were created to represent their history. Blacks were only able to celebrate their memory through parades or holidays since whites controlled the public space in the South.¹²⁰ White celebrations created monuments as lasting symbols of white supremacy, and many are still evident throughout the South today.

Yet if Reconstruction was a continuation of the Civil War, Meriwether was a soldier, as well. And unlike the more generic monuments to Confederate memory elsewhere, the Meriwether monument is “speaking symbol:” its celebration of white supremacy is literally in and on the monument itself. The Meriwether monument is made from Winnsboro granite, is 21 feet tall, and weighs around 27,000 pounds¹²¹ This granite is unique to South Carolina, especially in the Midlands and Piedmont region where it is found. The granite is often called “South Carolina State Stone” or “Blue Granite” because the stone produces a light blue or grey color.¹²² Tellingly, it is same stone used in the construction of the South Carolina Statehouse. The original Statehouse

¹²⁰ Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 58.

¹²¹ “McKie Meriwether Monument Completed. Inscription Given in Full,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, January 26, 1916.

¹²² “South Carolina’s Informational Highway,” Accessed January 24, 2016, <http://www.sciway.net/facts/sc-state-stone-blue-granite.html>.

was burned by William T. Sherman and the Union army in February of 1865. The new building was completed in 1903. Both the monument and the institute of the state were built with the same stone and are based on a society for white Carolinians.

There are four different panels on the monument. The first reads: “In memory of Thomas McKie Meriwether, who on 8th of July, 1876, gave his life that the civilization builded by his fathers might be preserved for the children unimpaired.”¹²³ This panel reveals what Steven Hahn has called a “civilizationist ideology”: it celebrates the white fathers before Meriwether and a civilization founded on slavery and white supremacy.¹²⁴ It also has a religious undertone of Christian martyrdom. As David Goldfield argues, religion was incorporated in the way that white southerners remembered the past. “White southerners,” he writes, “consciously compared their history to the crucifixion and ascension of Jesus Christ: the Civil War and Reconstruction mirrored the death and resurrection of the Savior.”¹²⁵ The panel’s phrase “gave his life” echoes the sacrificial offering of Christ. It does not state that Meriwether was murdered or assaulted, the characterization used immediately after the massacre by those who justified their attack at Hamburg. The panel also emphasizes the idea that Meriwether was young man, which created a sense of innocence that made his death even more sacrificial and filial.

The second panel extends those motifs. It reads: “In youth’s glad morning the unfinished years of manhood stretching before him with clear knowledge and courageous

¹²³ “McKie Meriwether Monument Completed. Inscription Given in Full,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, January 26, 1916.

¹²⁴ Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South From Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹²⁵ Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War*, 53.

willingness he accepted death, and found forever the grateful remembrance of all who know high and general service in maintaining of these civic and social institutions which the men and women of his race had struggles through the centuries to establish in South Carolina. What more can a man do than to lay down his life?"¹²⁶ The second panel, while it reiterates and complements the ideas from the first panel, is even more evocative in its use of Christian allusion. To state that Meriwether accepted death with "clear knowledge and courageous willingness" is similar to the death of Jesus. It is telling, though, that nothing is evident of atonement, which, in some Christian and especially evangelical theology, is the reason Christ accepted death. If Meriwether was sacrificed, it was not because white men had sinned.

The third and last panel reads: "In his life he exemplified the highest ideal of Anglo-Saxon civilization. By his death he assured to the children of his beloved land the supremacy of that ideal. As his flame of life was quenched it lit the blaze of victory."¹²⁷ On this last panel, Meriwether is not characterized as a young man, but is transformed into a father of white supremacy and white southerners. Similarly, the religious motif switches from son to father. Throughout the Bible God refers to his followers as children. The allusion gives the impression that God's people are white Southerners inhabiting a gifted land to build up Anglo-Saxon civilization. Interestingly, there is a connection here to the chosen people saving the world, as well. As Charles Reagan Wilson argues, even in

¹²⁶ "McKie Meriwether Monument Completed. Inscription Given in Full," *Edgefield Advertiser*, January 26, 1916.

¹²⁷ "McKie Meriwether Monument Completed. Inscription Given in Full," *Edgefield Advertiser*, January 26, 1916.

the Lost Cause white Southerners still claimed to be the “quintessential Americans.”¹²⁸ At no time did “quintessential America” seem more threatened. “As the rest of the nation had changed because of industrialism, urbanization, immigration, and other forces of modern America,” Wilson writes, “the South had remained most like the nation of the Founding Fathers.”¹²⁹ The third panel also must be understood in relation to World War I, and to the previous “reunion” of white Southerners to the nation and its martial defense during the Spanish-American war.¹³⁰ Both of these conflicts were racialized wars. The Spanish had been portrayed as barbaric, mercenary hordes in 1898; the Germans in World War I were rapidly coming to be seen as “Huns.” Both were threats to Anglo-Saxon civilization, and the monument served as a reminder of previous Anglo-Saxon heroism in defense of civilization. Through the monument, honorable white Southerners (who oddly in the antebellum period had been mythologized as Normans) were willing to give their lives again. As Wilson writes, for white southerners, a new war offered the chance to link the Lost Cause to America and to Anglo-Saxon civilization itself. White southerners believed fighting in World War I vindicated the Confederacy since America was fighting for the same beliefs as Confederates in the Civil War. The war would create a new civil religion joining the North and South.¹³¹ The monument symbolized not just a white Southern hero of Reconstruction, but an American martyr who laid down his life for civilization and the Anglo-Saxon race.

¹²⁸ Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 167.

¹²⁹ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 167.

¹³⁰ Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865- 1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 178-182.

¹³¹ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 173, 175.

The unveiling of the monument took place on February 16, 1916. It was a ritual ceremony. Goldfield argues that rituals connected southern history and faith—the unveiling of monuments in public places served as a space for white southerners to come together outside of church to honor southern history. The unveiling was structured like a church service. Different speakers sanctified the life of Meriwether. “In the town of North Augusta, in the center of Calhoun square,” the *Edgefield Advertiser* reported, “stands a massive granite shaft that will be a silent tribute for many generations to come to the brave and patriotic young man, McKie Meriwether, whose life was immolated on his country’s altar in July 1876.”¹³² There was, in addition to the actual unveiling, a large reception in the auditorium of the North Augusta high school, right across the street from the monument. The chairman of the proceedings was John C. Sheppard, who had been governor of South Carolina in 1886 and was a Tillmanite. Sheppard’s speech purportedly described the conditions of the state in 1876. Along with a State House full of blacks and carpetbaggers, “[t]he governor’s home was at that period the center of vulgarity and vice,” Sheppard claimed, “and the people of South Carolina were required to bear it at the point of the sword drawn by national government.”¹³³ He declared that the people of South Carolina were willing to fight in order to fix this government and argued that the white Carolinians took up arms at Hamburg to defend themselves and their state. The speaker stumbled into the word *massacre* but actually conjured up the old construction

¹³² “McKie Meriwether: Monument Erected in North Augusta to Memory of Hero Who Lost Life in Hamburg Riot,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, February 23, 1916.

¹³³ “McKie Meriwether: Monument Erected in North Augusta to Memory of Hero Who Lost Life in Hamburg Riot,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, February 23, 1916.

and connotation of *riot* without using the word. Sheppard make it clear that “it was not a massacre in the brutal sense of that word... it was a rebellion against wrong, an armed rebuke to tyranny and oppression.”¹³⁴ Hamburg allowed Hampton to be elected governor, he argued, which brought back rightful government.

After Sheppard’s opening speech, the guest of honor, D. S. Henderson, who was a participant at Hamburg, discussed the event. Henderson first honored the life of Meriwether and his patriotism in laying down his life for his country. While Sheppard talked of Hamburg as redeeming the state, Henderson discussed the meaning of the monument as one of redeeming national pride. And while Sheppard emphasized Hamburg’s role in restoring pure government, Henderson emphasized its role in restoring white civilization. With the start of World War I in Europe, many nations were looking to the United States as an example both of democracy and of Western civilization. Henderson claimed that the South was fully reconciled with the North, which created one united nation to stand against others. These two regions, which were once separated, were together fighting for the same ideas. “The New Nation with the new South as a component part of it, stands today in the front of the nations of the world,” Henderson said, “for the preservation of the world’s civilization and enlightenment.”¹³⁵ With a united country, a white man’s country, the United States could use their influence to promote the ideas of the Anglo-Saxon world. He continued: “The troublous days of the past of which we have been speaking are only in evidence now-a-days, that we may be

¹³⁴ Stephen Budiansky, *The Bloody Shirt: Terror after Appomattox* (London: Penguin, 2008), 280.

¹³⁵“McKie Meriwether: Monument Erected in North Augusta to Memory of Hero Who Lost Life in Hamburg Riot,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, February 23, 1916.

able to remedy our past mistakes, and that we can with more power and success enforce the principles we acted upon in our days of stress and turmoil.”¹³⁶ The men who created this monument believed that it was a symbol of the ideas for which the nation, not just the state, should continue to remember and fight for. And the main idea was white supremacy as the foundation of civilization. These ideas weren’t backward-looking elegies, but helped to frame racial problems that would confront the state, the region, and the nation for generations.

The monument is dedicated to Meriwether’s memory, but it is also a symbol of Hamburg, which itself symbolizes the rise and decline of blacks within South Carolina. In fact, the monument is the last visible vestige of the town. It was founded in Edgefield District in 1821 by Henry Shultz, an entrepreneur who emigrated from Hamburg, Germany. He was famous for creating a brigade that linked Augusta, Georgia to South Carolina across the Savannah River. “Before 1 July 1821,” as Orville Vernon Burton has written, “not a house stood in Hamburg, but by 1826, two hundred houses and fifty to sixty stores served the twelve hundred inhabitants.”¹³⁷ By 1822, Hamburg was producing and shipping 35,000 bales of cotton, and the city’s population was around 2,000.¹³⁸ Profit from the trade down the Savannah River grew so rapidly that Charleston merchants funded a construction of a railroad from Charleston to Hamburg.¹³⁹ Eventually, Hamburg fell into a decline and disrepair because of railroad expansion and the Augusta Canal.

¹³⁶ “McKie Meriwether: Monument Erected in North Augusta to Memory of Hero Who Lost Life in Hamburg Riot,” *Edgefield Advertiser*, February 23, 1916.

¹³⁷ Burton, *In My Father’s House*, 30.

¹³⁸ J. Durelle Boles, collector. GEU, Benjamin Brantly printer. EMU10001453472, and J. Durelle Boles Collection of Southern Imprints. GEU. *Origin of the Town of Hamburg, South Carolina*, .6

¹³⁹ Burton, *In My Father’s House*, 30.

Shultz himself was even convicted of attempted murder, though only served half of his sentence. But after seeing his town beaten in the race for commercial success by Augusta, Shultz tried to commit suicide; though he failed at that, he died in poverty within the city he created in 1851.¹⁴⁰

One would have assumed that the city would have disappeared after the death of Shultz, but it was brought back to life again during Reconstruction as a village notable for its black political and economic entrepreneurship. Prince Rivers, Samuel L. Lee, and Charles D. Hayne were freedmen who helped create Aiken County out of Edgefield, and Hamburg was one of its new towns, along with Aiken and Beech Island.¹⁴¹ Many blacks migrated to Hamburg because they found it a safe area away from the violence and intimidation of whites. They also saw it as a place of opportunity. Rivers, for instance, was one of the first freed slaves to join a black regiment in the Union army in South Carolina. Lee was the first freedman to be admitted to the South Carolina bar, and also served as speaker of the House in the legislature. Hayne was a skilled slave owned by a wealthy Charleston family who migrated to the upcountry during Reconstruction to pursue new political opportunities.¹⁴²

Hamburg was Reconstruction in microcosm: it offered a promising future for blacks, until the massacre and its violent illustration of what level of violence whites were willing to commit in order to take back the state. Hamburg's population slowly

¹⁴⁰ "Henry Shultz and His Town of Hamburg, S.C.," Last modified February 22, 2015
<https://henryshultz.wordpress.com/page/2/>

¹⁴¹ Burton, *In My Father's House*, 14.

¹⁴² "Hamburg, Aiken County, South Carolina," Last modified March 22, 2015,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamburg,_Aiken_County,_South_Carolina

declined after the massacre. It became a ghost town, but it was not until a flood destroyed most of the city in 1911 that its ultimate disappearance was sealed. By 1929 the last residents left Hamburg; today the city no longer exists. The one remaining symbol of Hamburg is the Meriwether monument.

Vernon Burton has argued that Reconstruction had a great influence on the South, even more so than the Civil War or the American Revolution.¹⁴³ He argues that Reconstruction was not a failure, as white memory would make it; rather, as at Hamburg itself, it was defeated by the white southerners.¹⁴⁴ And the abandonment of the town is a fitting symbol for Hamburg's enduring legacy. Just as the town was erased, so too after Reconstruction was the black memory of Hamburg, and even of Reconstruction itself. As white Carolinians gained control of the state, they were able also to take full control of Hamburg's memory

¹⁴³ Burton, "Ungrateful Servants," 12.

¹⁴⁴ Burton, "Ungrateful Servants," 91.

CONCLUSION

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM HISTORY

“Men die, and towns die, and cruelest of all, memories die,” Stephen Budiansky argues, “And when North Augusta celebrated its centennial in 2006, Hamburg was nowhere to be heard of, though the McKie Meriwether monument was duly catalogued in an inventory of local historical sites the town compiled for the occasion.”¹⁴⁵ For the 2006 centennial the monument was described as representing the only white man killed during the Hamburg “riot”.¹⁴⁶ The monument misrepresents the horrific history of white Carolinian terrorism and manipulation of southern memory. The alteration in memory is also evident in schools in North Augusta, as John Monk, writer for the *Augusta Chronicle*, points out the eighth grade textbook that describes the event. The textbook argues, “a company of black militia harassed two young white males from Edgefield. Once news of the incident spread, a group of Edgefield whites stormed the local armory, determined to take guns away from the militia. Several people died, and many others were killed.”¹⁴⁷ The murder of the six black men was not described, nor did the textbook describe the planned racial violence white Carolinians used in order to regain political power to create a racially divided South that would last for generations.

In 2011, the Heritage Council of North Augusta, a local non-profit organization, sponsored the creation of a new Hamburg marker. The marker describes the deaths of the

¹⁴⁵ Stephen Budiansky, *The Bloody Shirt: Terror After the Civil War* (New York: Plume, 2008), 281.

¹⁴⁶ Budiansky, *The Bloody Shirt*, 281.

¹⁴⁷ John Monk, “A Forgotten Massacre Hamburg Violence Fades From Memory,” *Augusta Chronicle*, February 18, 2008.

six black men at Hamburg. “After a dispute between whites and a black militia company, about 200 men from local rifle clubs tried to disarm 38 black militiamen and others barricaded in a warehouse,” the marker describes, “One white was killed and men on each side were wounded before the blacks fled. Two blacks were killed trying to escape. Whites captured 25-30 blacks and executed four of them. 87 whites were charged in the massacre but were never tried for it.”¹⁴⁸ Though names were not mentioned on the marker, it was the first step in representing the true history of the massacre.

As the nation continues to debate the renaming of roads or buildings, and as it deals with the controversy of the Confederate flag, it is essential for the nation to recognize both sides of history. It is impossible to understand society today without acknowledging the good and bad aspects of history. The Meriwether monument represents a terrible part in Carolina history, but it is a disservice to the black men who were murdered to overlook this moment because it is difficult to discuss. Before southerners can move past the racial discrepancies of the past, the South must come to terms with every aspect of its history. The Meriwether monument stands today as a representation of the manipulation of southern history.

¹⁴⁸ “Hamburg Massacre- North Augusta, South Carolina,” Accessed January 25, 2016, <http://www.sciway.net/sc-photos/aiken-county/the-hamburg-massacre.html>

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