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Wade Hampton: Conflicted Leader of the Conservative Democracy?*

Fritz Hamer

IN APRIL 1877 WADE HAMPTON, III, Confederate military hero, and now political “savior,” declared to a Columbia crowd on his return from Washington that they should “forget we are Democrats or Republicans, white or colored, and remember only that we are South Carolinians.”¹ Although Hampton may have used some political hyperbole to soothe a fractious electorate, as the now undisputed governor of the Palmetto State he seemingly wanted to convince white Democrats that blacks, most of them former slaves, should be allowed to participate in the political process. Of course the litmus test for this to happen had to be that African Americans repudiate the Republican party. That party, which in the minds of many South Carolina whites had corrupted and nearly ruined the state since 1866, had championed the rights of the former slaves. While white Democrats appeared united in their hatred of the Radical Republican regimes of Reconstruction, the latter’s rule in South Carolina had ended in 1877. Hampton now offered an olive branch, of sorts, to those black Republicans whom he had reviled for over a decade. And most of Hampton’s Democratic allies supported the former general’s overtures, for they expected that African Americans would have few alternatives.

But some of Hampton’s allies in the 1876 election disagreed. Several former Confederate officers, among them Matthew C. Butler and Martin Gary, had no patience for reconciliation with blacks. In their minds, the battle for the state government, for the very integrity of a white-dominated South Carolina, was to eliminate all political opponents, white or black. In other words, neither the reviled Republicans of both races, nor, for that matter, any other African Americans, should be allowed to participate henceforth in the political process. Did Hampton believe that his prestige and personal qualities were strong enough to overcome such powerful hatreds, or was his Columbia rhetoric just that, something to offer the opposition until he and his lieutenants could eliminate them completely from the political arena? This paper will review his motives and relations with people up to the election of 1876, and will argue that both tendencies were at play. In the final analysis, however, Hampton

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represented white Democrat resurgence and retrenchment, and while he may have believed that former slaves could be a part of the political process, it would only be on his and his white lieutenants' terms. In their minds only whites had the ability, indeed the very right, to govern the state. But to find out what led Hampton to his "redeemer" leadership role in the crucial election of 1876, one must first review his background.

Until South Carolina's secession in 1860, Hampton's life had little to suggest that he would be embroiled in contentious politics. Although his grandfather had held prestigious military posts, first in the Revolution and later in the War of 1812, and his father also had attained distinction in the latter war, the family focus was to attain land, slaves, and wealth. When the third Wade was born in 1818, he became part of one of the most privileged families in the American South. The Hampton family already controlled vast acreage in the South Carolina Midlands, owned hundreds of slaves, and made millions of dollars from growing cotton. They had few social or economic peers. Wade Hampton, III, was not just a wealthy scion of a prominent family, but was also well educated and traveled, having attained a degree from South Carolina College and having toured extensively in Europe and the Northeast during his young adult life. Nonetheless, his most important purpose in life was to become a successful plantation manager who would direct vast estates of cotton lands from which the family would continue to derive great wealth. In 1843 he began to manage the family plantation in Mississippi, which included 12,000 acres and nearly one thousand slaves. Hampton traveled regularly between these holdings and those in the Midlands of South Carolina in order to manage both. His favorite activities, hunting and fishing, could also be assuaged in such endeavors. Like his father and grandfather, Wade viewed politics as a secondary role in society that he reluctantly assumed. In 1852 Richland District constituents elected him for the first time to the South Carolina House of Representatives, and six years later the same voters elevated him to the State Senate. Although he served on legislative committees regarding federal relations, agriculture, and redistricting, he rarely spoke publicly and did not initially distinguish himself in either chamber. And not until his last years in the antebellum legislature did he even speak out on major issues before the legislature. In short, it seems that he served in the State House because his social position required it.²

Such modest political ambitions began to change as the rift between North and South grew more intense at the end of the 1850s. In fall 1859 Hampton spoke out against John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry and warned that if the North did not condemn this radical abolitionist, the Union could not survive. Although he did not lead the charge when Lincoln became the standard bearer as the Republican presidential nominee, the South Carolina planter supported plans for a secession

convention if the Illinois lawyer were elected. Hampton not only voiced his support for the Minutemen, those groups of men in many communities around the state that prior to the national election supported secession, but he formally joined them. Throughout the fall 1860 electoral campaign season, groups of Minutemen held public demonstrations in their own regalia and published a manifesto supporting secession. In the wake of Lincoln's election victory, Hampton continued to support the calling of a secession convention, although he was not subsequently elected to that body. But when South Carolina seceded, Hampton immediately offered his services to defend the newly independent "nation." In the midst of the crisis, however, as South Carolina faced off against the Federal government over the status of Fort Sumter at the mouth of Charleston harbor, Hampton saw fit to leave the state in March 1861 to check his holdings in Mississippi. It was only after his return to the Palmetto State two weeks after Sumter surrendered that Hampton began to organize his now famous Legion. The planter-turned-soldier became not only the Legion's founder, but also its financier, using his vast wealth to pay for its soldiers' uniforms, equipment, and firearms. By late spring the Confederate high command ordered Hampton's Legion north to defend the newly anointed capitol in Richmond, Virginia.³

Hampton's many exploits as a military leader, first of his legendary Hampton Legion and then as cavalry commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, are well known. After the Confederate armies reorganized in spring 1862, the Legion was split up, and its commander became a subordinate under the renowned cavalry general, Jeb Stuart. Upon this legendary figure's death in May 1864, Hampton's distinguished service and abilities led to his promotion as Stuart's successor in command of all Confederate cavalry in the Army of Northern Virginia. From Manassas to Gettysburg to Petersburg, the South Carolinian received many wounds in daring attacks against Federal cavalry and infantry. In the last months of the war Hampton went home in a doomed attempt to stop William T. Sherman's march through the Carolinas. Loyal and determined to war's end, Hampton's resilience seemed more tragic because of his own personal losses. First, his brother Frank fell mortally wounded at Brandy Station in June 1863. More than a year later, one of his sons, Preston, was killed in an engagement near Petersburg. To compound these tragic deaths, at the war's end Hampton's family home at Millwood, just outside Columbia, was burned to the ground by Sherman's troops. His holdings in Mississippi, including three steam cotton gins and 4,700 bales of cotton, were likewise lost. Perhaps Hampton's greatest capital loss, however, was the liberation of more than one thousand slaves. In spite of all his dedication to the Southern cause, the state's most distinguished surviving Confederate military commander found himself virtually destitute financially and

emotionally.⁴ Despite his best efforts, Hampton could only recover a small portion of his holdings following his declared bankruptcy in 1868.

In the midst of such personal and capital losses Hampton was slow to accept the new social and political order dawning on post-war South Carolina. Although he rejected emigration to South America or Europe, a course that some of his former Confederate comrades had taken, he was slow to reconcile himself to the Confederacy's demise. In summer 1866 he wrote to his former commander-in-chief, Robert Lee, that "I am not reconstructed yet. . . ." Furthermore, he told Lee that "[T]ime will prove that you have not fought in vain." It is clear that Hampton would not easily concede that four years of bloodshed and personal loss had been a national and personal waste.⁵

As the defeated Confederate tried to cope with his own personal loss, the political and economic changes occurring within his state became more alarming. For a brief period it had appeared that former Confederates would be able resume the reins of power with the blessings of President Andrew Johnson. But the Republican-controlled Congress soon refused to accept Johnson's lenient terms for the former Confederacy and reversed the president's Reconstruction policy with a series of laws in 1866 that imposed severe restrictions on most of the old leadership and required the Southern states for the first time to accept former slaves as political and social equals. This was an affront, if not worse, to most whites such as Hampton. And they soon showed their opposition.

Hampton expressed this bitterness in greater detail in an 1866 letter to President Andrew Johnson. He denounced what he perceived as a vindictive Congress that was led by Radical Republicans who had usurped their authority and ignored the Constitution by forcing the Southern states to adopt the thirteenth and fourteenth amendments without due deliberation by their respected white leaders. In short, to Hampton the amendments were forced upon the South illegally. He could also not accept that Congress had responded in such a manner in order to thwart the South Carolina legislature, which in December 1865 had passed a series of "Black Codes" that severely restricted the movement of freedmen and, essentially, returned them almost to the life of servitude that they had recently left. Nor could Hampton see the purpose of what he called the "corrupt" Freedmen's Bureau and "a horde of barbarians – your brutal negro troops" that imposed law and order in the South. Such organizations, he maintained, were an effrontery to whites, but especially to former slaveholders who had had virtual life-and-death mastery over blacks barely a year before. Such a response was natural for men like Hampton who had grown up and been taught that only they had the ability and right to govern the affairs of their state. Now that former slaves were free men to whom Congress had given political

rights, Hampton could not fathom such a monolithic shift in social position, even if his beloved South had been defeated militarily.⁶

His bitterness slowly waned in the following months, but Hampton remained true to his upbringing as a planter and former slaveholder. Even though he advocated limited political rights for freedmen, he advised his white friends that they could still control the state legislature by controlling the black vote. Like planters of the antebellum era, Hampton and most of his class could not conceive that former slaves actually had the ability to behave rationally in the political arena. Many former slaveholders believed that freedmen were still inherently imbued with the secondary status they had possessed in slavery. African Americans needed people like Hampton to instruct them and “prevent” them from harming themselves. Such a conclusion came from the paternalist racist assumption that blacks were unable to think for themselves or realize their own best interests. In 1868 he told James Connor, a fellow Confederate veteran from South Carolina, that it was the duty of “every Southern man” to secure the “good will and confidence of the negro.” It was even acceptable to send blacks to Congress, since Hampton considered that they could be trusted more than “renegade [whites] or Yankees.” In conclusion he advised Connor that “respectable negroes” should be recruited. Presumably Hampton meant freedmen whom whites knew could be relied upon, whether by bribery or intimidation, to accept and serve Southern whites in a loyal, that is, subordinate manner.⁷

The assumptions of Hampton and his associates were sorely tested during the following decade as the battle against Republican party rule in the state ebbed and flowed. At first, most white voters tried to forestall the election of delegates to a new state constitutional convention mandated by Congress. Since the latter had required that a majority of the state’s registered electorate ratify the convocation of such a convention, a large number of registered white voters never cast their ballots on election day in November 1867. Despite this unity, the vast majority of registered black voters (85 percent) who voted for such a body was sufficient to validate the elections for the constitutional convention that met two months later. Not surprisingly, the convention’s majority of black delegates drafted a new constitution that ushered in tax and land reform, and the establishment of the first formal public education system in the state. Nonetheless, the former cavalry leader continued to believe that whites could influence enough freedmen so that Democratic conservatives could control the legislature when the next round of elections occurred in fall 1868. But Hampton’s assumptions, as we will see, proved false.

The Radical Republicans’ bold program threatened white conservatives, who feared losing control of black labor and of political affairs to a Republican party

with majority black support. It was the intention of most white Democratic leaders to prevent this and take back the reins of power in order to forestall what they imagined would be political and social chaos. Although some whites, even Hampton for a time, advocated some peaceful accommodation with Republicans, many believed that only intimidation and violence against their opponents could resurrect white control. Former Confederates such as Martin Gary and Matthew C. Butler decried this perilous new order as an attempt to place the “negro over the white man” whereby Republicans were “at war with the noblest instincts of our [white] race.” To those whites who tried to reach an accommodation by political means with former slaves, intransigent conservatives like Butler believed they were badly misled, if not traitors to their race. Butler and his supporters, known as “straight outs,” began a campaign of intimidation and violence to attain future electoral victory for conservative Democrats. Such violence ranged from beatings to murder, one of the more extreme cases being the assassination of a black leader, Benjamin Randolph, in October 1868 while the latter was campaigning in Abbeville for a seat in the legislature. Several shots rang out at the local train station and killed him instantly. Yet even in this violent atmosphere blacks and their white Republican allies went to the polls in November and won a significant majority.⁸ The Radical Republicans now began to implement their reform agenda – they raised taxes, implemented land redistribution, and installed a locally-administered public education system.

Hampton could not legally run for political office because Congress had barred high ranking Confederate officers from public service, yet his work behind the scenes was not impeded by the Republican victory of November 1868. Since his prediction that whites could control the black vote had proved illusory, he seemed to discard his hopes in that direction. Hampton now tacitly supported the Klan violence that accelerated in the wake of the 1868 elections. Active primarily in the upstate, bands of vigilantes, often clad in frightening regalia, intimidated and attacked white and black Republican supporters with impunity. Unable to end the violence, the Republican governor, Robert K. Scott, appealed to President Grant and Congress for Federal troops to help stem the carnage. In April 1871, after the President invoked the Third Enforcement Act (commonly known as the Ku Klux Klan Act), Federal troops soon arrested several hundred suspected Klansmen. Even though Hampton publicly spoke out against the violence, he nonetheless led a subscription effort on behalf of the accused for their legal defense. Although one historian has called the Act timid and has suggested that it should have been imposed earlier and more forcefully, this action by the national government ended most of the violence. Hundreds were incarcerated and trials were held. Unfortunately for the authorities, so many suspects turned

themselves in that the courts and jails could not process the huge backlog that these arrests and surrenders had created in the justice system. This circumstance, coupled with the expert trial representation that the accused received through the moral support and the financial backing of people such as Hampton and Butler, assured that only a token number of accused Klansmen were convicted, and they generally received light prison sentences. Even though the violence came to an end, the pause proved only temporary. As the campaigning for the fall 1876 elections began in earnest, white conservative elements re-ignited their campaign of intimidation and violence. And this time Hampton led the effort by running for governor.⁹

Although former Confederates at all levels had eventually been given political amnesty by Congress in 1872, Hampton had remained too preoccupied with personal family issues and his poor finances to take a leadership role in the fight against the Radical Republicans at that time. His efforts to improve his finances collapsed when the insurance company he joined went into bankruptcy less than a year after his appointment to its board. Nevertheless, he still had a keen interest in the political future of his home state. Thus when old Confederate leaders approached him in June 1876 to be the Democratic Party's nomination for governor, he readily accepted.¹⁰

Hampton's social position and heroic role as a Confederate leader during the war made him the ideal standard bearer for the conservative Democrats. Unanimously nominated in the August party convention, the soldier-turned-politician started a campaign across the state from the Upcountry to the Lowcountry, defending the virtues of his party and castigating the allegedly corrupt and spendthrift ways of the Radical Republicans. But Hampton's speeches and his obvious public appeal as a hero of the defeated Confederacy became more effective largely because of the private militia – the mounted Red Shirts – that bolstered his appeal and protected him in every community where he took his campaign. On the fall campaign swing through Anderson, Sumter, Winnsboro, and Yorkville Hampton was met by an impressive entourage of local dignitaries, admiring young women, and scores, sometimes hundreds, of mounted Red Shirts. For one campaign rally in Winnsboro on 16 October 1876 an elaborate itinerary was created and fliers were posted throughout the community.¹¹ The arrangements outlined where the local Democratic dignitaries were to stand, the location of "colored clubs," and how the "mounted men" were to position themselves so that "colored people of both parties" could be admitted in front of them. In Yorkville a grand parade met Hampton at the train station and turned out for the Democratic nominee's stump speech where he appealed not only to whites, but also to blacks. As usual, he castigated the corrupt Republicans in Columbia and their governor, Daniel Chamberlain; then Hampton appealed for black support. Ironically,

he told blacks that they had become “slaves to your political masters” and that to be “freemen they must leave the Loyal League” and join with him to bring “free speech, free ballot, a free press.”¹² And yet just a decade before most of the blacks in the audience had been slaves for life to Hampton and to others of his class, chattels devoid of any rights whatsoever. Now fear prevented many black voters at these meetings from disagreeing openly while the Red Shirts stood ready to pounce on any dissenters in the crowd. Except in the Lowcountry where blacks outnumbered whites, few of these grand political rallies allowed the opposition to refute Hampton’s claims.

In spite of Hampton’s appeals on the stump and his professed opposition to campaign violence, his Red Shirt supporters ruthlessly used intimidation and violence throughout the Upcountry to suppress Republican opposition. One Laurens County Republican group appealed to Governor Chamberlain for protection because no one “dares to speak nor act with respect of his franchise privileges without being in extreme danger.”¹³ Individual acts of violence sometimes expanded into major battles that led to injury and death on a large scale. Just as the campaign began in earnest, the Ellenton riots of September 1876 saw black militia carry on a running battle with Red Shirt companies for almost two days before Federal troops intervened to end the carnage. At least 50 blacks and one white Red Shirt lay dead at its conclusion. At Cainhoy in the Lowcountry blacks and whites faced off again in similar fashion. Here the black militia got the better of the action, but still white Democrats inflicted nearly as many casualties on the Republicans before they fled. Despite such brutal violence occurring all around him, Hampton seemed to remain above the fray, outlining before black audiences why they should support his election. Through an alliance with the whites, he argued, “who owned the land . . . [and] pay the taxes,” blacks could redeem the state “together.” But, he warned, if they continued with their “carpet-bag friends [the Republicans],” they would lose any aid or support, presumably from whites, when needed.¹⁴

As Edmund Drago shows in his recent study, some former slaves seemed to take Hampton’s words to heart, for the white Red Shirt clubs did possess black allies. There were at least eighteen black Democratic Clubs organized during the 1876 political campaign. It is difficult to determine how many of these clubs actually were formed by political coercion from whites or from genuine disillusionment by blacks with the Republican leadership. Evidence gathered by Drago suggests that these black organizations had members that joined for a variety of reasons, some from conviction, others out of necessity. Some African Americans felt that even if the Democrats were not their best political allies, they did not think that the Republican party could protect them. In order to continue living and working in their communities, some former

slaves consequently believed that they needed to gain favors from white Democrats who would protect and sustain them during and after the elections.¹⁵

Even though black allies for the Red Shirts did exist, it is clear that most African Americans remained loyal to the Republican party despite the growing divisions within its ranks during the election campaign. And most of those black voters who switched their allegiance faced severe rebuke from fellow blacks, including their wives. Within most black communities such betrayal often led to expulsion from the household, and sometimes even physical assaults. But white intimidation by the Red Shirts and their allies was far greater. Even so, the results at the polls were very close when the November ballots were tallied. Although the conservative Democrats had a lead of just over one thousand votes across the state, this was initially nullified by the vote count in Laurens and Edgefield Counties. County commissioners in these two districts reported voter fraud where Democrats received more votes than actual registered voters. This began the long stalemate over who had won the election. For the next several months both Republicans and Democrats claimed victory.¹⁶

In spite of this uncertainty Hampton declared himself the winner. He demanded that his Republican opponent step down. Backed by Federal troops, Chamberlain refused. A potentially bloody riot almost ensued during the last days of November 1876 as both Republican and Democratic legislators claimed victory for themselves and proceeded to occupy the same chamber in the still-unfinished South Carolina State House, each group led by rival would-be speakers, E.W.M. Mackey for the Republicans and William H. Wallace for the Democrats. The tense situation continued for four days with both sides refusing to leave the chamber. Surrounded by Federal troops, on the morning of the fourth day the Democrats reluctantly voted to leave voluntarily when the soldiers outside seemed poised to remove them by force. Meanwhile, disgruntled whites had begun to arrive in Columbia from many areas of the state to gather around the State House, seemingly bent on throwing out the Republican members regardless of the Federal troops. Before violence could break out, Hampton displayed commanding leadership when he went before the mob and requested that it disperse. As it did so, his authority was manifest, while the legitimacy of the Republican governor and his party was irrevocably weakened.¹⁷

While Chamberlain tried to hang on with the aid of Federal troops and Congressional backing, Hampton had enough public support to have himself inaugurated governor in December 1876 even though he lacked legal authority. He declared in his acceptance speech that he owed much of his success to black voters who “rose above prejudice of race and honest enough to throw off the shackles of party.” Yet even though Hampton publicly claimed this black support, others in his own party realized

that the Red Shirt bands with their intimidation tactics and recourse to violence had really “won” the election for him, not any putative black cross-over voters. A case in point: on election day in one Lexington precinct a Democratic observer admitted that only ten blacks voted the Democratic ticket. While it is difficult to assess how many blacks actually voted Democratic across the entire state, one historian estimates that probably no more than 100 blacks in each county voted for Hampton and his party.¹⁸

Nonetheless, even without substantial black support Hampton would eventually force his Republican rival to resign his office. As he and Chamberlain disputed each other’s legitimacy into the spring of 1877, Republicans’ hopes that somehow their ticket could still win grew ever dimmer. Hampton and his Red Shirts advised their supporters to pay taxes to the Democracy – that is, his own Democratic party’s regime – not to Columbia, so that the Republican regime increasingly could not operate the daily duties of government. In fact, the power of the conservative Democrats had grown to such a degree that just before Chamberlain resigned in April 1877 Hampton reputedly claimed that he would have every tax collector in the state hanged if Chamberlain refused to yield his office. But the final chapter in Republican rule only ended after Hampton visited the newly inaugurated President Rutherford B. Hayes in Washington. There he assured Hayes that he would guarantee political rights and protection to blacks as well as whites, regardless of party, and the President in turn agreed to pull out all remaining Federal troops from the state. With Federal military protection now gone, Chamberlain had no other recourse but to step down and leave the state.¹⁹

With Hampton and the Democrats finally undisputed victors, the former cavalry hero continued to claim that he regarded both races as equals before the law and that African Americans should enjoy the same political rights and protections as whites. Perhaps the “redeemer” governor truly believed this, but some, if not most, of his lieutenants did not. Men such as Butler and Gary viewed the election of 1876 in the same stark racial terms as George Tillman had previously characterized the 1868 electoral campaign: “Southern Society . . . will not have these people [i.e., blacks] rule over us.” Or as another Red shirt leader and future governor of the state, Ben Tillman, put it when looking back at that pivotal year – it was a battle between white “civilization” and black “barbarism.”²⁰

Whether Hampton considered racial dominance to be the essence of this political struggle or not, it is obvious that he viewed blacks as second-class citizens who could only participate in politics under white supervision. Old Confederates such as Butler were determined to eradicate black political participation, regardless of who might supervise black voters. Although Butler’s extreme goal, namely to remove

African Americans both from the State House and from local offices, failed in the early post-Reconstruction era, black political participation was steadily eroded over time. And the process started within months of Hampton assuming undisputed office in spring 1877. In Richland County Senator Beverly Nash and State Supreme Court Justice Jonathan Wright were forced to resign their offices by the fall of 1877 after trumped-up charges of corruption and drunkenness were brought against them. Even if they were not directly threatened, by the early 1880s most black politicians resigned once they realized how tenuous their own position in the white-dominated government had become. A few African Americans held onto their offices through the 1880s only because they came from predominately black counties. Yet even these few who clung to political office had little but symbolic impact on policy. By the 1890s white supremacy would be complete and remained so for most of the next century.²¹

Hampton's political leadership continued to have an impact through the 1878 election. He worked to improve funding for the budding public education system created by the Republicans, and expenditures per pupil continued to rise for both blacks and whites through the 1880s under subsequent governors. But while Hampton's legacy for equal education appeared genuine, his alleged desire for equality in the political process never did. During the Hampton years constitutional office-holders, that is, the elected heads of state agencies, became all white. The former general's party lieutenants found ways to stuff ballot boxes and restricted minority voters through literacy tests and grandfather clauses, two means that steadily excluded more African American voters from exercising their right to vote. And while Hampton oversaw these new restrictions of voting rights, he also did little to support the few remaining African Americans in local offices, even if they were Democrats. Likewise, the few black legislators did not remain long in office after Hampton left the governorship to become U.S. senator in 1879.²²

In 1878 Hampton was elected to a second term as governor, but plans were already afoot to send him to Washington where his influence on state politics would be minimized. Although the war hero's prestige as a "redeemer" leader would survive as a symbol of white supremacy over the hated Radical Republican regime, his power on the state political stage was no longer essential to white political dominance. Now over sixty, Hampton's age probably affected his situation, as there were younger leaders poised to take over the reins of real political control. In late 1878, following a serious hunting accident, Hampton's very survival even seemed precarious. Even though the hero and victor of the 1876 election survived his accident and continued his political career in Washington for another decade, Hampton became largely a symbol of the old guard whose influence on state politics was steadily eroded. While

respected by most of his colleagues in Congress, Hampton's tenure there had little significance for the state or the nation. He rarely spoke to the Senate and often missed sessions because of illness or infirmity. Although the conservative regime that Hampton had returned to power in 1877 continued to maintain political control in South Carolina through most of the 1880s, its days were clearly numbered as Ben Tillman's star began to rise. By the end of the 1880s even Hampton's symbolic value to the state's Young Turks, led by Tillman, was gone. The State Senate voted him out of office on 11 December 1890.²³

Hampton lived for another decade and struggled to support his family while attending Confederate reunions inside and outside the state when his health permitted. When he died in April 1902 he was praised for his determination and bravery as a soldier who did all in his power to defend his state and the Confederacy during four years of war. There is no denying that he was one of the last of the old cavaliers who fought ferociously for the Cause, but his political leadership during and after Reconstruction is more problematic. After the war Hampton tried, as a member of the old guard, to return the state essentially to some semblance of its pre-war days when blacks and most whites had accepted the planter oligarchy without question. Born into this established white planter class, he envisioned a world ordered as he perceived it to have been before secession. Although he verbally opposed violence after Appomattox, he still acquiesced in the Red Shirt campaign of 1876. Even though he continued to claim that he had garnered a significant number of black votes – allegedly 16,000 – to win back the governorship in 1876, most of his white supporters in that election subsequently admitted that Hampton was in error. As one of them, Ben Tillman, observed years later, “every active worker in the cause knew that in this he was woefully mistaken.”²⁴

A noble soldier, Wade Hampton was at best a resolute but reactionary politician, grudgingly willing to concede to blacks a place in the political arena only on white Democrats' terms. Despite his rhetoric to the contrary, Hampton accepted the tactics of intimidation and violence in order to “save” the state from what he and other white Democratic leaders considered chaos under a black-dominated Republican Party. Like most whites, he believed that the best option for all, blacks and whites, was a paternalistic society that controlled the economic and political course of the state. To Hampton, equitable distribution of political power and economic freedom for recently freed slaves was a recipe for disaster. His philosophy and upbringing made his political career one of reaction and retrenchment.²⁵

NOTES

1. Walter Brian Cisco, *Wade Hampton, Confederate Warrior, Conservative Statesman* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2004), 266.
2. Ibid., 10–12, 17, 23, 29, 31, 46; Hampton to E. Ham, 1 January 1877, Hampton Family Papers, Manuscripts Division, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia (hereafter HFP); N. Louise Bailey, Mary L. Morgan, Carolyn R. Taylor, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate, 1776–1985* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 1:656–59.
3. Cisco, 51–52.
4. Ibid., 55–163; Charles E. Cauthen, ed., *Family Letters of the Three Wade Hamptons, 1782–1901* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), 113–14; Hampton to E. Ham, 1 January 1877, HFP.
5. Hampton to R.E. Lee, 21 July 1866, HFP.
6. Cauthen, 126–141. For quotations from this letter see especially pp. 129–31.
7. Hampton to John Connor, 9 April 1868, HFP. For one of the best overviews of the general attitude towards blacks by most whites in the state after 1865, see Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 41, 44.
8. For the failed effort to forestall the election of delegates to the state constitutional convention in November 1867, see Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 385–86. For the division among whites in 1868 and the violent actions led by people like Gary, see Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 51–52.
9. For the support Hampton gave the indicted Klansmen, see Zuczek, 100; for the violence perpetrated by the organization, see *ibid.*, 94–100 and Cisco, 204–6. Also see Lou Falkner Williams, *The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials, 1871–1872* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 53.
10. On the Congressional amnesty for former Confederates see Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 504. For Hampton's tragic personal and financial problems in this period, see Cisco, 198–201, 210–11. And for his acceptance of the Democratic nomination for governor, see the typescript of narration dated 25 July 1876, HFP, and Walter Allen, *Chamberlain's Administration in South Carolina* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1888), 400.
11. For details about the Hampton political rallies see the handbill entitled "Celebration in Honor of General Wade Hampton at Winnsboro," 16 October 1876, HFP, and *Yorkville Enquirer*, 19 October 1876; the author wishes to thank Debra Franklin, South Carolina State Museum researcher, for taking extensive notes of the latter for this study.
12. The Loyal League had originally been organized in the North during the war to rally support for the Union. After 1865 many new local chapters sprang up in the South and consisted largely of freedmen.

13. For this and the following see Zuczek, 174, 176–78.
14. Dewitt Grant Jones, “Wade Hampton and the Rhetoric of Race: A Study of the Speaking of Wade Hampton on the Race Issue in South Carolina, 1865–1878” (Louisiana State University Ph.D. dissertation, 1988), 144–45.
15. See Edmund L. Drago, *Hurrah for Hampton: Black Red Shirts in South Carolina during Reconstruction* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), particularly 16, 22–34.
16. For review of the vote tallies and the stalemate that ensued, see Zuczek, 193. For black attempts to switch to the Democratic side and how insignificant such occurrences actually were, see Joel Williamson, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861–1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 408–12. Nevertheless, Cisco (232–34) tries to claim that many blacks did switch to the Democrats. Also see Richard M. Gergel, “Wade Hampton and the Rise of One Party Racial Orthodoxy in South Carolina,” *Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (1977), 6–9.
17. For an account of the stalemate in the State House after the election, see Cisco, 250–252.
18. For an account Hampton’s inaugural address and its contents, see *Charleston News and Courier*, “extra edition,” 14 December 1876, HFP, and Cisco, 256–58. For estimates on the number of black voters that supported Hampton, see Williamson, 411.
19. On the threat by Hampton see Cisco, 267. For the end of Chamberlain’s tenure see *ibid.*, 266–69.
20. For George Tillman’s remark, see Kantrowitz, 53; for Ben Tillman’s characterization, see Zuczek, 160. Also see William Cooper, *The Conservative Regime: South Carolina, 1877–1890* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968).
21. On Wright’s removal from office see James Lowell Underwood and W. Lewis Burke, Jr., eds., *At Freedom’s Door: African American Founding Fathers and Lawyers in Reconstruction South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 64–67. On Beverly Nash’s removal see John H. Moore, *Columbia and Richland County: A South Carolina Community, 1740–1990* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 265–66. For the general campaign used by Hampton and his allies to remove most blacks from office, see *ibid.*, 267. For a comprehensive examination of the removal of blacks from politics in the 1880s, see Cooper, 90–107.
22. On Hampton’s short tenure as governor and his modest success in carrying out his election promises to blacks, see Kantrowitz, 78–79; Williamson, 412–17, and Williams, 90, 96, 111–12. Also see Gergel, 9–14.
23. On Hampton’s health and waning influence, see Cisco, 270–324, and Kantrowitz, 92–94, 185.
24. Kantrowicz, 78.
25. Kantrowitz (78–79) argues persuasively that Hampton’s paternalistic view of race was really little different from the violence which Ben Tillman and Matthew Butler advocated in 1876. In the end, both sides believed that the only proper and conceivable order of society was for whites to dominate blacks.