1-1-2008

Wade Hampton III: A Symposium

Nicholas G. Meriwether
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Edited by
Nicholas G. Meriwether

THE UNIVERSITY SOUTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY
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Wade Hampton III, A Symposium.
Edited by Nicholas G. Meriwether.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wade Hampton III, A Symposium / Nicholas G. Meriwether, ed.
   p. cm.
   Includes bibliographical references and contributor biographies.
   ISBN 978-0-9801256-1-0
E467.1.H119 2008 975.708 CIP
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Acknowledgments

Many people made this volume possible, beginning with our symposium participants. We extend our thanks to them for their presentations, and especially for their cooperation in revising them for publication here.

Steve Griffith, president of the University South Caroliniana Society, first suggested the symposium and spearheaded the effort to gather the distinguished panel of scholars who participated.

Allen Stokes, Director of the South Caroliniana Library, arranged for the program, with the cheerful assistance of the Library staff.

The symposium was a team effort, but special thanks go to Beth Bilderback, Visual Materials Archivist, for procuring the photographs used in the program, which also appear on the cover of this volume. The staff pitched in to help copy edit the text, especially former Manuscripts Assistant Kathryn Graham, who did the first round of copy editing and also checked many of the references.

The greatest thanks go to the membership of the University South Caroliniana Society, whose support of the Library made possible the original program and this publication. For seventy-two years, the Society has played a central role in the preservation and promulgation of South Carolina’s history, culture, and people. This volume is a testament to their vision and generosity.
FOREWORD

Allen Stokes

More than a century after his death, the figure of Wade Hampton III still looms large in the minds of historians and in the history of his state. The scope of his life, the turbulence of his times, and the multifarious nature of his career make him an appealing, even arresting, figure whose complex legacy is still being explored by scholars, an effort furthered by the symposium that first created the essays in this volume.

The eldest of the eight children of Wade II and Anne Fitzsimons, Wade Hampton III was born in the Fitzsimons family home on Hasel Street in Charleston in 1818. He spent his youth at Millwood plantation near Columbia, graduating from South Carolina College in 1836. He married first Margaret Frances Preston (1818-1852) and second Mary Singleton McDuffie (1830-1874).

On the eve of the Civil War, Hampton was reputed to be one of the wealthiest men in the South, with extensive land holdings and a labor force of nearly 1,000 in South Carolina and Mississippi. Hampton actively managed his properties and educated himself in the most advanced agricultural practices.

Elected to the state House of Representatives in 1852 and elevated to the state Senate in 1858, Hampton was not an active participant in the agitation for secession. Despite a lack of formal military training, he obtained a colonel’s commission and financed the raising of Hampton Legion. Twice wounded, he ultimately attained the rank of lieutenant general, one of only three civilians to earn that distinction in Confederate service. He distinguished himself as commander of a brigade of J. E. B. Stuart’s Cavalry Corps and was known for his tactical brilliance in operations outside of Richmond and Petersburg. In 1864, he was appointed commander
of the Cavalry Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia, returning to South Carolina in the last year of the war to defend his native state against Sherman’s invasion.

After the war Hampton sought to rebuild his fortunes, but never regained the wealth of his pre-war years. He successfully campaigned for governor against the incumbent Daniel H. Chamberlain in 1876, though the bitterly contested election was marred by fraud and violence on both sides. Only after the withdrawal of Federal troops five months later did he formally assume office.

Hampton was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1879 and served until 1891. His final public service was as commissioner of Pacific Railways from 1893 to 1899. His last years were spent in Columbia, where he died in 1902. He is buried in the graveyard of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, where his father and grandfather are interred.

The essays that follow outline the background, career and achievements of this towering figure in South Carolina history, whose life spans the state’s most turbulent decades.
THE HAMPTON FAMILY

Virginia G. Meynard

The name of Wade Hampton is well known and revered in South Carolina, but it is not generally remembered that there were three Wade Hamptons. All were of equal importance to the state in their own time, each with an outstanding family, and the legacy of the first two helped shape the life and career of Wade Hampton III. Tracing the Hampton family lineage provides a window into the world that Wade III inherited and reshaped during his multifaceted career as planter, businessman, general, and governor. Yet his distinguished life of accomplishment, the culmination of generations of family service, also reflects the turbulent history of his state, region, and the nation.1

The Hampton family roots are in Virginia, where William Hampton arrived in 1620. Four generations later, in 1774, Anthony Hampton and his six sons—Wade I was the youngest—moved to the Upcountry of South Carolina. The boys were Indian traders who obtained deerskins and furs from the Cherokees and sold them to English merchants.

To be nearer their source of supplies, they built their homes near present Greer, S.C., on what was then the border of the Cherokee Nation. It was there, in 1776, that tragedy first struck the family, when Anthony Hampton, his wife and eldest son were brutally massacred by Indians and Tories, who swept through the settlements burning the houses of Revolutionary supporters and murdering the inhabitants. The Hampton family's service during the Revolution was distinguished, with Wade Hampton I serving

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1 This chapter is based on Virginia G. Meynard, The Venturers: The Hampton, Harrison and Earle Families of Virginia, South Carolina and Texas (Easley, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1981). References to this work are by page number within the text. Readers interested in delving more deeply into the source material informing this chapter are urged to consult this volume.
as a colonel in Sumter’s Brigade. The Revolution gave him fortune and fame; he received slaves as bounty for his military service and established himself as a merchant-planter at the Congarees. In 1782, he married a widow, Martha Goodwyn Howell, who died two years later without issue.

His reputation played an important role in his election in 1786 to the state legislature, where he was influential in the selection of Col. Thomas Taylor’s plantation as the site for Columbia, the new capital. Just two days after the vote, Wade Hampton and Thomas Taylor bought from the state, at ten cents per acre, eighteen thousand acres of virgin land located five miles below the capital site. Wade’s share—twelve thousand acres east of Gill’s Creek—extended from present Forest Lake to the Congaree River, and included much of present Fort Jackson. Garner’s Ferry Road ran through the middle of this land, and Wade I established his famous Woodlands plantation and stables on the south side.

Politics and planting were not his only activities, and Wade’s interests in culture can be seen in his work organizing the South Carolina Jockey Club and race track in Charleston. It was at a Jockey Club Ball there that he met eighteen-year-old Harriet Flud. They were married in 1786, and he built a fine manor house for her at Woodlands. In 1791, the year that Wade Hampton II was born, Wade I began to plant Sea Island cotton at Woodlands. Cotton made Hampton a wealthy man, but his happy home life came to an abrupt end in 1794 with the death of Harriet at age twenty-six. Wade, after serving a term in the U.S. House of Representatives, turned his energies toward mechanizing his plantation and was the first to establish a gin in South Carolina. Its success added to his already substantial wealth, and enabled him to expand his efforts at the track. In 1800, the Hampton string of horses won every day at the Jockey Club Meet in Charleston. The real success of the Meet, however, was his burgeoning relationship with twenty-one-year-old Mary Cantey, the younger step-sister of Harriet Flud, who accompanied the fifty-year-old Wade. They were married on the Fourth of July
1801, and she eventually gave birth to eight children.

When war threatened with Britain in 1808, Wade I, at age fifty-eight, offered his services to the U. S. Army. Promoted to brigadier general, he was ordered to build roads in Louisiana. While he was away, his cotton business was handled by his factor, Christopher FitzSimons\(^2\) of Charleston, who estimated that his client would lose thirty thousand dollars as a result of his absence from the state. FitzSimons’ estimate did not, however, take the war itself into account, and by January 1811, the war between Britain and France caused the price of cotton to plummet.

Hampton’s work in Louisiana suggested a solution. The high returns on the sugar crop there were compelling, and Wade decided to invest. He bought Houmas plantation with its two hundred slaves for three hundred thousand dollars, and from that time on, it was sugar, not cotton, that maintained the Hampton fortune. Wade I and his son, Wade II, who had reached the age of twenty-five by 1816, went to Houmas each fall for the harvesting of the cane crop. A refinery was built for turning the cane into sugar and molasses, and eventually there were four great sugar houses.

Wade Hampton II was actively involved in the family business, making frequent trips to Charleston to work with FitzSimons, who guided the young man in his transactions. Additional bonds between the two came in 1817, when Wade II married FitzSimons’ eldest daughter, Ann. General Hampton built a cottage for the couple across Garner’s Ferry Road from Woodlands, which they named Millwood. A year later, Ann gave birth to a son, and then there were three Wade Hampton. Wade II was elected colonel of the South Carolina militia, and thereafter he was always referred to as Colonel Hampton.

In 1823, Mary Cantey Hampton asked for a town house in Columbia so that the children could escape the dreaded malaria prevalent at Woodlands. General Hampton bought the Ainsley Hall

\(^2\) FitzSimons also signed his name “Fitzsimons,” which is the Library of Congress authority spelling; local custom favors the former, which has been retained here.
House on Blanding Street and the family moved in. But there were mosquitoes in Columbia, too, and within several years three of the children died. From then on, during the malarial season, the Hamptons took their surviving teenaged children, Caroline, Mary, and Susan, to White Sulphur Springs, a resort in Virginia that was the summer gathering place of wealthy Southern planters. It was at this resort that Caroline Hampton met young John Smith Preston, a recent Harvard Law graduate. They were married in 1830 and moved to his home in Abingdon, Virginia.

Wade Hampton II began to expand his holdings and bought Walnut Ridge, a 2,500-acre cotton plantation in Mississippi. He spent several months each fall at Walnut Ridge, but Millwood was home. He became one of the most influential men in South Carolina and for the next thirty years, no man achieved the office of governor or senator without his support.

Ann FitzSimons Hampton died in 1833, leaving eight children, and Wade Hampton I died two years later. In the division of his estate, Wade II took Millwood and Woodlands, and Houmas went to the widow, Mary Cantey Hampton, and her daughters, Caroline Preston, Mary Hampton, who married Thomas Player, and Susan Hampton, who married John Laurence Manning. John and Caroline Preston came from Virginia to live with her mother in Columbia, and thereafter the townhouse was called the Hampton-Preston House.

Wade II continued the family tradition of cultural pursuits, importing the noted stallion Monarch from Hampton Court in England and building his stables around the famous horse. By 1837, horse racing was at its zenith in South Carolina, and people came from all over the South to attend the annual Meet in Charleston. To house them, work was begun on the state’s first all-Greek Revival building, the Charleston Hotel, a magnificent structure with fourteen Corinthian columns. This style of architecture appealed to Wade Hampton II, and he began renovations at Millwood to change it from a country cottage to South Carolina’s greatest mansion. It
required two years to complete the project.

While Millwood was being renovated, Wade II and his close friend Col. Richard Singleton introduced the Greek Revival style of architecture to White Sulphur Springs. They began construction on three adjacent cottages on a hill overlooking the resort, one for each family and a third as a guest cottage. Each cottage had six pillars across its front, making eighteen columns in one long row. Angelica Singleton told young Wade Hampton III, “We are to have our own kitchens and stables and live like princes” (161-2).

The summer homes, called the Colonnade, were completed in 1838 and were described by Percival Renniers in his book, *The Springs of Virginia*: “Over at Angelica’s right, in the topmost Colonnade cottage, were the legendary and wealthy Col. Wade Hampton and his pretty daughters. In the other Colonnade on her left were none other than His Excellency Martin Van Buren, President of the United States, and his thirty-one-year-old bachelor son and secretary, Abram. If neighbors meant anything, they certainly were living like princes” (162).

Their social activities matched the grandeur of the architecture of the renovated cottages: “there was the reception ball,” followed by “a great barbecue at the Greenbrier River, picnics with orchestra playing behind the bushes, a dress ball every night, and deer hunts led by the two veterans Richard Singleton and Wade Hampton II” (162). That fall, President Van Buren joined the Hampton family, members of Congress, and great names from the South at Colonel Singleton’s plantation for the wedding of Angelica and Abram Van Buren. Angelica then moved to Washington and became the official hostess at the White House for her father-in-law.

That same year, Wade Hampton III, a recent graduate of South Carolina College, married John Preston’s sister, Margaret, and brought her to Millwood to live. Like his father, Wade Hampton II was an outstanding agriculturalist as well as turfman, and Woodlands was considered a model plantation. A visitor in
1840, discussing a ride across Woodlands with Colonel Hampton, commented on the stables for the stud horses and broodmares imported from England. Farther on were the slave village and the settlement called The Machines where a gristmill, two cotton gins and extensive barns were located. Nearby were animals including a large herd of purebred Durham cattle, Berkshire hogs, and a large flock of long-wooled sheep.

The minutes of the South Carolina Agricultural Society for 1839–45 show Wade II to be the principle exhibitor of horses, cattle, sheep, and hogs at the annual state fairs of the Society. They were held each October, and the animals at Woodlands were marched to town in a veritable procession headed by the Brahman bull and his progeny and ending with the sheep, lambs, and goats. It became a family ritual to gather in the early morning to see them off. Recognition of Wade II's accomplishments in animal husbandry and agricultural innovation continued even after his death, when Clemson University recognized him in 1960 as one of South Carolina's twelve greatest farmers.

Yet his career as a planter was not without its setbacks. In 1839, Wade II sold 192 slaves for $180,000, perhaps to help pay for the extensive renovations at Millwood. Regardless of the reason, the need for cash became evident when he later borrowed $34,000 from Mississippi lenders. This still left him with almost five hundred slaves in South Carolina and hundreds more at Walnut Ridge in Mississippi.

The Hampton and Preston families continued to summer at White Sulphur Springs. The majesty of the scenery and the beauty of the belles so awed a reporter from the North that he wrote in his newspaper, "The Lord made the White Sulphur Springs, and then the Southern girl, and rested, satisfied with his work" (170).

It remained for humans to complete Wade II's other architectural jewel. Renovations at Millwood were completed at last in 1840, and Colonel Hampton was host at a grand ball. Friends were invited for eight o'clock, and when they reached
A SYMPOSIUM

The tree-lined avenue leading from Garner's Ferry Road to the mansion, they found it lighted on both sides by great pine torches held aloft by servants. The first glimpse of the mansion with its twelve lofty columns stretching across the front was breathtaking. Steps led up to the mansion's piazza, which commanded a view of the surrounding countryside for twenty-five miles. The mammoth entrance door opened into a large center hall, and when the doors to the rooms on each side of this great hall were thrown open, space was provided for the largest ballroom in South Carolina. The lovely Hampton girls acted as their father's hostesses, and a lavish supper was served at midnight. Then the guests continued dancing until dawn when they could safely depart in the morning light in their carriages. Benjamin F. Perry described it as the most elegant entertainment he ever had seen. Not surprisingly, Millwood became the mecca for South Carolina's aristocracy, as well as for politicians. An invitation from Colonel Hampton meant not only the opportunity to mix with the best society in the state, but to meet and talk with the nation's most prominent political leaders, such as Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun.

Another development in the family history was the move to Louisiana in 1840 by John and Caroline Preston and their children so that John could manage Houmas plantation. The Prestons built a Greek Revival mansion there and filled it with art objects gathered in Europe. They spent most of each winter at Houmas and entertained large numbers of guests for months at a time. A visitor marveled at the luxurious cane crop, which grew twelve feet high and covered four thousand acres. The 1847 crop rendered over eight million pounds of sugar and ten thousand gallons of molasses. When the Prestons returned to Columbia in 1848, they greatly enlarged the Hampton-Preston House by adding extended wings to each side. John became involved in politics, and they traveled extensively in Europe.

Daniel Webster, the eminent senator from Massachusetts, came to Columbia in 1848 to observe the institution of slavery
on Southern plantations. He believed that slavery was evil and disastrous, but that the Constitution recognized it, and he supported the Constitution. The distinguished senator was honored at a dinner party given by the Prestons at the Hampton-Preston House, and the next day he went to Millwood for the noon meal. Webster rode over the fields at Woodlands, talked with the slaves about their tasks, and visited their cabins in the village. That evening at Dr. Robert Gibbes’ dinner table, Webster issued the startling proclamation that “no change could be made which would benefit the slaves” (177-78). Nationally, however, the debate over slavery raged on in the U. S. Senate. Wade Hampton II, although one of the largest slaveholders in the South, opposed secession and worked quietly among the South Carolina legislators using his influence for moderation.

In the decades before the Civil War, the Hamptons continued to prosper. Domestic life saw its share of joys and sorrows, triumphs and setbacks. Margaret Preston Hampton, wife of Wade Hampton III, died in 1852, and her three children were reared at Millwood by their maiden aunts, the four Hampton sisters. More dramatic was Wade Hampton II’s sudden withdrawal from the turf in the 1850s; it was said that his daughters, who had become pious members of the church, had asked that he abandon the Jockey Club races, and he respected their feelings.

In 1855, at age twenty-six, Colonel Hampton’s youngest son, Frank, married Sally Baxter of New York and brought her to Woodlands to live in the old mansion of Wade Hampton I. Sally was totally unprepared for her duties at Woodlands. She wrote her father that she unlocked the day’s supplies of sugar and flour needed by the cook, and presided over the boiling of hops and the making of yeast for bread. Then she selected the poultry and directed the proper picking of game, all necessary chores of the Southern housekeeper. She complained that as a Northern woman she was woefully untrained for her job.

Frank Hampton did not follow Wade II’s example, and helped to revive the Columbia Jockey Club. The Congaree Course
was refitted, and the Hampton colors flew there as well as in the Charleston Meet. In a gesture of support, Colonel Hampton made his first appearance at the Washington Course in five years. His hair had turned white, but he still was tall, thin and handsome at age sixty-five. He was hailed with a buzz of welcome everywhere he went, and as he passed in front of the grandstand, the crowd gave him a standing ovation.

Colonel Hampton delayed his departure for Mississippi in the fall of 1857 to attend the wedding of Wade III, then aged forty, and Mary Singleton McDuffie, twenty-eight. She was the daughter of former Governor and U.S. Senator George McDuffie and the granddaughter of Col. Richard Singleton. The groom began to build a large mansion in present-day Forest Hills for his bride called Diamond Hill. The Colonel finally left for Mississippi in January, and after reaching Walnut Ridge, he became ill. His condition progressively worsened, and he died a few weeks later.

The death of the man whom the Charleston Courier called “the first gentleman of the state” came as a shock. The funeral was held at the Hampton-Preston House with burial in the family plot in Trinity Episcopal Churchyard.

Wade Hampton III was forty years old when his father died, leaving a half-million dollars in debts. There was no will, and in the division of the estate, the four spinster daughters of Wade II received Millwood with its slaves; Frank Hampton got the Woodlands complex with its slaves; Wade III took over his father’s Mississippi plantation and all three brothers assumed parts of the debt. The Prestons, unencumbered by the Colonel’s debts, sold Houmas (twelve thousand acres and 550 slaves) in the spring for $1.5 million and left with their children for a two-year stay in Europe. They left a country convulsed with mounting tension over slavery. Wade III, like his father, opposed secession and fought for moderation. To support the moderates, John Preston returned from Paris in 1860 to lead the opposition in the state legislature. When the Secession Convention met in Charleston in December, its members
voted to secede in spite of the pleas of Preston and other moderates. Wade Hampton III refused to attend the convention and soon after the vote left for his Mississippi plantations.

After the fall of Fort Sumter in June 1861 war became eminent, and Wade III returned from Mississippi, stating that honor and patriotism required him to stand by his state. He formed his own legion of one thousand men, outfitted them with his own funds, and set up a training camp at Woodlands. Capt. James Conner believed that his company of dragoons was the best in the legion. He wrote his mother from Camp Hampton, “We are the pets of the ladies.” He was no less frank in his estimation of his leaders. The Hamptons and Prestons, he informed her, did nothing “but think, talk, and work for the legion” (218).

One evening Conner attended a party at the Preston mansion in Columbia. Riding in on horseback, he found the gardens aglow in the moonlight, with all the fountains playing. He was impressed with the Preston girls, Mamie, Buckie, and Tudie, who exerted themselves to make everyone feel at home. “Miss Mary [Mamie] Preston and I are getting to be great friends,” he told his mother (218).

A month later, Hampton’s Legion departed for the battlefields of Virginia. John Preston was commissioned a lieutenant colonel, then was promoted to brigadier general and was eventually assigned to manage the Prison Camp at Columbia. Even in war, the Hampton-Preston House continued to be the social center of the town, only now it was filled with young soldiers on leave or recuperating from wounds. Frank Hampton received his appointment as an officer in Hampton’s Brigade but delayed his departure for Virginia because of the serious illness of his wife, Sally Baxter. She died of tuberculosis in September 1862, leaving four young children. Frank then joined his brigade, leaving the children at Millwood in the care of his sisters. Tragically, less than a year later, Col. Frank Hampton was killed at Brandy Station.

John Preston was appointed superintendent of the Confederate Bureau of Conscription in Virginia in 1863, and
the family moved to Richmond. There, they quickly assumed a prominent social position with the help of another South Carolina émigré, Mary Boykin Chesnut, the wife of Gen. James Chesnut, an aide to President Jefferson Davis. Chesnut introduced them to the city's social life and the Prestons became close friends of President and Mrs. Davis. Such human ties ameliorated some of the dislocations and privations of war. Dr. John Darby of the medical corps called on Mamie Preston and brought a friend, Gen. John B. Hood, to meet Buckie, who was widely known for her beauty. Hood fell deeply in love with Buckie, and she, awed by such a dashing war hero, gave him her full attention. Darby and Hood left Richmond to join the army in Tennessee. Hood lost his right leg at Chickamauga, and Dr. Darby nursed him back to health. A few months later they were back in Richmond to find the Preston girls surrounded by young officers, but Buckie saw only Hood with his injured leg. Rumors soon circulated that they were unofficially engaged, and Dr. Darby left for England to obtain an artificial leg for Hood. Among Buckie's other admirers was Col. Rawlins Lowndes. The aide to Gen. Wade Hampton III could not take his eyes off of Buckie, a fact Chesnut noted in her diary.

General Preston was transferred back to Columbia in June 1864 to expedite the movement of troops and war materiel, and the family returned to the Hampton-Preston House. Dr. Darby returned from Europe, and General Hood, wearing his wooden leg, was placed in command in Georgia. Then the battle for Atlanta began, during which Willie Preston, the Preston's eldest son, was killed.

Mamie Preston and Dr. Darby were married at Trinity Episcopal Church in September 1864. Because the family was in mourning for Willie, the reception was cancelled, but otherwise the wedding was a very elaborate one. The bride wore a gown of tulle and lace embroidered with diamonds and pearls, and Dr. Darby's uniform was tailored in London.

General Hood retired from the army after his disastrous defeats in Tennessee and returned to Columbia in January 1865. As the fiancé of Buckie Preston, he was a guest in the Hampton-
Preston House. By that time, Union General William T. Sherman had marched through Georgia and was in Savannah preparing to strike at South Carolina.

As Sherman’s troops approached the capital, Columbians tried to evacuate. Christopher “Kit” Hampton arranged to take his four sisters, Kate, Ann, Caroline, and Mary Fisher Hampton, to York County. They departed on a train with their charges, the orphaned children of Frank and Sally Baxter Hampton. Mary Singleton McDuffie Hampton, wife of Wade Hampton III, boarded with her children, McDuffie, Daisy and Alfred. The only private accommodations General Preston could arrange for his family was a boxcar, into which they crowded with a retinue of servants.

Sherman’s army entered Columbia on February 17, 1865, and that night a great fire destroyed the city. The three Hampton mansions in the country—Woodlands, Millwood and Diamond Hill—were burned to the ground by stragglers. Commandeered as headquarters for Union officers, the Hampton-Preston House was the only family residence spared.

The Hamptons and Prestons remained in York for several months. General Hood followed them to York in April, and it was there that Buckie broke their engagement. “The Hood melodrama is over,” Chesnut wrote in her diary (243). John Preston informed Chesnut that he was taking his family abroad at once, and they would spend the winter in Paris. Before they left, however, Col. Rawlins Lowndes, still aide to Gen. Wade Hampton III, found his way to York. He and Buckie had a long ride together, and Chesnut, thinking of the Hood romance, mused, “The King is dead. Long live the King” (244).

She could well have been describing the convulsions that would continue to pull at the Hamptons in the years after the war. Mary McDuffie Hampton, her children, and the Hampton sisters with their charges returned to Columbia in May and occupied the Hampton-Preston House while the Prestons were in Europe. Construction on a cottage for the Hampton sisters was begun at
Millwood, and Gen. Wade Hampton III built a home called Southern Cross for his family near the ruins of Diamond Hill. Sally Hampton, eldest daughter of Wade III, married John Cheves Haskell, and they moved to her father’s plantation in Mississippi for the next decade. Wade III also departed for Mississippi to salvage the remnants of his plantations.

The Prestons returned from Europe in 1868, and Buckie and Rawlins Lowndes were married in the Hampton-Preston House. John and Caroline Preston had spent most of their funds in Europe and found it impossible to maintain the mansion and gardens in the style of antebellum days. To obtain the necessary funds, they put up much of their fine art collection at auction, but it was not enough. Unable to keep up the mansion any longer, they sold it in 1872 for $42,000 to the wife of the Reconstruction governor and moved to a house on Hampton Street. John Preston was elected president of the Central Bank of Columbia and the family lived on his income.

Mary McDuffie Hampton died after a long illness in 1874, and her children went to Millwood to live with their aunts. Sally and John Haskell and their children returned to Columbia in 1876 for Haskell to practice law and assist in the gubernatorial campaign of his father-in-law, Wade Hampton III. A casualty of the bitter campaign was the burning of the cottage at Millwood, the arsonist believing it was the home of the candidate.

The Hampton sisters obtained the Caldwell-Boylston House on Richardson Street and lived there while a third house was built for them at Millwood. Sally and John Haskell bought seventeen acres of the old Taylor plantation (site of Providence Hospital today), enlarged the overseer’s house, and moved in. They called it Hawkswood.

Dr. John Darby, who had become professor of surgery at New York University, died in 1879, and Mamie and her children returned to Columbia to live with her parents. John Preston, then aged seventy and white-haired, was still much sought after as a public speaker. He gave his last oration at the unveiling of the
Confederate monument on the State House grounds in 1880 and died the next year.

Disaster came again to the Hamptons in 1899. The house at Millwood occupied by the Hampton sisters was burned by arsonists, as was Southern Cross. The aging Hampton sisters, left homeless for the third time, moved into Edgehill, an old Taylor house behind Hawkswood. Wade III moved into the caretaker’s cottage at Diamond Hill and later to a house on Senate Street where he died in 1902.

The last survivor of the children of Wade Hampton II was Kate Hampton, who died in 1916 at age ninety-two. Reminiscing about the family in old age, she would shake her head in disbelief and then recount very slowly, “All gone—Wade III, Kit, Ann, Caroline, Frank, and Mary Fisher. All gone” (282). She, too, joined them in Trinity Episcopal Churchyard where the sisters are buried side by side near their father. The charred ruins of Woodlands and Diamond Hill have disappeared, but five columns that withstood Sherman’s flames still stand at Millwood. They are a symbol of one of the most distinguished and important families in South Carolina history, and a reminder of both their achievements and their sacrifices.
ON THE MORNING OF JULY 28, 1862, Brig. Gen. Wade Hampton reported for duty at Hanover Court House, Virginia, headquarters of the cavalry division of the Army of Northern Virginia. That day the South Carolinian made the acquaintance of his new commander, Maj. Gen. James Ewell Brown Stuart, of Virginia. 1

Considering that the two men were polar opposites in many respects—age, physique, personality, prewar background, military attitudes, leadership style—the meeting was an agreeable eye-opener. Hampton found the “Beau Sabreur of the Confederacy” to be personable and approachable as well as courteous and correct in his military habits. In subsequent days, when he settled into the life of the cavalry division, Hampton saw that Stuart held the confidence and respect of virtually every officer and man under him. These findings allayed his fears—derived from well-worn rumors—that Stuart was a preening egotist consumed by a thirst for newspaper publicity, the favor of powerful men, and the devotion of pretty women. 2

But Hampton was not so pleased by the other members of

the cavalry. Like many another infantry commander, he considered
the cavalry to be the refuge of impressionable youngsters who
viewed war as a genteel tournament, and of wild-eyed adventurers
for whom it was a form of blood sport. War had no charms for
Hampton, who at forty-four was twenty years older than most of
the troopers—and many of the officers—he met at Hanover Court
House and later. He saw conflict with the cold, clear eye of a life­
long civilian, but one whose experience ably qualified him for
military leadership. By the outbreak of the war, he had many years
of experience in making decisions, giving orders, and being wholly
responsible for numerous dependants, especially his extensive
enslaved labor force.

Hampton had become a cavalryman through necessity and
only because he wished to continue to serve the Confederate army
that he had joined within days of the April 1861 firing on Fort
Sumter. Although never a rabid secessionist, he had been a major
benefactor of the Confederacy, bankrolling its war efforts with
funds earned through decades of cotton cultivation. And he had
gone to war at the head of a small army of his own making—the
Hampton Legion, a force of infantry, cavalry, and artillery whose
formation and upkeep he personally financed. That force had served
prominently and well in its first engagement, the July 1861 victory
at First Manassas, where its leader had been dangerously wounded
in the forefront of the action.3

The legion spent the next several months occupying strategic
positions on the Potomac River near Dumfries and Colchester, where
it threatened Union shipping. In March of 1862, along with the rest
of its army, Hampton’s command—recently expanded to brigade
size with the addition of three regiments from Georgia and North
Carolina—withdrawed to the line of the Rappahannock River near

Confederate Veteran 23 (1915): 24-26; Wellman, Giant in Gray, 50-53; Edward
L. Wells, Hampton and Reconstruction (Columbia, S.C.: The State, 1907), 37­
38; William C. Davis, Battle at Bull Run: A History of the First Major Campaign
Fredericksburg. Early in April, the army descended to the Virginia Peninsula to occupy the defenses of Yorktown. The brigade saw little action in that sector, but late in May—after the Confederates abandoned Yorktown in favor of defending Richmond—Hampton's skill and valor earned him promotion to brigadier general.

He proved himself worthy of this honor with an able performance on the first day at Fair Oaks, the opening engagement of the Peninsula Campaign. In that battle of May 31, his foot stopped a rifle ball. The wound never completely healed, leaving him with a slight but noticeable limp.

The wound compelled Hampton to return home to recuperate. Before fully recovered, however, he hobbled back to the army in the last days of June, to find that a reorganization had resulted in most of his regiments being assigned to other generals. Accepting provisional command of a brigade under the legendary "Stonewall" Jackson, Hampton fought creditably at White Oak Swamp, the next-to-last battle of the Peninsula Campaign, before again losing his command to a more senior brigadier.

Such treatment in the face of devoted service might have incensed some commanders, but Hampton refused to bemoan his fate. His stoicism impressed Confederate President Jefferson Davis, who offered him an opportunity to retain his rank by transferring to Stuart's command, which was expanding from a brigade to a division. After long and careful consideration, Hampton agreed to the posting but only until a suitable berth in the infantry came open.

His age and background notwithstanding, Hampton was promising cavalry material—an expert horseman, a master swordsman, and a crack shot with pistol and rifle. Yet there was nothing of the cavalier about him. He eschewed ostentation, swagger, and artificial gentility. He dressed simply, made no show of his prowess with horses and firearms, and cared nothing for pomp and pageantry. His conservative bent and unassuming nature found favor among many of his new colleagues. 4 One of Stuart's

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4 Wells, *Hampton and Reconstruction*, 16-17; Wellman, *Giant in Gray*, 4, 17-20,
staff officers, the novelist John Esten Cooke, not only described the newcomer’s physical appearance but also caught the essence of his persona:

The face was browned by sun and wind, and half covered by dark side-whiskers joining a long moustache of the same hue; the chin bold, prominent, and bare. The eyes were brown, inclining to black, and very mild and friendly; the voice low, sonorous, and with a certain accent of dignity and composure. The frame of the soldier—straight, vigorous, and stalwart, but not too broad for grace—was encased in a plain gray sack coat of civilian cut, with the collar turned down; cavalry boots, large and serviceable, with brass spurs; a brown felt hat, without star or feather; the rest of the dress plain gray. . . . What impressed all who saw him was the attractive union of dignity and simplicity in his bearing—a certain grave and simple courtesy which indicated the highest breeding. He was evidently an honest gentleman who disdained all pretence or artifice. It was plain that he thought nothing of personal decorations or military show, and never dreamed of “producing an impression” upon any one.5

But not everyone in Stuart’s command warmed to Wade Hampton, then or later. More than a few, especially those in the higher echelons of the division, considered him an intruder, a usurper. Others—although loath to admit it—saw in him a living reproach to their self-centered life of display and frivolity. In turn, Hampton formed a low opinion of some of Stuart’s lieutenants, especially

5 Cooke, Wearing of the Gray, 52.
Brig. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee, nephew of Robert E. Lee, whom he sized up as vain, pompous, and condescending. Fitz’s manner was typical of the well-bred Virginian—a manner that made Hampton deeply conscious of the fact that, as a son of the Deep South, he was an outsider. It was obvious that Virginians ruled the cavalry of this army; all others were liable to be treated as second-class citizens.6

Hampton quickly saw where he stood in the social hierarchy that characterized the cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia. Despite his family’s wealth and prominence, he was regarded by Fitz Lee and other First Families of Virginia as nouveau riche. His well-known identity as one of the largest slaveholders in the South appeared to work to his disadvantage among colleagues ambivalent toward, and even defensive about, the “Peculiar Institution.” Then there was the fact that, because he had won his wreathed stars before Fitz Lee, Hampton was entitled to the post of Stuart’s second-in-command. His place at Stuart’s right hand stirred jealousy in Fitz as well as in some of Stuart’s regimental commanders.

From the start, Hampton also harbored some reservations about Stuart. The man sometimes appeared more foppish than martial—he indulged a fondness for gaudy affectations including ostrich-plumed hats, golden spurs, and crimson-lined capes, and he rode to the accompaniment of headquarters musicians. A more serious concern to Hampton was his superior’s evident penchant for risk-taking—for challenging well-mounted, well-equipped Yankees with forces small enough to suggest a contempt for his enemy but that also smacked of arrogance.

Even so, Hampton could not deny that his new commander had a wealth of experience in the military—more than enough to validate the trust placed in him by their superior, Robert E. Lee. Stuart, who graduated from West Point in 1854, had won his spurs in the First United States Cavalry. Throughout his prewar career,

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he had displayed tactical skill, cool-headedness under fire, and an abiding love of the horse soldier’s life. His many encounters with hostile Indians—the finest light cavalry this nation ever produced—had brought him an appreciation of the importance of mobility, well-directed firepower, and the mounted charge, which, if handled properly, could defeat an opponent psychologically as well as physically.7

Stuart brought this body of influence and experience to his service against the forces of the Union. After a brief stint of outpost and reconnaissance duty in the Shenandoah Valley, he won enduring fame at Manassas by leading his First Virginia Cavalry in a saber charge that routed enemy infantry threatening the critical position on Henry House Hill. The feat brought him the warm regard of his superiors and helped him win promotion to brigadier general in command of all the horsemen in the main Confederate army in the eastern theater.

His fame continued to build during a series of actions south and west of Washington, D.C. In virtually every instance, the erstwhile store-clerks and mechanics who appeared to predominate in the mounted ranks of Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan’s Army of the Potomac proved no match for Stuart’s cavaliers, most of whom had been conversant with horses and firearms since early youth.

Stuart was adept not only at combat but also at gathering intelligence. During the Peninsula Campaign, while Wade Hampton tangled with Yankee foot soldiers, Stuart led one thousand troopers and horse artillerymen on a circuit of McClellan’s army astride the Chickahominy River. The dramatic display of nerve and daring enabled the “Beau Sabreur” to bring his superior timely word of Union positions and movements south of Richmond. The intelligence enabled Lee to mount carefully directed attacks that eventually drove off the invaders, thus saving the capital from death.

by assault or siege.

By the time Wade Hampton "joined the cavalry," Stuart's reputation had been well established—as had his personality and character. In his dealings with others—superiors and subordinates alike—Stuart was open and candid, and neither egotistical nor pompous. He prized certain virtues—honor, loyalty, courtesy, dedication to cause and region—and he expected those under him to share his values. He was a shrewd judge of character and was capable of sober and mature reflection.8

Yet, as Hampton came to appreciate, there was another, less estimable, side to Stuart's persona. Although known for a disarming sense of humor, the cavalry leader was capable of displays of pique, peevishness, and anger. He could act rashly and with a dangerous sense of invulnerability, characteristics that sometimes imperiled his command. Once he set a course, he could not be deterred, and he rarely heeded those who suggested caution or moderation. He was unable to admit mistakes and feared betraying the faintest hint of weakness. And although he valued honesty as an abstract principle and would have hesitated to tell an outright lie, his after-action reports were models of evasion and special pleading, with inconsistencies and implausibilities cloaked in prose of deepest purple.9

Perhaps inevitably, given these differences, the Hampton-Stuart relationship got off to a rocky start. When Stuart organized his division, he designated Fitz Lee's command the First Brigade, Hampton's brigade the Second. It seems a minor distinction, but

in making it Stuart implied that Fitz was his senior subordinate. Probably in response to a complaint from Hampton himself, Robert E. Lee forced Stuart to renumber.\textsuperscript{10}

When he retook the field for active campaigning, Stuart led Fitz's brigade westward, in company with the main army. Having neutralized the Army of the Potomac, Robert E. Lee now concentrated against a new opponent with a presumptuous title—the Army of Virginia, commanded by Maj. Gen. John Pope—which was operating between the Rapidan and Rappahannock Rivers. The result was the campaign of Second Manassas, which, like its predecessor, ended in Union rout and retreat to the defenses of Washington.

But Hampton was not allowed to join in the victory; when starting after Pope, Stuart left his First Brigade on the Peninsula, ostensibly to ensure that McClellan made no further attempts against Richmond. Stuart knew this was unlikely, but he was aware that Hampton, lacking cavalry experience, was not ready to sally forth into combat.\textsuperscript{11}

Hampton made his debut in field command of cavalry during the Sharpsburg Campaign in September. He performed with quiet competence throughout his army's sojourn north of the Potomac, winning Stuart's approval and the grudging respect of other Virginians. Hampton, however, did not necessarily share the tastes of his Virginia comrades; for example, it appears that he did not attend the gala ball that Stuart staged on September 8 at his headquarters near Poolesville, Maryland, and to which he invited the Southern-sympathizing gentlemen of the area and their ladies fair. Most of Stuart's officers were delighted by the genteel entertainment, but given his disdain for pomp and pageantry, it seems unlikely that Hampton attended the event.

\textsuperscript{10} OR, Ser. I, Vol XII, Pt. III: 920; Wellman, \textit{Giant in Gray}, 84.

Stuart’s horsemen saw relatively little action in the September 17 fighting outside Sharpsburg, but Hampton did an effective job of covering the army’s subsequent retreat to Virginia. In October, he turned in another able performance, this time during the raid that carried Stuart’s division as far north as Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. When he entered that city, Stuart demonstrated confidence in his ranking subordinate by appointing Hampton military governor of Chambersburg for as long as the Confederates lingered in the area, confiscating rations, forage, and livestock.

Raiding was a salient aspect of life in Stuart’s cavalry, but Hampton questioned its value. He believed that cavalry’s primary mission was close support of the main army, not independent operations. In modern terms, he advocated a tactical role for cavalry rather than a strategic one. In time, he himself became adept at leading long-distance expeditions, but he limited his forays to resupply missions and intelligence-gathering operations.

Hampton never came to terms with the favoritism Stuart showed his Virginia regiments over those from the cotton states. Late in 1862 and early in 1863, while stationed at Fredericksburg, Hampton complained to family members and other correspondents of the workload his brigade had to shoulder in unremittingly bitter weather: “The country is exhausted & I do not see how we are to live. But Genl. Stuart never thinks of that; at least as far as my Brigade is concerned. He has always given us the hardest work to perform & the worst places to camp at. My numbers are already greatly reduced by our hard service, & I fear there will be no chance to restore our horses to [an acceptable] condition.”

Receiving no satisfaction from Stuart, Hampton complained directly to General Lee. This did him much harm, for the army leader thought highly of Stuart and abhorred intra-command squabbling. Early in 1863 Hampton erred again by going over Lee’s head to Jefferson Davis with a plea that his worn-down brigade be

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12 Wade Hampton III to Mary Fisher Hampton, 22 November 1862, in Hampton Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, hereafter noted as HFP.
withdrawn from the front in order to secure recruits and remounts. He gained approval to re-fit in a section of Virginia not picked over by the armies, but at the cost of alienating “Marse Robert.” Diarist Mary Boykin Chesnut claimed that on a subsequent occasion, when Hampton sought permission to go home on furlough, Lee replied: “I would not care if you went back to South Carolina with your whole division.”

Because Hampton was allowed to graze his horses far from the army, he was not on hand to support Stuart during the Chancellorsville Campaign of April–May 1863. Thus he failed to share in the glory won by Stuart and Fitz Lee, who on May 2 located the unanchored right flank of the Army of the Potomac west of Fredericksburg—a coup that caused the crushing defeat of the Federals and their new commander, Maj. Gen. “Fighting Joe” Hooker.

Hampton did take part in the next major campaign—the one that culminated at Gettysburg—but it proved a painful experience in more ways than one. On June 9, when Stuart’s camps on the Rappahannock were attacked and some of them overrun by the rejuvenated Union cavalry, Lt. Col. Frank Hampton of the Second South Carolina Cavalry fell mortally wounded in a saber-and-pistol duel south of Brandy Station. Wade Hampton never fully recovered from the loss of his beloved younger brother. Although he did not blame Stuart directly for Frank’s death, he faulted his superior for allowing himself to be taken by surprise, which he ascribed to Stuart’s chronic overconfidence.

The fighting at Brandy Station ended as a tactical draw largely because of Hampton’s heroics, but in the weeks that followed he had little opportunity to add to his reputation. He capped his participation in the Gettysburg Campaign by suffering four painful and disabling wounds—on July 2 at Hunterstown, Pennsylvania,

and on the following afternoon outside Gettysburg. When the Army of Northern Virginia withdrew in defeat, Hampton was conveyed to Virginia aboard an ambulance. His recuperation took four months, and upon his return he was greeted by a chorus of cheers from his brigade. Reportedly, Stuart was miffed by the display of welcome—perhaps because his own reputation had taken a hit at Gettysburg and in subsequent encounters with his much-improved enemy.\(^\text{15}\)

In Hampton’s absence, Stuart’s command had been expanded to corps size. Hampton and Fitz Lee, who remained Stuart’s senior subordinates, were promoted to major general to command the two divisions thus formed. Stuart retained overall command, but he was denied elevation to lieutenant general, the normal rank of a corps leader. Some observers believed he resented his failure to advance and vowed to win new honors in hopes of persuading Robert E. Lee to elevate him.\(^\text{16}\)

Perhaps as a result, his relationship with Hampton steadily deteriorated. During the Mine Run Campaign of November–December 1863, the generals clashed, and then accused each other of breaches of military strategy and etiquette. For the first time, Stuart criticized Hampton in a post-action report, omitting his name from a list of subordinates who had performed well. In his report, Hampton was more restrained although he complained that more than once during the campaign he had lost command of his division to Stuart, who had personally directed its operations without cause and without notifying Hampton beforehand.\(^\text{17}\)

As the winter of 1863–64 wore on, Hampton increasingly

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\(^{15}\) Wellman, *Giant in Gray*, 130; Rawleigh W. Downman to his wife, 7 August 1863, Downman Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society; Peter W. Hairston to his wife, 30 October 1863, Peter Wilson Hairston Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.


blamed Stuart for neglecting and overworking his troopers. His frustration grew incrementally with every rejection his superior made to his suggestions for lessening his command’s burdens. And he was enraged when Stuart permitted many of Fitz Lee’s regiments to disband for the winter and return to their homes to remount and resupply. Stuart not only disapproved similar requests by Hampton, but forced the latter’s troopers to do double duty in order to fill the void thus created.18

During the early spring of 1864, with resumption of active campaigning only weeks away, Hampton despaired of retaking the field on anything approaching an even footing with the improved Yankee cavalry. In fact, he predicted the complete ruin of his division, which he blamed solely on Stuart’s harmful policies. He wrote one of his sisters that if that happened, “I shall ask to be transferred to some other army, or I will resign. I am thoroughly disgusted with the way things are managed here...”19

Hampton’s fears were exaggerated; when the spring campaign began, his command, although reduced in manpower, horseflesh, and weaponry, gave a solid account of itself in the initial fighting in the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania. Moreover, Hampton failed to consider that disaster might strike not him but his commander. After Stuart fell mortally wounded at Yellow Tavern on May 11, a chastened Hampton praised him in addresses read to the corps and offered heartfelt condolences to Stuart’s wife and

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19 Wade Hampton III to Mary Fisher Hampton, 5 January 1864, HFP.
Upon Stuart’s passing, Hampton, by virtue of his seniority, appeared certain to succeed to command of the cavalry corps. But Robert E. Lee refused to confer the title on him until August of that year. By then, Fitz Lee—who considered himself the rightful heir to Stuart’s mantle—had been detached to take a command in the Shenandoah Valley. During those three months, whenever the two served together, Fitz more or less subordinated himself to Hampton, but when they served apart—which Fitz contrived to do as often as possible—they reported separately to army headquarters. The arrangement was not to Hampton’s liking. But, in contrast to his former habits, he kept his dissatisfaction to himself.\textsuperscript{21}

His new attitude and the ability he displayed in command of the corps during the all-cavalry engagements at Haw’s Shop on May 28 and Trevilian Station on June 11 and 12 raised his stature in the eyes of Lee.\textsuperscript{22} So did the manner in which the corps responded to Hampton’s leadership. After Haw’s Shop, one Virginian perceived “a vast difference between the old [order] and the new.”\textsuperscript{23} The troopers began to refer to themselves, with pride, as “riding infantry” and to brag of their ability to “hold a line of

\begin{footnotes}
\item20 Wade Hampton III, [narrative of the operations of the Cavalry Corps of A.N.V. during the last campaign, in reply to Lee’s circular of 31 July 1865], bd. vol., ca. 1867, HFP.
\item21 Ibid., 51-52; Edward L. Wells, \textit{Hampton and His Cavalry in ’64} (Richmond, VA: B. F. Johnson, 1899), 263-65.
\end{footnotes}
battle as well as veteran infantry."24 Such sentiments would never have been expressed were Stuart still in command.

Hampton’s men were especially impressed by the noticeable shift from a reliance on saber charges to an emphasis on dismounted fighting with rifles and carbines. One South Carolinian remarked, “We understood the art of shooting . . . and we shot to kill, and did kill lots of them.”25 A Virginian noted two results of this cultural change: “while under Stuart stampedes were frequent, with Hampton they were unknown, and the men of his corps soon had the same unwavering confidence in him that the ‘Stonewall Brigade’ entertained for their General.”26 The men also applauded Hampton’s practice, whenever operating apart from the main army, of taking along as many men and guns as higher authority would permit.

This new order prompted Lee to reevaluate Wade Hampton, whom he had feared was too old to win the respect and confidence of the cavalry. When Lee finally named Hampton to corps command, their once-fractured relationship began to heal. In the latter stages of the 1864 campaign, Lee praised the South Carolinian for his many services at Petersburg, which included his spectacularly successful raid in September on the enemy’s cattle herd, resulting in the capture of almost 2,500 beeves. Before the year was out, Hampton and his commander had forged a warm friendship, one that endured until Lee’s death in 1870.

Perhaps the greatest compliment Lee gave his “aged” cavalry leader occurred after the war, when he looked back on the chain of events that had led to Hampton’s detaching from the Petersburg front to oppose the hordes of William T. Sherman. Lee called Hampton’s absence from Virginia “the cause of our immediate

24 John R. Haw, “The Battle of Haw’s Shop, Va.,” *Confederate Veteran* 33 (1925): 373-76; Wade Hampton III to Mary Fisher Hampton, 20 August 1864, HFP; and Wade Hampton III, [narrative of the operations of the Cavalry Corps of A.N.V. during the last campaign, in reply to Lee’s circular of 31 July 1865], bd vol., ca. 1867, HFP, 55.


disaster” at Appomattox.27

Hampton savored the compliment to the end of his years. He, too, may well have wondered if things might have gone differently for the cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia, had he, rather than Fitz Lee, commanded it through the fighting at Petersburg and beyond. But he would never know, for his determination to defend his native state decreed that he must finish out the war in a distant venue, one fraught with even greater difficulties and handicaps than those he had experienced in the Virginia theater of operations.

27 Robert E. Lee to Wade Hampton III, 1 August 1865, Edward L. Wells Papers, Charleston Library Society, Charleston, S.C.
Wade Hampton III
In the Carolinas Campaign

William Joe Long

In early 1865, the outlook for the city of Columbia was grim. With the Union army on the state's border and no significant Confederate force between the city and the enemy, citizens had little reason for optimism.

Yet high expectations were still placed on one of South Carolina's favorite sons. Diarist Mary Boykin Chesnut was among those who found hope in the presence of a single, larger-than-life figure in Columbia as the Union army approached. The return of Wade Hampton III from the Army of Northern Virginia seemed to lend reassurance to beleaguered South Carolinians.

General Hampton, along with a contingent of Army of Northern Virginia cavalry, had been detached from that army to try to help protect their home state against Sherman's advancing army. A veteran of this force recalled:

As Butler's division disembarked from the long train which had brought them from Virginia, the order came to mount, and as the column reached Main street it was an inspiring sight to see these old men congregating in groups and congratulating themselves that Columbia was now safe. That Sherman would be whipped beyond the limits of the State did not permit of a question.32

These impossible expectations rested heavily on the shoulders of the state's hero. Four long years had gone by since Wade Hampton had outfitted his "Hampton Legion" for the war, but he still wore one of the heavy Prussian swords he had purchased.

for his cavalry. Its blade bore the motto “draw me not without reason; sheathe me not without honor.” Hampton had demonstrated his reluctance for war in 1860, refraining even from voting for secession while in the legislature. During the Carolinas Campaign he would live out the second half of the motto as well.

For his soldiers, often engaged in skirmishing against Kilpatrick’s cavalry, Union foraging parties, and “bummers,” the Carolinas campaign would be fought not so much for strategic goals as for highly personal stakes, including the lives and property of family and friends. For Wade Hampton, too, this campaign would be a very personal one, as devastating to his private life as to the Confederate cause. Through its tragic course, however, he would show his leadership qualities in the most difficult circumstances, and emerge with a reputation not only un tarnished, but enhanced among his fellow citizens.

As Hampton took over the cavalry opposing Sherman in South Carolina, he had more than the enemy to contend with. A thorny command problem awaited him, as his detachment joined the forces of Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler in Columbia.

By this time, Hampton had learned a lot about difficult subordinates, partly by being one to Gen. Robert E. Lee in Virginia. In the consolidation of his cavalry command, all of his leadership skills would be required. Just before combining his forces with Wheeler’s, Hampton had received a promotion to lieutenant general—a rank which Wheeler openly coveted. Worse, the promotion appeared to have been made specifically to give Hampton command of the force, in response to reports of poor discipline among Wheeler’s cavalry in Georgia.

Wade Hampton III and “Fighting Joe” Wheeler had strongly contrasting personalities and command styles. Wheeler was a West Pointer committed to a military career; Wade Hampton III had received no formal military training at all and never showed any military ambitions before the war. Hampton was forty-seven in 1865, while Joe Wheeler, at twenty-nine, was among the youngest
general officers in American military history. The diminutive Wheeler, nicknamed “the War Baby” by his men, was also physically dwarfed by his new commander, the “Giant in Gray.” Their respective commands contrasted as strongly as they did themselves.

I will certainly be making some generalizations about those commands, which can be a dangerous thing. Careless caricatures have sometimes seemed to render Wheeler troopers as “spaghetti western” characters, and M. C. Butler’s troopers into cover models for “historical romance.” It is important to realize that each soldier was an individual, and that dramatic touches to their portrayals are misleading for the same reason that they draw our attention: they tend to depart from the ordinary pattern. Likewise, in accounts written after the war, many soldiers may have played to the “images” of their units to some extent.

With this said, however, Butler’s command certainly contained a critical mass of “blue bloods.” Many of Hampton’s South Carolina cavalry were planter’s sons who had been expert recreational riders before the war and considered themselves full-fledged incarnations of Southern chivalry. Among them were the famed Charleston Light Dragoons and a cadet company of students who had left The Citadel to join the Confederate army together. By February of 1865, these young men were no longer mere parade-ground equestrians, but their experience of war was very different from that of Wheeler’s Western soldiers. The Carolinians were recent veterans of the bloody but conventional warfare around Petersburg, and while they had adapted their tactics with changes in technology, they considered themselves cavaliers, carrying the mantle of J. E. B. Stuart.

The difference in the command cultures of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of Tennessee had also left their mark on the soldiers in their respective cavalry commands. While both Wheeler’s men and Hampton’s had developed strong personal loyalties to their immediate commanders, they had had contrasting
experiences with higher army authorities. The Army of Northern Virginia was, famously, the army of men shouting “Lee to the rear!” while it might justly be suspected that the Army of Tennessee had a number of men muttering “Bragg to the very front” below their breath. While griping was far from unknown in any command, I think it is reasonably safe to say that in 1865 a soldier from Lee’s army was more likely to have developed a degree of trust in and affection for the higher levels command, while an Army of Tennessee soldier might well harbor more suspicion.

Wheeler’s command had also developed a very different relationship with civilians. Chronically undersupplied, Wheeler’s cavalry often “lived off the land” even in Confederate territory, “confiscating” food and supplies so freely that some Southern civilians said they dreaded the approach of Wheeler’s men as much as that of the enemy. Their bad reputation may have been compounded by their nondescript appearance. Since Wheeler’s men were attired largely in civilian clothing or even captured Union gear, any motley group of mounted men might believably identify themselves as “Wheeler’s men,” and the misbehavior of assorted bushwhackers, deserters or “bummers” might thus have been ascribed to them.\(^3\)

However, there were certainly plenty of actual incidents of misbehavior as well, as Wheeler himself acknowledged. A reminiscence by one of his men recounted an incident in South Carolina after Wheeler and two scouts had crossed the Pee Dee River and taken shelter with a farm family:

We told the old man that we were Confederates, but did not tell him of what command. We could hear

\(^3\) In the collection of the S.C. Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum is a piece of cloth from a bloodstained couch, used by a wounded Confederate during the battle of Aiken. The donor, a small child at the time of the battle, related in a letter at the time of donation that he remembered “a squad of Wheeler’s men go into the rear of Merritt’s store and exchange clothes with the Yankees, saying to them, ‘You can get more soon, we can’t—no matter about the color!’” SCCRRMM Accession Records, no. 3.59.
him giving Wheeler's cavalry the d— and lamenting that they were on the other side of the river and likely to cross. . . . The General would agree with him that the cavalry were mighty bad men and would rob and steal everything in sight. The old man said he would have to hide all his stuff the next day, at which Wheeler laughed and agreed with him.\textsuperscript{34}

Wheeler's cavalry justified their confiscation of property, however, with the observation that they were fighting to prevent the destruction of the very farms from which they stole their rations, and doing so while chronically undersupplied. This rationalization was sometimes even pushed to justify stealing anything which "the Yankees are going to steal anyway" and was bound to lead to conflict with their South Carolina cavalry comrades and their new commander.

In fact, in one of Wade Hampton's earliest encounters with his new troopers, weapons were drawn; he encountered some of Wheeler's soldiers looting stores along Richardson Street (now Main Street) and faced them down.\textsuperscript{35}

Wheeler's cavalry also had a bad reputation for their treatment of prisoners of war, or more accurately, for their failure to take them. Hampton would learn, perhaps to his chagrin, that this reputation too was sometimes justified. In the immediate aftermath of the burning of Columbia, and perhaps without sufficient familiarity with the Western troopers of his new command, he briefly interrogated a Union prisoner taken by two of his new "scouts." A cavalry courier related the aftermath:

\begin{quote}
General Hampton asked: "To what command do you belong?" The prisoner answered: "To Kilpatrick's Cavalry." Then he asked again, "What did you
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{34} E. H. Mc Knight, "Scouting with General Wheeler," Confederate Veteran 19 (February 1911): 72.

\textsuperscript{35} Marion Brunson Lucas, Sherman and the Burning of Columbia (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1976): 54.
do to Columbia?” to which the prisoner replied: “We burned it up, sir.” General Hampton’s almost verbatim reply was: “Well, sir, I have every reason to believe that you have told me the truth, for we saw the whole heavens lit up; but I always verify before I act, and if I find you have told the truth, I will shoot every man of you I catch.”

Dismissing the scouts and the prisoner, we proceeded. . . . After riding perhaps half a mile General Hampton stopped and ordered me to ride back and get some additional information from the prisoner. I galloped back, overtaking the scouts at a branch which crossed the road, and was in speaking distance, but not anticipating the tragedy which followed, saw one of the scouts . . . without a word of warning and before I could speak, send a bullet crashing through the poor fellow’s brain. Returning to General Hampton, I found him on the firing line talking to Gen. M. C. Butler and made my report, to which he made no reply.36

E. P. Henderson, one of Hampton’s South Carolina cavalrymen, related in his Autobiography of Arab that the Carolinas Campaign took on a vastly different tone than the Virginia battles of the South Carolina cavalry: “The six weeks we scouted together, I could recount incidents that would ‘make your blood boil in your veins, and your hair rise on your head,’ that would fill a dozen books like this . . . they had better be left unwritten.”37

The ruthless nature of the cavalry skirmishing associated with the campaign led to threatening correspondence between Hampton and Sherman, with the latter blaming Wheeler’s cavalry for the summary execution of Union foragers and threatening

reprisals upon Confederate prisoners of war. Hampton suggested that perhaps civilian bushwhackers were lynching foragers and threatened counter-reprisals for any prisoner executions. However, while that bitter exchange has been examined in depth, the *Official Records* of the war also contain an oft-overlooked report by Union General John Geary which hints at the complexity of the strategic situation in South Carolina in 1865:

During our occupation of Winnsborough the best of order was preserved. . . . Lt. Gen. Wade Hampton, commanding the enemy’s cavalry forces, had left with the mayor a note pledging his word that any men of our army who might be left in the town as safeguards after the departure of the main forces should be protected from arrest and injury if overtaken by any of his troops. At the urgent request of the mayor and citizens I left two mounted men from my provost guard. The citizens of the town after our departure, organized themselves under these two men, drove out a few stragglers from our army who came into the place, and preserved good order . . . until a detachment of Butler’s rebel cavalry entered the town the next morning, who showed my men every courtesy in their power . . . the incident was a very remarkable one in the midst of such a campaign as that of our army through South Carolina. 38

While the incident certainly was, as Geary noted, “remarkable,” it is also noteworthy because of its implications for the restoration of civil order in the aftermath of the war. Wade Hampton’s “word” held in the midst of this particularly brutal campaign and allowed mortal enemies to cooperate, at least briefly.

Successful cooperation between Butler’s and Wheeler’s

troops was achieved as well; in the long fighting retreat across South Carolina, the commands would develop an effective working relationship under Hampton’s strong and steady guidance, culminating in the successful surprise attack and rout of Judson Kilpatrick’s Federal cavalry at Monroe’s Crossroads on March 10, 1865.

One particular strength of Hampton’s tactics would always be the employment of his soldiers in accordance with their capabilities. Wheeler’s variously-armed and often unorthodox soldiers were at their best carrying out scouting and raiding duties, although also quite capable of dismounted fighting, such as that at Congaree Creek near Columbia. Butler’s South Carolina cavalry were noted saber fighters as well as experienced practitioners of the latest “mounted infantry” tactics—an apparent contradiction quickly resolved with further examination.

Wade Hampton’s armament report of December 1864 is most instructive on this account. Of 4,452 armed cavalrymen in his Army of Northern Virginia command at that point, more than one-fourth (1,369) lacked sabers, 925 had no “long guns,” and 4,079—around eighty-five percent—had no issued revolvers. Thus one reason for the use of the outdated saber was the simple fact of its availability.

This summarized, by the way, the 4,452 “armed” cavalrymen, but Hampton reported 1,100 men of his command at that point with no weapons at all. The military role of these men would be as “horse holders” in dismounted engagements, a vital service when employing these tactics. It is probably a safe assumption that a similar proportion of long guns, sabers, revolvers, and unarmed men existed in the eight-hundred-man detachment from the Army of Northern Virginia which accompanied Hampton to South Carolina.

These men would face Federal cavalry who were uniformly equipped with revolvers, carbines and sabers, and among them would be many armed with the new Spencer repeating rifles. It
seems easy to understand, then, Hampton's preference for fighting
dismounted, and if possible from behind defensive works, against
such superior firepower.

Less obvious are the advantages of the Carolinians' saber
fighting propensity. Late in the war, many regarded the saber as
reduced to complete anachronism. Indeed, J. S. Mosby famously
wrote that his men gave no more heed to sabers than to cornstalks.
However, the saber still promoted the *esprit de corps* of the vaunted
South Carolina cavalry, and for a force chronically short of revolvers
it also provided a formidable close-combat option.

This was, of course, another point of contrast with Wheeler's
Western men. Charles Calhoun of the Sixth South Carolina related
an anecdote from the first meeting between the two commands in
Columbia. Calhoun said that one of Wheeler's troopers lightheartedly
asked a South Carolina trooper what the metal "thing" was hanging
from his saddle. The cavalryman told him that it was a saber and
that he should have kept his own, since Hampton's command still
used them.39

Indeed, Capt. James Moore of the Second South Carolina
Cavalry noted that "there was nothing Hampton's men liked so
well in a fight as a chance to use their sabres." After a Virginia
engagement he reported having seen "about 50 captured Federals
... most of them with sabre cuts in their heads."40

Hampton himself also demonstrated a personal affinity for
saber fighting, most famously at Hunter's Down in the Gettysburg
campaign, but also on other occasions during the war. He was a
great believer in the shock effect of a properly-timed mounted
charge and used this tactic to good effect more than once in the
Carolinian's Campaign.

At Monroe's Crossroads, Wheeler was overheard asking
permission to dismount the men to attack, but Hampton said "as
a cavalryman, I prefer making this capture on horseback," and

39 C. M. Calhoun, *Liberty Dethroned: A Concise History of Some of the Most
40 Brooks, *Butler and His Cavalry*: 179, 182.
trooper Charles Calhoun of the Sixth, near him in the assault, said
he fought “as though a private that day.” Calhoun mentioned that
Hampton drew his sword as he ordered the charge.41

The fight at Fayetteville, North Carolina, was a classic
instance, and perhaps the last one, of Hampton’s man-to-man
fighting prowess. This was a month after the burning of Columbia,
and by this time Union troops ranged virtually at will across the
dying South; it is hard at this distance to fathom the spirit that could
keep men fighting under those hopeless conditions. One factor
which surely contributed, however, was the personal leadership
shown by Wade Hampton:

On the 11th March, 1865, we went into the town of
Fayetteville, N. C. I was riding along with General
Hampton at the head of Wheeler’s Cavalry.... I rode
on down to Cape Fear bridge, and General Hampton
was there trying to rally the men, but he could not do
so. I galloped up to him and said, “General, there are
not over ten or fifteen Yankees here. Give me four or
five men, and I will whip them out of town.” ....

He said to me, “Scott, where are they?” I told
him to the left of the market house. As we turned
the corner they commenced firing on us, and we on
them. General Hampton said, “Charge them.” We
charged them and shoved our pistols right in their
faces and got them started on the run, up one street
and down another, consequently some of them who
had gone towards the bridge got behind us. After
we had killed or captured most of this squad we
were after, I looked and saw some behind us, and I
yelled, “General here they are behind us.” General
Hampton said: “Men, sit still and pick them off one
by one as they come down.” They came down as
hard as they could, and we picked them off. I saw

41 Calhoun, Liberty Dethroned, 181; 179-80.
General Hampton cut down two with his sabre that morning. . . . We killed thirteen and captured twelve. . . . General Hampton had with him in this affair Privates Wells, Bellinger and Fishburne of the Charleston Light Dragoons, Scott and one member of General Wheeler’s command.”42

U. R. Brooks remembered of that day that “one of them had no better sense than to come at General Hampton with his saber, and when he got near enough General Hampton straightened in his stirrups and with one slash of his sword split the poor devil’s head down to his body.”43

Capt. F. F. Eve, a Georgia cavalry veteran, read these accounts and responded that “I have heard Gen. Hampton, with snapping eyes, tell of this little affair. . . . The old General’s sabre stood him in good stead that day.”44 Just as Hampton’s return to South Carolina reassured Columbia’s civilians beyond all reason, his leadership in the field during the campaign buoyed the morale of his soldiers.

In the closing days of the war, Capt. Rawlings Lowndes had occasion to talk to Union General Kilpatrick under a flag of truce. Kilpatrick had recently been humiliated by that surprise attack, and he had suggested that he and his men would have done better against Hampton under “fair” conditions. Lowndes replied,

“Well, General, I make you the following proposition, and I will pledge myself that General Hampton will carry it out in every respect. You, with your staff, take 1,500 men, and General Hampton, with his staff, will meet you with 1,000 men, all to be armed with the sabre alone. The two parties will be drawn up mounted in regimental formation opposite to

42 Brooks, Butler and His Cavalry, 112-13.
each other, and, at a signal to be agreed upon, will charge. That will settle the question which are the best men.” They all laughed, but did not accept the proposal, and said they would consider it. This bravado characterized the men of Hampton’s command, many of whom returned home “under arms” from North Carolina without surrendering at the war’s end. He had not worked the strategic miracle which the most optimistic Confederate civilians had hoped for—but true to the motto on his saber, he had also returned with his dignity and his leadership reputation intact. In fact, when the state’s Democrats later looked for a leader to accomplish a political miracle, and despite “difficult subordinates,” Wade Hampton would be their candidate of choice.

At the Relic Room we have many reminders of courage, of fidelity, of noblesse oblige, but Hampton himself provided the most eloquent proof of those qualities which so endeared him to his men and his state. In his final public address he said:

That is all I shall ask of South Carolina—a few feet of earth where my kindred for six generations are resting. And I am proud to say that one or more of each generation since they were known in South Carolina has filled a bloody grave for South Carolina. . . . I claim no credit for that. Every South Carolinian who was true was willing to give his blood and his life for the old State. I am sure that I was willing to do so. I think I can say so to you, my men, that I never turned my back upon any of you when your faces were turned toward the enemy. . . . I pray that God will bless you and will give you peace and prosperity, give it to the old State, give it to each

45 Edward L. Wells, *Hampton and His Cavalry in ’64* (Richmond, VA: B. F. Johnson, 1899), 423.
one of you and that you will go home and tell your kindred that you have seen your old comrade and that he thanks you for them.46

46 "Hampton’s Last Request," Columbia State, November 20, 1906. Reprinted from a unspecified ca. 1902 article.
HAMPTON AND THE IRONIES AND LIMITATIONS OF SOUTHERN MODERATION

Gaines M. Foster

Bloody as well as contentious in South Carolina, the election of 1876 marked the end of Reconstruction, when Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was declared the president of the United States and Democrat Wade Hampton III, governor of South Carolina. Within the Palmetto State, the Democrats seeking to elect Hampton—and thereby end Republican control of the state—pursued two very different, but ultimately complimentary, strategies. Led by Edgefield County’s Martin Witherspoon Gary, one faction advocated radical white supremacy and sought to remove all African Americans from politics and make them subservient to whites. In behalf of that cause, Gary, his Radical followers, and many of the Red Shirts and other paramilitary bands active in the campaign sought to confront Republican politicians whenever possible and frighten blacks away from the polls. Even before the campaign formally began, whites attacked blacks in Hamburg in a deadly confrontation that left one white and at least seven blacks dead. During the campaign, violence broke out in other towns as well. Meanwhile, candidate Wade Hampton, who personified and led a second, moderate faction within the Democratic Party, advocated a different approach to the campaign and promised a different South Carolina if he won. Throughout the campaign Hampton eschewed violence, even on occasion condemning the violence that did occur. He appealed for African-American votes and called for the creation of a unified and harmonious South Carolina after the election.¹

¹ The account that follows relies heavily on Manly Wade Wellman, Giant in Gray: A Biography of Wade Hampton of South Carolina (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1949); William J. Cooper, The Conservative Regime: South Carolina,
At the end of an extremely tense campaign, both Democrats and Republicans claimed victory—at both the national and the state level. Within South Carolina, the Democrats appeared to have elected Hampton, but Republicans claimed they had done so through fraud and intimidation of potential African-American voters. The State Board of Canvassers, controlled by the Republicans, threw out the votes of Edgefield and Laurens Counties, which gave the Republicans control of the state’s House of Representatives and would have made Hampton’s opponent, Republican Daniel H. Chamberlain, governor of the state. The Democrats vehemently disagreed and took their cause to the state supreme court, which ruled in the Democrats’ favor. At that point, a five-month standoff began as Democrats and Republicans both claimed victory, Hampton and Chamberlain both claimed to be governor, and in effect two groups of legislators claimed to be the state’s legitimate House of Representatives.

During the first two weeks of that standoff, two potentially violent confrontations occurred at the State House in Columbia. In the first days after the election, the Republicans elected to the House of Representatives, many but not all of them African-American, met and organized in the House chamber. Federal troops, part of a contingent President Ulysses S. Grant sent at Chamberlain’s request during the campaign, occupied the State House to ensure the Republican House’s continued existence. On November 28, Democrats elected to the House went to the Capitol and sought and gained admission, but military authorities did not allow the

challenged representatives, those from Edgefield and Laurens Counties, to enter. Inside the Capitol the two sides gathered, and political opponents jostled one another while outside, a crowd of hostile whites assembled, determined that the Democrats take control of the government. Violence loomed as the very real possibility that the whites outside the State House might charge it, try to throw the Republicans out, and thereby provoke a confrontation with Federal troops. The Federal officer in charge sent for Wade Hampton. Hampton, who had been nearby, arrived, and in a one hundred and twenty-five word speech calmed and dispersed the crowd. The crisis passed.²

Two days later, Democratic legislators once more marched into the State House, and four of the more bizarre days in the political history of South Carolina ensued. Democratic and Republican legislators occupied the same chamber in the Capitol. Many members of both houses were armed, and the possibility of violence was again very real. After initial tension, though, the two sides proceeded, independently, to act like a legislature and, on occasion, some good humor prevailed. On the third day, rumors began to circulate that Republican constables in the State House had summoned members of a “black gang” from Charleston, who had arrived and sneaked into the Capitol. They along with the constables, the rumors foretold, would soon throw the Democratic legislators out of the House chamber. The truth of the rumors is almost impossible to ascertain. They could have been true; blacks had participated in confrontations across racial lines during the campaign. Or they could have been started to provide an excuse for whites to resort to violence, as often had happened during Reconstruction. In either case, the rumors exacerbated an already

² In addition to the sources mentioned above, see Alfred B. Williams, Hampton and His Red Shirts: South Carolina’s Deliverance in 1876 (Charleston, S.C.: Walker, Evans, and Cogswell, 1935), 375-98. Williams gives a good sense of the tension and potential for violence in the two incidents. He covered the conflict as a reporter but wrote this version much later, in 1926–1927. See also Times (London), December 12, 1876, p. 6, and, for praise of Hampton’s moderation, p. 9.
tense environment. Hampton called for reinforcements, and whites from other areas of the state—many of whom had served with the Red Shirts and rifle clubs that earlier in the election had resorted to violence—descended on Columbia. The city filled with three to five thousand men, reports estimated, some clearly willing—if not eager—to attack the Capitol, ensure a Democratic legislature, and inaugurate Wade Hampton as governor.  

Then, the Democrats changed course, although exactly why is not clear. On December 4, they withdrew from the State House and went back to Carolina Hall, where they continued to meet, still acting as if they were the legislature of South Carolina. That night, whites milled about the streets, many apparently angered by the withdrawal. Martin Gary, once again advocating radicalism and confrontation, delivered an angry speech. For a second time, an assault on the Capitol seemed a real possibility. Once again, Wade Hampton addressed the crowd. Speaking only a few words, the former general assured angry white Democrats that he would be governor and calmed the crowd. Tensions eased; the potential mob dispersed. Twice in two weeks, a few words from Wade Hampton had helped avert violence and prevent white Democrats from attacking the State House—and its detachment of Federal troops.  

Hampton turned out to be correct—though not right away. Four months later, he did become governor. But before that victory, South Carolina continued to have two legislatures and two governors. When the disputed election for president was resolved, with Republican Rutherford B. Hayes declared the winner, the new president met with both Chamberlain and Hampton. Shortly thereafter, perhaps as part of a compromise that had given him the

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4 Williams, *Hampton and His Red Shirts*, 399-418. Another account that gives a sense of the potential for violence is found in Myrta Lockett Avary, *Dixie After the War: An Exposition of Social Conditions Existing in the South, During the Twelve Years Succeeding the Fall of Richmond* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1906), 353-73.
White House, Hayes ordered the Federal troops that had for so long supported Chamberlain and the Republican House's claim to power, back to their barracks. Wade Hampton became the sole and official governor of South Carolina, the Democrats regained control of the state, and Reconstruction in the state came to end.

Why is Hampton's role in preventing these two potential attacks on the State House so important? There are three reasons. First, the story of the Democratic assault that did not occur helps historians know how to frame Reconstruction, that is, how to put Reconstruction into the proper narrative context. The end of Reconstruction, which Hampton's victory in part signaled, was called "Redemption" by white Southerners at the time who believed that they had redeemed the state from the corruption and evils of "Negro rule" and by many historians since who have employed the term ironically. Journalist Nicholas Lemann recently published a study of Redemption which mentioned South Carolina although it focused primarily on Mississippi. He titled his book *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War*. Lemann thereby framed Reconstruction as the continuation of the Civil War, an interpretation that has many supporters among historians, especially historians of the Palmetto State. Richard Zuczek's study of Reconstruction in South Carolina, *State of Rebellion*, treats white opposition to Reconstruction as a continuation of the war, as does the new standard text on South Carolina history, Walter Edgar's *South Carolina: A History*. Edgar titles his chapter on Reconstruction "The Civil War, Part II, 1865-1877." Yet if Reconstruction had simply been a continuation of the Civil War and Redemption its climactic battle, the white Democrats around the State House should have attacked and brought the war to an end in military fashion. They did not.  

Historians' attraction to the idea of Reconstruction as a continuation of the Civil War is certainly understandable. On many

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occasions during Reconstruction, whites, often in paramilitary bands such as South Carolina's Red Shirts and rifle clubs, attacked blacks and Republicans, and that violence often became the means through which white Democrats retook control. But rarely did white Southerners attack federal troops. Moreover, a determination to preserve white supremacy characterized both the Confederate war effort and the battles of Reconstruction—but then the preservation of white supremacy has characterized much of American history. The Civil War was about slavery and secession. Reconstruction, as Hampton understood and reminded his fellow South Carolinians, was about neither. Reconstruction is best understood not as the continuation of the Civil War, but as the first attempt to wrestle with the problems that the war had left—the meaning of freedom for African Americans and the shape of a society without slavery. Redemption, in turn, was not the last battle of the war, but a crucial confrontation in what would continue to be a contest over the nature of the New South. Reconstruction is best understood as the first failed attempt to create a new South. Framing Reconstruction in that way also puts Hampton's moderation in the larger context of the role of moderates and moderation in the history of a new South and a new South Carolina.

A second reason to focus on the two confrontations at the South Carolina State House in the fall of 1876 is that they reveal an irony inherent in Southern moderation. Appreciating that irony, though, requires counterfactual speculation—in other words, it involves trying to imagine what would have happened had history proceeded differently. In this case, what would have happened had white mobs on either November 28 or December 4 attacked the State House? They could have easily overcome the small Federal detachment guarding the Capitol and installed a Democratic government. But how would the federal government have responded to a direct assault on federal troops and federal power? Such an attack may not have led to another Civil War, as some at the time predicted, but it very well might have prolonged
Reconstruction. Direct, armed defiance of federal authority and, conceivably, the killing of federal troops would have made it very difficult for then-President Grant not to intervene more actively in the political confrontation in South Carolina and might have made it politically impossible for President Hayes to withdraw federal troops. In preventing such an armed confrontation, then, Hampton probably speeded an end to Republican rule and Reconstruction. During the campaign, Gary's radicalism made Hampton's victory possible but, in the period that followed, Hampton's moderation, especially his calls for patience and peace, brought an end to federal involvement and led to his inauguration. Therein lies the irony: in 1876-77, Hampton's moderation saved Gary's radicalism.

A third reason to dwell on the story of the confrontation in Columbia is for what it reveals about Wade Hampton and the nature of his influence in South Carolina. On each occasion when Hampton helped prevent violence, he made a relatively brief appearance before the crowd and offered little in the way of justification for retreat. He calmed the crowd and convinced them to disperse primarily through his presence, not by what he said, but because of who he was. He had made a similar appeal during the campaign itself. Hampton commanded the loyalty of so many white South Carolinians because of his family's history, his Civil War record, his own aristocratic bearing, and his commitment to noblesse oblige. He pioneered what became a common Southern political style, a politics of personality. Hampton's references to the war, in fact, epitomized his approach. He sought to remind South Carolinians that he had stood with them in the state's greatest crisis and that they could trust him to protect them now because he had proven his loyalty then. Hampton and other Bourbon politicians ruled in part through just such an appeal to cultural unity rooted in a personal identification with a responsible aristocracy. In Hampton's case, white South Carolinians responded with tremendous respect and adoration for their leader. A generation later, politicians such as Benjamin Tillman and Theodore Bilbo in Mississippi practiced
another form of the politics of personality, one based on a more literal appeal to identification: “I am one of you so you can trust me to battle those who are not, blacks and rich folks alike.”

Hampton’s politics of personality proved successful as early as 1865 when he was almost elected governor despite having declined to run. His use of who he was as a means to sustain moderation, a moderation that saved Gary’s radicalism from itself in 1876–77, developed more slowly. In April of 1865, few would have expected Gen. Wade Hampton to become a voice for moderation. If anyone in the Confederacy had a right to feel bitter at the end of the war, Hampton did. He had been wounded twice, he lost a brother and a son in battle, and his home was destroyed (although by whom is not clear). In the days immediately after Appomattox, in fact, Hampton had not counseled moderation. He avoided surrender with Gen. Joseph Johnston at Bennett House and urged Jefferson Davis to continue to fight. He tried to join Davis in the Confederate president’s flight south, riding hard to catch up with him. Finally, overcome by exhaustion and advised by family members, he gave up. He soon abandoned the idea of continued resistance and by the summer of 1865 he publicly opposed calls for Confederates to emigrate to Mexico and urged white Southerners to stay and work to build up the South. He went to Mississippi and tried to revive the operation of his plantation there.6

In the months and years that followed, Hampton urged adjustment to the realities of defeat. Secession and slavery were dead, Hampton argued; Southerners must adjust and construct a new social order. He became a pragmatic moderate, however, not a scalawag or Radical. He never wavered in his commitment to white supremacy, and he always envisioned a social order in which black laborers worked for white land owners. Hampton

6 In addition to the sources already cited, Hampton’s attempt to prolong the war can be traced in Lynda L. Crist, ed., The Papers of Jefferson Davis, vol. 11 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 548, 556, 568. For a copy of Hampton’s public letter against emigration see New York Times, August 9, 1865, p. 2.
campaigned against what he termed the "unconstitutional, revolutionary" Reconstruction laws of 1867 and always condemned the Republican-controlled governments that followed. He did not play an active role in politics through much of Reconstruction, however. In need of employment after he failed to make a go of his Mississippi plantation and had to declare bankruptcy, he spent most of the years from 1868 to 1876 in the insurance business and outside the state of South Carolina.\(^7\)

In 1876, Hampton returned to the state and ran for governor. Eleven years before, Hampton had been one of the first prominent whites in the South to call for at least limited black suffrage. He proposed that African Americans who met certain educational qualifications be allowed to vote. During the 1876 campaign for governor, even as Gary and other Radicals fought to remove blacks from politics, Hampton sought African-American votes. In asking blacks to vote for him, he defended their rights, especially those granted under the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution. He promised that, if elected, he would preserve those rights and make African Americans part of a post-Reconstruction South Carolina. Some historians, perhaps even Lewis P. Jones, who considered Hampton’s approach a lost opportunity, have gone too far in lamenting South Carolina’s rejection of Hampton’s vision of more harmonious race relations. But compared with Gary’s Radical white supremacy and the disfranchisement of virtually all blacks and the reign of white racial terror that came in the 1890s with the leadership of Gary’s disciple Benjamin Tillman, even Hampton’s halting steps toward better race relations appear moderate.\(^8\)

In placing Hampton’s moderation in the context of the


history of the New South, though, its limitations are as important as his moderation—in part because they resembled the limitations inherent in Southern moderation over the next century of the region’s history. Hampton rooted his appeal for racial cooperation in economic necessity: landowners needed labor, laborers needed jobs, and the state needed to restore its prosperity. He also based his call for a new society on an appeal for law and order. South Carolina, he maintained, had lost the war and had to accept the changes defeat brought—an end to slavery and the new amendments to the Constitution. African Americans who pushed for more, especially full equality, and supported the Republican Party, Hampton dismissed as the dupes of outsiders. Aristocratic whites, he insisted, were the former slaves’ true friends. When he campaigned for African-American votes, he evoked the days of slavery. He claimed that he had always treated his slaves well and invited his listeners to ask them. Finally, Hampton played an active role in the emerging Lost Cause. He never questioned the South’s war for independence and the preservation of slavery but rather praised it as noble and honorable. 9

Hampton, in other words, never challenged South Carolina’s past, never questioned whether slavery had been moral or even good for the South and his state. Instead, he celebrated the old order and called only for such change as the war had made inevitable. He offered white South Carolinians neither a new understanding of their past nor a compelling reason why they should create a different future. Hampton here exemplified one of the great limitations of New South moderation. In order to build a truly new South, white

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Southerners needed to admit the evils and errors of the past, be it the system of slavery or, a century later, those of segregation. But, like Hampton, later Southern moderates rarely issued a clarion call for change or provided a vision of why that change would be good. Instead, they made a pragmatic case for compliance with the law, which provided little incentive to transform society and no compelling narrative to sustain such a transformation.

The limitations of Hampton’s moderation became apparent in the years after his inauguration in 1877. As governor, Hampton, for the most part, lived up to his promise to protect blacks’ rights and provided at least some participation for African Americans in government. Hampton, though, served only two years and then went off to the United States Senate. With his influence based on the politics of personality, on who he was and what he had done rather than on a political program, his absence from South Carolina while he was in Washington actually reduced his influence within the state. Nor had Hampton provided South Carolinians with a compelling vision of a new order that would have supported even the moderate changes he had sought. During the two decades that followed his brief term as governor, the absence of both Hampton and a narrative to support his policies made it easier for Benjamin Tillman and the forces of white racial radicalism to offer their own narrative of redemption as the triumph of white supremacy and to create the rigid system of racial repression, based on segregation, disfranchisement, and white violence, that shaped South Carolina’s society and government for the next eighty years.  

During the twentieth century, succeeding generations of Southern moderates often shared the limitations that had plagued Hampton’s moderation. In the 1950s, with the emerging challenge of black activism and in the wake of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, Southern moderates sounded surprisingly like Hampton in

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10 Cooper, Conservative Regime, 84-115, and other sources cited in the first endnote. See Robert Ackerman’s chapter in this volume for an excellent discussion of Hampton’s governorship.
the 1870s. They did not retreat from their defense of the Lost Cause or offer an alternative vision of the New South. They dismissed blacks who demanded change as dupes of outside agitators. They rarely challenged the morality of segregation and instead called on whites to preserve law and order and make only those concessions the courts required.

On the eve of the tumultuous battle that would end the rigid and repressive racial order, one scholar evoked Hampton’s memory. In 1949, Winthrop College professor Hampton M. Jarrell published *Wade Hampton and the Negro: The Road Not Taken*. In ending what he considered the extremism of “Negro supremacy” that Reconstruction had brought, Jarrell argued, both Gary’s resort to violence and Hampton’s promotion of “force without violence” proved necessary. Jarrell then went on to criticize Ben Tillman’s extremism that had rejected and superseded Hampton’s moderation. Anticipating the coming struggle for civil rights by African Americans, Jarrell urged Southerners to avoid Tillman’s extremism, violence and Radical rhetoric, and to embrace Hampton’s moderation. He did so in hopes that the dangers he perceived of a new Reconstruction could be avoided and the South’s racial order could be preserved.\(^\text{11}\)

Some white Southern moderates of the 1950s and 1960s did pursue a course not unlike Hampton’s moderation. They avoided defiant rhetoric, urged concessions to the law, and eschewed violence. In the midst of the civil rights dramas of the early 1960s, their approach often did serve to prevent change. In Albany, Georgia, for example, white law-enforcement authorities calmly allowed a few protestors and peacefully arrested others—and managed to forestall change for some time. In other towns and cities, tokenism or minimal concessions in the context of a calm and peaceful response to black protests proved an effective strategy for preventing federal intervention and a radical alteration of the racial order. Had the white South fully embraced such moderate tactics—such counterfactual

arguments are impossible to substantiate—perhaps it might have prevented substantial change altogether. Had they delayed passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the federal legislation that removed the legal basis of the old order, until the late 1960s, when white racist reactions against the civil rights movement had become a powerful countercurrent in the North, they might have prevented their passage and preserved the old order, or at least more of it than did survive. But among white Southerners in the late 1950s and early 1960s, voices advocating peaceful, minimal compliance were drowned out. The extremism of the Gary and Tillman style dominated public discussion. Their radical racist heirs preached extremism and defiance—and some resorted to violence.12

Unlike in the 1870s, in another irony of Southern moderation, in the 1960s radicalism saved moderation. The white South’s defiance of federal law, and the murders, bombings, and brutality directed against peaceful demonstrations, helped create a national consensus that made possible the passage of the legislation that brought an end to the repressive racial order created by Tillman and others across the South in the 1890s. That legislation and the efforts of the civil rights movement created not the world of full equality that white radicals had always feared, but at least a far better South than even Hampton’s moderation had envisioned.

12 The story of Albany and the role of white defiance and violence in the civil rights movement was developed in David J. Garrow, Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). The same point is also made in the documentary Eyes on the Prize. For an excellent example of how moderation, rather than defiance and violence, prevented change in one southern community see, Mary J. Hebert, “Beyond Black and White: The Civil Rights Movement in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1945–1972” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 1999). For a discussion of how southern leaders in the U.S. Senate advocated moderation and delay, see Keith M. Finley, “Southern Opposition to Civil Rights in the United States Senate: A Tactical and Ideological Analysis, 1938–1965,” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2003).
Periodically in American history, politicians, especially former generals and war-time presidents, have become symbols of an Age: Andrew Jackson, egalitarianism; Franklin D. Roosevelt, overcoming the Great Depression and the Axis powers; Ronald Reagan, ending the Cold War. These men mirrored the hopes and aspirations of the American people. As John William Ward observed, "the symbolic Andrew Jackson" became a "mirror" for the people themselves. These became icons, free from any inconsistencies, flaws, doubts, or partisan motivations.1

Wade Hampton III has provided the same symbol for South Carolinians. Like Robert E. Lee, he was revered for his sense of honor, courage, and truthfulness. Like Lee, he represented an enduring element in the Lost Cause. He was also an innovative cavalry leader, who is finally receiving his just due. After the war, Hampton's prestige was such that he was nearly elected governor in 1866, despite the fact that he refused to run for the office. Like Lee, he was also a sincere paternalist. In the election of 1876 Hampton presented his black supporters an attractive alternative to a national Republican Party on the verge of ending Radical Reconstruction. Some of them became black Red Shirts, the subject of this paper. As we approach the sesquicentennial of the firing on Fort Sumter, the symbolic Hampton still resonates among Carolinians who see him as the harbinger of "The Road Not Taken."2


2 Hampton M. Jarrell, Wade Hampton and the Negro: The Road Not Taken (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1949). Recent biographies, as their titles suggest, have treated Hampton with awe and respect. See Walter Brian
The flesh and blood Hampton was as much a realist as a romantic. Recognizing how federal intervention had broken the Ku Klux Klan in 1870, Hampton and the Democrats evolved a new strategy. Hampton would take the “high road,” promising blacks that he would preserve their right to vote and attend public schools, while Edgefield Radicals, such as Martin Gary and Matthew Butler, would use the force and intimidation of 290 rifle clubs. Hampton supporters had to rein in Gary and Butler. Northern newspapers referred to Butler and his Edgefield contingent as “Sitting Bull Butler and his Hamburg Sioux.” It may not have been in Hampton’s character to consciously engage in a “‘bad cop–good cop routine’” but the tactic certainly helped make him governor.3

The red shirt became a symbol of the Hampton campaign. Supporters wore them in Hampton’s processions through various cities. Five hundred to two or three thousand men, many in red shirts, riding behind Hampton, created what Italians call a spectacalo. Hampton’s handlers were brilliant in orchestrating the campaign. During the election of 1876, the unity so lacking in the last two years of the Civil War blossomed into a full blown nationalism that had eluded the historic Confederacy. Hundreds of women and children were active participants in these political campaigns. Younger women joined their mothers in stitching thousands of red shirts. They also decorated the platforms and made flags. As Hampton reached the podium, they waved flags and shouted their support, joining the men on horseback in screaming “Hurrah” for Hampton. Young ladies threw flowers in the general’s path. They did everything “but ‘jine the cavalry.’” Douschka Pickens Dugas, the daughter of Governor Francis Pickens, rode at the front of fifteen hundred Red Shirts as they entered Edgefield. In Confederate


3 Robert K. Ackerman, Wade Hampton III (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 175.
folklore, she became "Carolina's Joan of Arc."  

Children were mesmerized by the sight of rows and rows of Red Shirts. Seven-year-old W. W. Ball, of Laurens remembered the elation he felt when his grandmother made him a red shirt. Wearing a red shirt or riding a horse in the parade became a new generation's rite of passage. In Newberry "the Town boys were also in the saddle, conspicuous in their red jackets." Young men, disappointed at not being able to serve during the war, wanted "a chance to prove in some small way their mettle to their fathers and brothers." Some over-eager youths were all too willing to turn to violence even at the cost of bringing more federal troops into the state. Veterans had to restrain them.

In appealing to conservative blacks, Hampton blunted charges that the Democrats were anti-black. Hundreds of uniformed blacks supported Hampton; many joined his processions sporting red shirts, some on horseback. However, modern historians have given short shrift to them. Winthrop College professor Hampton M. Jarrell largely ignored them in his flattering portrayal, Wade Hampton and the Negro: The Road Not Taken. Likewise, the advent of the modern civil rights movement blinded many historians to the possibility that a sizable number of Upcountry blacks might have voluntarily become Red Shirts, thereby aiding the collapse of a multi-racial democracy in the state. Recent works on Hampton would have benefited by conceding that some black Red Shirts were willing auxiliaries.


6 Richard Zuczek, State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 168-169, rightly stressed the role of terrorism, but he discounted that blacks could be willing allies. He argued that the black Red Shirts were not numerous; they were intimidated into wearing the Red Shirts. W. Scott Poole, Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and
The phenomenon was recorded in the WPA Slave Narratives and in testimonies at Congressional hearings. Black Red Shirts participated in both of Hampton’s campaigns for governor. One former slave’s reminiscences stuck out a like a sore thumb. In 1937, Richard Mack boldly asserted: “The time Capt. Wade Hampton was stumping I followed him all over the State; I led 500 head; was with him to Camden, Orangeburg and all the way to Hampton County; led 500 negroes through the County; I was Captain of then [sic]. I rode ‘Nellie Ponsa’ and wore my red jacket and cap and boots; I had a sword too; my ‘red shirt’ died year before last.”\(^7\) Men like Mack were part of a long line of ex-slaves who accompanied white South Carolinians in nearly all the American wars of the nineteenth century. As body servants, they shared a common bonding with their white masters. They endured the same hardships of the battlefield. Mack’s young master, a captain, rhetorically asked him, “Why weren’t you white!”\(^8\) For young black men, it was pretty heady stuff to don the red shirt and join thousands of Confederate veterans in mile long processions. One observer noted, “The colored riders took great pride in their flashy red outfits, and were to be seen dashing in every direction on swift horses or ... mules.”\(^9\) Pen Eubank commented sixty years later, “Sho was a pretty sight to see ‘bout a hun’ded mens up on fine horses wid red shirts on. I still sees dem in my mind clear as day.”\(^10\)

No doubt black Red Shirts received special favors; some were simply opportunists. Others were frightened or terrorized into

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\(^7\) Drago, *Hurrah for Hampton*, 136.
\(^8\) Ibid., 135.
\(^9\) Charleston News and Courier, October 10, 1876.
\(^10\) Drago, *Hurrah for Hampton*, 119. I have chosen to include the dialect presented in the Slave Narratives, though it is not clear whether it was real, or imposed by the interviewers.
joining the cause, but some black Red Shirts had good reason for supporting Hampton. They deplored the damage to the Upcountry wrought by Sherman and the federals. Madison Griffin told an interviewer, “Abe Lincoln might ter done good, but he had us all scared to death, took our mules and burned our places.”

Other black Red Shirts resented the way the Union troops treated women of both races. Andy Brice asserted, “They strutted ’round, big Ike fashion, a bustin’ in rooms widout knockin’, talkin’ free to de white ladies, and familiar to de slave gals, ransackin’ drawers, and runnin’ deir bayonets into feather beds, and into de flower beds in de yards.”

Most of the twenty black Red Shirts I profiled who rode with Hampton in 1876 or 1878 were ex-slaves, poor, illiterate, and dark-skinned. Whether or not men like Butler and Gary recruited or even intimidated them, their allegiance was to Hampton, not to Butler or Gary. Some light-skinned black Red Shirts took advantage of their fair skin to curry favor with the conservatives. Ed Barber boasted that he was “better than the full-blooded Negro.” He knew “which side de butter was on de bread.” For some it was a matter of business. Most of blacksmith Aaron Mitchell’s customers were white; his black clients were too poor to pay him for his services. Finally, the corruption of state and local Republican officials also offended Mitchell and other black Red Shirts, much as it did reform Republicans.

Edward Henderson’s father was a white man from a prominent family in Abbeville; he himself was so fair that he could easily have passed for white. He was well-respected by whites and headed a black rifle club that supported Hampton. Voting for Hampton was a way to end violence and restore peace. Martha Lowery, a free person of color from Charleston County, who taught at Avery Normal Institute, credited Hampton’s victory to the ex-slaves, who were fed up with graft, confusion, and carpetbaggers.

11 Ibid., 132-133.
12 Ibid., 107.
13 Ibid., 102-103. Barber probably rode with Hampton in the election of 1878.
Looking back, she said there were plenty of signs that Hampton would allow them full citizenship. Her religious upbringing predisposed her to see redemption in prophetic terms. "God has the right Moses at hand when the emergency comes... He raised up Abraham Lincoln for that awful emergency," and "he raised up Franklin D. Roosevelt for the [recent] economic disaster." 14 Similarly, black Red Shirt Frank Adamson proclaimed in 1937 that he would be "hollerin' for Mr. Roosevelt, just as loud as I holler then for Hampton." 15 Pen Eubank exclaimed: "Us had done 'lected Marse Hampton as de new governor of South Ca'lin." 16

Eubank's claim is difficult to prove; intimidation and large scale voting fraud carried the election. The most concrete contribution black Red Shirts made was legitimating the election. How could conservatives be anti-black with such vocal and devoted black supporters? After all they participated in biracial processions. Viewing black and white Democrats, the Charleston News and Courier, tongue-in-cheek, intoned: "There was no distinction of color in any part of the programme or proceedings. The whole number of white and blacks seemingly was about equal. The proportion of colored men in nearly all of the mounted clubs was about equal. ... They rode side by side with their white friends and drowned their less practiced voices in every 'Hurrah for Hampton' that was given." 17

There is some evidence to suggest that enough blacks had voted for Hampton to give the general his slim margin. Republican newspapers were concerned about the black support Hampton received at his various rallies. Republicans publicly attributed most of it to bribery and intimidation, but privately they conceded they had a problem. Another index of the threat the black Red Shirts posed was the ferocity with which Republicans attacked them. Aaron Mitchell's house was surrounded by a mob of fifty people.

14 Ibid., 31.
15 Ibid., 97.
16 Ibid., 121.
17 Charleston News and Courier, October 10, 1876.
They cursed him, firing shots into the house. His wife Frances was beside herself. Edward Henderson's wife, Harriett, was threatened with a whipping at church; his ten year old daughter, Mahala, was whipped at school. The guilty parties were arrested.

Black women were staunch Republican stalwarts, especially the humbler women. They faced economic hard times, and suffered from the triple discrimination of poverty, race and gender. Like African-American women in Georgia, they may have resented not being given the vote in 1867. They fervently believed that the Democrats would re-enslave them. Ku Klux Klan atrocities against black women in the Upcountry in 1870 and 1871 seemed to suggest a reaffirmation of the worst aspects of the old order. Some black women were extremely militant. They stigmatized black Republicans as traitors to their race. Black Red Shirt Asbury Green described them as rattlesnakes. They tried to persuade his wife and five children to leave him. One black woman shouted to a black conservative, "Your wife ought to be burned out for living with you." In Lowndesville, black conservatives were confronted by black women, who pulled up their coats and told them to "kiss their arse." Black Democrat Merriman Washington later complained that when he led his sixteen black Red Shirts to vote in Richland County, black women "stripped some of my boys of their red shirts at the polls." When Preston Taylor left the polls shouting "Hurrah for Hampton," he reported that women "jumped on me and tore off all my clothes; just stripped me. . . . Right at the box where the voting was." The conservative press condemned militant black

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20 Drago, Hurrah for Hampton, 73-74.
21 Ibid., 41.
22 Ibid., 90-91.
23 Ibid., 63, 58.
women as "negro wenches." The Republican press put a different spin on the situation: "The colored women fought nobly."

In defending their breadbaskets, these women employed tactics that rice laborers used in the much-publicized strike along the Combahee River in the summer of 1876. Hard-pressed for cash, some planters were paying workers in scrip. The women successfully intimidated black strikebreakers. Dressed in pantalets, these women hardly had the same concerns as middle class black women who complained in 1876 to Hampton that they were prevented from dressing in hoop-skirts. Hampton replied "they could wear anything they liked, from a fig leaf up." He summarily dismissed their very real desire to be treated with dignity. Hampton's pledges to black Carolinians barely survived his reelection in 1878. When he reiterated his support for the rights of blacks, white audiences booed and hissed him. Abbeville Democrats narrowly voted not to accept Edward Henderson's company as an independent rifle club.

For Carolinians looking for a usable past, Wade Hampton is a symbol of what might have been. An echo of Hampton's idealism remained alive in Charleston. In 1969, Richard E. Fields became the first African American in modern times to become an associate judge of the Municipal Court of Charleston. He was nominated by conservative city councilman William H. Grimball, Jr. Grimball concluded "we have now reached the stage when we can get back on the road laid down by Hampton. We have reached the point where the color of a man's skin should not make any difference."

24 Ibid. 58-67. Abbeville Medium, September 6, 1876. No doubt the images were stereotypes shaped by racism, but such rhetoric captured their militant spirit. See Patricia Morton, Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).


26 Charleston News and Courier, October 1, 1878; Drago, Hurrah for Hampton, 151-152n191; Hampton recalled this incident during the campaign of 1878.

27 Drago, Hurrah for Hampton, 47, 154n236.

28 Edmund L. Drago, rev. and ed. W. Marvin Dulaney, Charleston's Avery Center From Education and Civil Rights to Preserving the African American Experience
Like Jarrell’s *Wade Hampton and the Negro: The Road Not Taken*, Robert K. Ackerman’s masterful *Wade Hampton III* is a plea for a new direction in race relations. While acutely aware of Hampton’s “darker side of prejudice,” he asks if Hampton’s “paternalistic moderation” might have evolved into “genuine Justice”.29


29 As South Carolina was poised to take a hard-line on desegregation, Jarrell’s book offered a compassionate alternative by a scholar who could see the calamitous direction the state was taking. But the problem with seeking a usable past is the non-usable past. In the 1950s, most white South Carolinians were in no mood to grant African Americans any real political power. In 2007, Ackerman’s appeal to an aristocratic ethos may not have much resonance to working class whites, who see Big Government and Affirmative Action as the bogeyman. See Ackerman, *Wade Hampton III*, 271-272, 226.
THE HAMPTON ADMINISTRATION
AND THE REDEEMERS’ REVENGE

W. Lewis Burke

The University South Caroliniana Society was formed to support the mission of the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina. This wonderful building and its historically rich contents have been used by the leading historians in the world. Most of the history books on the South and the United States would have been inadequate or simply not written if the South Caroliniana Library had not been a resource. The library, through the Society, has also been the host of many important seminars over the years. And in the spring of 2007 that tradition was continued with the comprehensive program entitled “Wade Hampton: A Symposium.”

A subject like Wade Hampton is always ripe for exploration. Hampton was a complicated man and is a complicated subject. Hampton was and is hero to many, but as the leader of the “Redemption” of South Carolina or South Carolina’s coup d’etat of 1876 there is disagreement on the meaning of Wade Hampton. One of the ironies of this symposium was the very fact that it was taking place at the South Caroliniana Library. As part of the University of South Carolina, the library was closed 140 years ago while Wade Hampton was governor. The impetus to close the university was race. The university’s faculty and student body were desegregated during Reconstruction, and with Hampton’s approval, the legislature wanted to close the “tainted” institution. In fact, the library was headed by the school’s first black professor and librarian, Richard T. Greener, who drew praise from the Charleston News and Courier for his efforts at improving the library. The audience at the symposium was surrounded with his legacy, both in the books that he cataloged and arranged and in the busts that he preserved.
and displayed.\footnote{Michael J. Mounter, "Richard Theodore Greener: The Idealist, Statesman, Scholar and South Carolinian" (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2002), 144; Charleston News and Courier, "The University Library," November 1, 1875.}

Another irony was that one of the black students who attended the university during Reconstruction had been an active supporter of Wade Hampton in the campaign of 1876. Styles Linton Hutchins canvassed the state for Hampton. Hutchins joined Hampton at a rally of hundreds of black voters in Georgetown. Hutchins even rode with A. C. Haskell in lower Richland County to demand equal time for Democratic speakers at a Republican rally. On behalf of Hampton, Hutchins debated Professor Richard T. Greener at that rally. Hutchins, a graduate of the law school of the University of South Carolina, was one of more than one hundred black men who received appointments by Governor Wade Hampton to minor offices. But within weeks, Hutchins lost his position when the legislature abolished his post as a trial justice in Columbia. Governor Hampton signed that legislation, but through his secretary, he apologized to Hutchins and complimented him on his work, offering the excuse that there was nothing he could do to preserve the judgeship.\footnote{W. Lewis Burke, Jr., “The Radical Law School,” in At Freedom’s Door, African American Founding Fathers and Lawyers in Reconstruction South Carolina, ed. James Lowell Underwood and W. Lewis Burke, Jr., 90-115 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 105-107. There is some question about the number of African Americans appointed by Hampton. In his recent biography of Hampton, Robert Ackerman noted that George Brown Tindall had found that 86 blacks were appointed by Hampton. Ackerman’s careful review of the state archives reveals a total of 108 including seven to offices unspecified. Robert K. Ackerman, Wade Hampton III, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 205.}

When the university’s board of trustees, with the approval of the General Assembly and Governor Hampton, closed the school, the legislature passed a bill to compensate the terminated faculty for back pay. However, one faculty member was left off that legislation. Despite pleas to Hampton and a personal promise by the governor, that intentional oversight was not remedied. The
person left out was Professor Richard Greener, the man credited with saving the library. He was never paid for his final year of work as a professor and librarian.3

These two stories are merely anecdotal evidence of how many blacks were treated after Wade Hampton became governor. But this paper is entitled “Redeemers’ Revenge” because it is about the more egregious and longer lasting legacy of “Redemption.” The true “Redeemers’ Revenge” is the history created by white Democrats about the “corruption of Reconstruction.” The 1877 legislative report on corruption comes to over 1,700 pages. It is true there was corruption. But most of it was penny ante. The big-time thieves such as Senator John Patterson simply stayed in Washington and did not return. Former Governor Franklin J. Moses, Jr., who even the Republicans tried to impeach, and who was, in fact, indicted during Reconstruction, was simply allowed by the Redeemers to leave the state. Josephus Woodruff, owner of the Republican Printing Company, fled but was promptly caught and returned to the state, not to be prosecuted, but to be a witness for the state in its “political show trials.”4

Only three people were actually tried by the state as a result of the massive corruption investigation: Francis L. Cardozo, Robert Smalls, and L. Cass Carpenter. What happened to Francis Lewis Cardozo is the major story of the “Redeemers’ Revenge.” One can visit the upstairs reading room of the South Caroliniana Library and read the nearly verbatim day-by-day accounts of the trial in the Columbia Register and the Charleston News and Courier. From these detailed accounts, one can see that the Cardozo trial was the trial that would prove the corruption of Reconstruction. To know how the prosecuting attorneys felt at the end of the trial, one can go downstairs to the manuscripts reading room and read the contemporaneously prepared trial notes in the Charles Richardson

Miles papers. In his handwritten notes of the trial, assistant prosecutor Miles highlighted the verdict with quotation marks—"guilty." ⁵

Some historians have assumed that all Republicans in Reconstruction South Carolina were corrupt. Others have excused the corruption by pointing out that the American political culture of the era was graft ridden. Still others have tried to point out the corruption of some white Democrats in South Carolina. Until my two articles in 2001 and 2002, no published work had ever examined the evidence presented at the trial against Cardozo. In those articles, I also explore the Smalls and Carpenter convictions, but the record in those cases is so small that it is difficult, if not impossible, to truly know what happened. ⁶

Cardozo, a "person of color," was born in Charleston and educated in Scotland and England. After his return to the United States, Cardozo taught in Charleston. In April 1868, the Presbyterian minister became the first African American ever elected to statewide office in U.S. history with his election as secretary of state. In 1872, he was elected treasurer of the state as a reformer. During Reconstruction, many people thought Cardozo was the most powerful African American in South Carolina. Throughout his political career Cardozo had enjoyed a reputation for honesty. He had helped initiate the corruption indictment of Republican Governor Franklin J. Moses in 1874. One conservative newspaper had praised him as "the most respectable and honest of all state officials." ⁷

⁵ See, for example, Columbia Register, "The Trial of Cardozo," November 6, 1877 and Charleston News and Courier, "The Trial of Cardozo," November 6, 1877; MS vol bd., [ca. 1877], Charles Richardson Miles Papers, South Carolina Library, University of South Carolina.


⁷ Chester Reporter, December 9, 1869. For an additional source on the point as to Cardozo's reputation, see an editorial that originally appeared in the Charleston News and Courier reprinted in the Columbia Daily Union-Herald, 21 February 1875.
strict money management caused corrupt Republican legislators to try to impeach him in 1875. They charged that he illegally funded state bonds, had improperly used designated tax revenues, and had paid fraudulent pay certificates. The evidence showed that the bonds had been over-issued by Cardozo’s predecessor, Niles J. Parker, and that Cardozo had tried to fix the irregularities. As to the tax revenues, Cardozo admitted some designated revenues had been improperly spent, but that those designated revenues had been recouped from other revenues and that there was no shortage in any fund. Finally, Cardozo denied issuing any known fraudulent pay certificates and pointed out that the state legislature required him to pay any certificate that appeared valid on its face. The impeachment was defeated by a coalition of reform Republicans and Democrats. In fact, the impeachment effort drew the attention of the *New York Times* which opined that under the charges there was no proof of any loss by the state nor gain by Cardozo.⁸

The end of Reconstruction and the end of Cardozo’s political career began when the Redeemer Democrats seized power under the Compromise of 1877. After the Redeemers took power, the legislature asked President Rutherford B. Hayes to grant clemency to all the white Democrats charged by the federal government with election violence. Hayes refused and ordered the prosecution of three Democrats.⁹ After Hayes’ reply, the state countered by launching its legislative investigation of corruption that resulted in three Republicans being tried in state court.

Cardozo was called before the committee and arrested two days later and charged with seven felonies and a misdemeanor. He was one of only twenty indicted and of three actually tried. Democratic Attorney General James Conner admitted that the

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indictments were intended to “politically guillotine” the Republican Party, and that the committee’s work “would not stand test as legal evidence. . . .” In fact, Conner hoped that all those charged would flee the state and that he could just try the cases in the press.10

Cardozo was a great symbolic target for the Democrats’ revenge. A haughty and prideful man, in the end he also served as a target of those Republicans who wanted their own form of revenge. Other targets were black Congressman Robert Smalls, and white carpetbagger and former Congressman Cass Carpenter. Others indicted were protected by immunity agreements, behind the scenes deals, and flight.11

The charges against Cardozo were essentially the same as those in the 1875 impeachment except for an additional count that Cardozo had conspired to issue a fraudulent pay certificate. Despite posting bond and returning from Washington, D.C., to Columbia for his trial, in October 1877 Cardozo’s bail was revoked and he was jailed. Only two days prior to the November 2 trial, the attorney general announced that Cardozo was to be tried only on a misdemeanor.12 This count charged Cardozo of conspiring with ex-Lieutenant Governor R. H. Gleaves, ex-Speaker Samuel J. Lee, ex-House clerk A. O. Jones, and Senate clerk Josephus Woodruff to issue a fraudulent $4,000 pay certificate payable to a fictitious person, C.L. Frankfort. At trial, former Attorney General Samuel W. Melton represented Cardozo, while Attorney General James Conner and four assistants prosecuted.13

12 William Shepherd McAninch notes that according to the common law, conspiracy was a misdemeanor; see his The Criminal Law of South Carolina, 3rd ed. (Columbia: South Carolina Bar, Continuing Legal Education, 1996): 349.
13 Burke, “Reconstruction Corruption,” 75-76.
After some rather suspect rulings against the defense on jury selection by Judge C. P. Townsend, a jury of six whites and six blacks was selected. At the end of the first day, the judge ordered the jury sequestered. However, hotel after hotel refused to house them because it was a mixed-race jury. The jurors were finally housed in the billiard room of a hotel under the guard of the sheriff.\(^\text{14}\)

When the trial resumed, the state’s first witness was ex-Speaker Samuel J. Lee, who had an 1871 conviction for issuing fraudulent county checks. He was also under indictment for the issuance of $29,000 in fraudulent legislative pay certificates, but had never mentioned the “Frankfort certificate” when he testified before the legislative committee. Moreover, Lee was no friend of Cardozo’s. He had served as counsel for the House’s attempt to impeach Cardozo and had once come to fisticuffs with the larger Cardozo who easily bested him.\(^\text{15}\)

Lee admitted plotting to issue the fraudulent certificate and signing it in December of 1873. But he gave conflicting testimony about the details of the conspiracy. First, it was a plot proposed by Gleaves. Then he changed his mind and added “Cardozo, also.” He said the plot was to steal a $4,000 surplus in legislative appropriations to be divided five ways. On cross examination, he remembered that it was a plot to steal surplus certificates of indebtedness. This was significant because legislative pay certificates were issued by the legislature while certificates of indebtedness were issued by the treasurer. The “Frankfort certificate” was clearly a legislative pay certificate and not a certificate initiated by Cardozo. Lee also admitted on cross examination that Cardozo had warned the House officers that it was illegal to over-issue pay certificates. More damningly, Lee admitted he had prepared many other fraudulent pay certificates while conspiring with three other people, but never with Cardozo.\(^\text{16}\)

If anyone had conspired to get Cardozo convicted it was

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 379-81.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 382.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 383-4.
the next witness, Josephus Woodruff, clerk of the state senate and co-owner of the Republican Printing Company. Woodruff’s reputation provoked a newspaper to proclaim: “Woodruff is still for sale, but who will buy him?” Woodruff testified that Lieutenant Governor Gleaves had told him that Cardozo said that there was a $4,000 surplus, and to prepare a $4,000 certificate to be divided five ways. Woodruff admitted he invented “C.L. Frankfort” as a joking play on Cardozo’s initials reversed. Woodruff contradicted Lee’s details of the conspiracy. He claimed that there was an unexpended $4,000 appropriation for legislative expenses, and that he prepared the fraudulent certificate signed by all the officers, giving Cardozo $2,400 in certificates of indebtedness in exchange for the certificate.

Over objection, Woodruff was allowed to testify from the books of his printing company and read from his diary. These two rulings were quite prejudicial. Under age-old rules of evidence, a witness was only allowed to read a “past-recollection recorded” in court if he had prepared the documents himself and could not remember what he had previously recorded. But the company books had been recorded by a bookkeeper who was supposedly not available to testify. Woodruff read entries from the ledger book for $800 credits to Woodruff and Jones from the certificate supposedly proving they had gotten their shares of the five-way split. Then Woodruff was allowed to read portions of his diary. Woodruff’s diary was in a form of shorthand “that he invented” and which only he could read. Woodruff had never claimed not to remember his interactions with his “co-conspirators,” so the ruling allowing him to read his diary seems to have been contrary to the rules of evidence. This ruling was made even more egregious because the defense could not read the shorthand and was denied access to a translation that Woodruff had prepared for the legislative investigating committee. While the actual shorthand diary has not been found, surviving portions of the translation document Woodruff’s animosity toward Cardozo

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17 Charleston News and Courier, July 31, 1877.
and more. Historian Joel Williamson questioned the veracity of the diary in 1960, but it was not until 2001 and 2002 that the actual irregularities were fully explored.\(^{19}\)

On cross examination, Woodruff admitted that he had issued more than $400,000 in fraudulent legislative certificates since 1868, and that it was his job to inform Cardozo of legislative expenditures, but since he never had done so, there was no way for Cardozo to know of a surplus. His personal animosity against Cardozo was revealed further when he admitted that he had sued Cardozo to try to collect a printing company appropriation and had never gotten his money.\(^{20}\)

The dramatic moment of the cross examination came when Melton took out a magnifying glass and showed that the $800 entries for Woodruff and Jones in the printing company books had been altered by inserting an “8” to change the amount next to Woodruff’s name and adding a new entry for Jones. Both alterations were by a different handwriting than that of the “conveniently unavailable” bookkeeper. In another striking moment, Melton asked Woodruff if he had tried to bribe Cardozo in December of 1873 with a $5,000 certificate on behalf of the legislative officers. Woodruff denied “positively” that he had made any such effort. Moreover, when asked if Cardozo had demanded that Woodruff write “cancelled” on the certificate and sign it, Woodruff again denied it. Melton had carefully laid his trap. The defense lawyer then produced the certificate, prompting Woodruff to proclaim, “I take it all back…..” This theatrical moment revealed much about the weakness of the state’s case. The rejected bribe from Woodruff occurred in the same month as the “Frankfort certificate.” One must wonder why Cardozo would refuse a $5,000 bribe just for himself and then, in the same month, conspire with four enemies to steal and divide $4,000.\(^{21}\)

Alleged co-conspirator, A. O. Jones testified for the state but

\(^{19}\) Williamson, After Slavery, 388; Burke, “Reconstruction Corruption,” 81-2.
denied any knowledge of the conspiracy. A clerk in the Democratic treasurer’s office was called to prove that there had been a specific $4,000 surplus that Cardozo could have planned to steal, but instead proved that the surpluses in the treasury were much larger at the time of the conspiracy.22

The defense only called two witnesses. Cardozo denied knowledge of the “Frankfort certificate.” He proved the falsity of the details of the conspiracy by using the records of the treasurer’s office to demonstrate there never was a $4,000 surplus in legislative funds. The books were in possession of the now-Democratic treasurer and were retrieved by the court for use in the trial. On cross examination, Cardozo denied that he ever paid certificates he knew were fraudulent. The best Conner got from Cardozo was the admission that he had voted for Moses for governor.23

A former treasury department clerk testified for the defense that the office practice was to pay certificates like the “Frankfort certificate” if they were endorsed by the appropriate officers of the legislature, and that he would have paid a certificate if it bore the genuine signatures of the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house and the secretaries of the house and senate.24

In rebuttal, the state recalled Josephus Woodruff, who claimed he had bribed Cardozo many times and that he paid him in currency. The attorney general asked if Woodruff “always paid him in currency?” He answered, “Yes, sir.” When asked if he could prove it, Woodruff read his January 13, 1873, diary entry, which he claimed said: “I paid Cardozo $3,000 in currency.” If one examines the surviving translation for this entry provided to the committee, it did not mention currency, and in fact, it contains an entry stating that Woodruff had prepared a $3,000 check for Cardozo. Of course, this is the diary translation which the defense never was allowed to see. The case was now closed.25

22 Ibid., 389.
23 Ibid., 389-92.
24 Ibid., 392.
25 Ibid., 393.
The closing arguments lasted nine and a half hours. The only accounts of the arguments describe them as full of political accusations. Judge Townsend, in a rather biased two-hour charge, recounted the state’s case but mentioned none of its discrepancies. He attacked Cardozo’s evidence and said that since Cardozo could be tried in his absence, it was not remarkable that he had returned to face trial.26

After twelve hours of deliberations, the jury returned a verdict of guilty. On hearing the verdict, the visibly shaken Cardozo and Melton left without a word. This was Melton’s greatest blunder. When he heard the verdict, he should have requested to have the jury polled, but he did not. Later, Melton discovered that the jury had decided the case by a majority vote. But he had waived Cardozo’s right to a unanimous verdict by not polling the jury before they were dismissed.27

Immediately after Cardozo’s trial, Smalls and then Carpenter were tried and convicted. What we know of Smalls’ trial is that he was convicted of accepting a $5,000 bribe paid by check. The check introduced at his preliminary hearing was post-dated six months later than the supposed bribe. At trial, a check with the appropriate date was substituted, but the new check was not made payable to Smalls. Smalls’ verdict was delivered to the judge on a Sunday and the jury was dismissed. When the verdict was read on Monday, Melton had no jury to poll, and he asserted that based on the Cardozo jury majority vote, he suspected the same with Smalls’ jury. But Judge Townsend denied Melton’s motion to summon the dismissed jury for polling. Cass Carpenter’s trial involved the issue of whether Carpenter had altered certificates made payable to him. They had clearly been altered to increase the amount of money paid, but Carpenter denied the alteration and that he had received the money. But he, too, was quickly found guilty. However, the white

26 Columbia Register, “The Trial of Cardozo,” November 6, 1877; Charleston News and Courier, November 6, 1877.
27 Yorkville Enquirer, November 15, 1877; Burke, “Post Reconstruction Justice,” 401n338.
former congressman was pardoned by Governor Hampton less than two months later. But it was different for Cardozo and Smalls.\textsuperscript{28}

After a scathing speech, Judge Townsend sentenced Cardozo to two years in jail and a $4,000 fine. Many historians assume that Cardozo was pardoned by Governor Hampton shortly after the trial. Some report that Hampton offered Cardozo and Smalls pardons, and that they refused, hoping to win on appeal. Cardozo could not post an appeal bond and spent six months in jail. In fact, Cardozo remained a hostage to negotiations between President Hayes and Hampton. In March of 1878, Hampton asked Hayes to pardon three Klansmen. In April, Cardozo was finally released but only on a reduced bond. In May, Cardozo wrote to Hayes crediting Hampton for the reduced bond and urging the president to pardon the Klansmen. By July 1878, Hayes pardoned the Klansmen but still Cardozo waited. He lost his appeal on November 29, 1878, in a two-to-one decision by the state supreme court.\textsuperscript{29}

But still Hampton did not pardon Cardozo. In November of 1878, Governor Hampton suffered a serious injury while hunting. On December 10, his right leg was amputated below the knee, and on that same day, he was elected to the U.S. Senate. Although he did not resign as governor until February 24, 1879, Lt. Gov. William D. Simpson had assumed the responsibilities as governor sometime before the resignation. In the meantime, the Rev. Henry Cardozo, Francis' brother, circulated a petition supporting a pardon for Cardozo. On February 12, 1879, when he presented it to Gov. William D. Simpson, it contained the names of many prominent white citizens as well as ten of the twelve trial jurors. But this plea seemed to only antagonize Simpson. In March of 1879, Cardozo was threatened with arrest, and he returned to South Carolina and was again jailed. Over the next few weeks as Cardozo again languished in jail, the political wheels turned. The Redeemers wanted more than a petition. Finally, the federal government relented and the U.S.

\textsuperscript{28} Burke, "Post-Reconstruction Justice," 402. As to the Carpenter pardon, see Pickens Sentinel, February 28, 1878.

\textsuperscript{29} Burke, "Post-Reconstruction Justice," 402-5.
Attorney dismissed all of the pending election fraud cases against white Democrats in the state. Then, on April 23, 1879, Governor Simpson pardoned Cardozo and Smalls.30

As for the charges against him, there is no evidence that he acquired great wealth during Reconstruction and after his release from jail, Cardozo was destitute. While the Redeemers convicted Cardozo, and despite the Democrats' harangues about the corrupt carpetbaggers and scalawags, not a single scalawag and only two carpetbaggers were brought to trial. The only major carpetbagger convicted was Niles J. Parker who had been Cardozo's predecessor as treasurer. Parker had been brought to trial in 1875 by a Republican prosecutor, convicted by a Republican jury and sentenced by a Republican judge. Yes, the Redeemers prosecuted him again, but they abandoned prosecutions of those who may have stolen hundreds of thousand of dollars. But the Democrats had achieved their goal of making it appear that all Republicans—especially blacks—were corrupt, through the conviction of "the most respectable and honest of all state officials."31 Joel Williamson, in After Slavery, summed up the corruption issue this way: "Had the Redeemers been truly outraged by Republican thefts, they would doubtless have gone 'viciously' after all of the corruptionists. . . ." Having failed to do so, one can only conclude that the Redeemers were guilty of "public duplicity, personal dishonesty, and political opportunism."32

But there is more to add to the legacy of the "Redeemers' Revenge." Thomas Dixon's The Clansman was the basis of the first great Hollywood film, Birth of a Nation. The story took place in South Carolina. The villain of both book and film, called Silas Lynch, was based on Cardozo. Like Francis Cardozo, he was college educated, a missionary, a mulatto, and president of the state Union League. Both were of imposing physical size, both were considered the most powerful black man in South Carolina, and

31 Chester Reporter, December 9, 1869.
32 Williamson, After Slavery, 416.
both even owned homes on Sullivan’s Island. Of course, in the book and movie, the character based on Cardozo tried to force a white woman to marry him. This conduct was used to perpetuate the myth of the sex-craved image of the black man who wanted to take advantage of white women. This sort of “moral” corruption has remained an undercurrent in American popular culture even today. So, I would conclude by adding to the legacy of the “Redeemers’ Revenge” not only the conviction of an innocent man but this more distorted history of Reconstruction.33

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 all South Carolinians.” Although Hampton may have used some political hyperbole to soothe a fractious electorate, the now undisputed governor of the Palmetto State wanted to convince the white Democracy 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. This party, which in the minds of most 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, their rule had ended in 1877. Now Hampton offered an olive branch, of sorts, to those whom he had reviled for over a decade.

Most of Hampton’s Democratic allies supported the former general’s overtures since they expected that African Americans would have few alternatives. But some allies of Hampton in 1876 disagreed. Former Confederate officers Matthew C. Butler and Martin Gary, for example, had no patience for reconciliation with blacks. The battle for the state government—for the very integrity of a white South Carolina in their minds—was to eliminate all opponents, white and black. Foremost among these were the

1 Quoted in Walter Brian Cisco, Wade Hampton, Confederate Warrior, Conservative Statesman (Washington, DC: Brassey’s, 2004), 266. The author wishes to thank Jennifer Fitzgerald, a colleague at the South Carolina State Museum, for reading this paper and providing valuable comments and suggestions.
reviled Republicans, but more generally, they sought to squelch the political participation of all non-whites. Did Hampton believe his prestige and personal qualities to be strong enough that he could 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 Hampton’s motives and relationships up to the election of 1876 and argue that perhaps there was a little of both. But in the final analysis, Hampton represented white resurgence and retrenchment, and while he may have believed that former slaves could be a part of the political process, it was only on the terms of Hampton and his white lieutenants. 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.²

Until secession, Hampton had done 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 had also attained distinction in the latter war, the family’s focus was to attain land, slaves and wealth. When Wade III 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 growing cotton. They had few social or economic peers. Wade Hampton III was not just a wealthy son of a prominent family, but well educated and traveled, having attained a degree from South Carolina College and toured extensively in Europe and the Northeast during his young adult life. Nonetheless, his most important station in life was to become a successful plantation manager who would direct a vast estate of cotton lands from which great wealth would continue to be derived. In 1843 he began to manage the family plantation in Mississippi that included twelve thousand acres and nearly one thousand enslaved

² Ibid., 275-276.
workers. Between these holdings and those in the midlands of South Carolina, Hampton traveled regularly to manage both. His favorite activities, hunting and fishing, could also be acquitted in such endeavors. Like his father and grandfather, Wade III viewed politics as a secondary role in society that he reluctantly assumed. Richland District constituents elected him to the South Carolina House of Representatives for the first time in 1852, and six years later, the same voters elevated him to the state senate. In neither chamber did he distinguish himself, rarely speaking while serving on legislative committees on federal relations, agriculture, and redistricting. Not until his last years in the antebellum legislature did he even speak out on major issues. In short it seems that he served in the State House because his social position required it.3

Such modest political ambitions began to change, as the rift between North and South grew more intense at the end of the 1850s. Hampton spoke out against John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry in the fall of 1859, warning that if the North did not condemn the radical abolitionist the Union could not survive. Although he did not lead the charge, when Lincoln became the Republican presidential nominee, the South Carolina planter supported plans for a secession convention if the Illinois lawyer were elected. He not only voiced his support for such a body but also joined the Minutemen, groups of men in communities around the state that supported secession prior to the elections. Throughout the fall campaign season, these groups held public demonstrations in their own regalia and wrote a manifesto supporting secession. In the wake of Lincoln’s election victory, Hampton continued to support the calling of a convention although he was not elected to that body. When the state seceded, Hampton immediately offered his services to defend the newly independent “nation.” But in the midst of the

crisis, as South Carolina faced off against the federal government over the status of Fort Sumter at the mouth of Charleston harbor, Hampton left the state in March 1861 to check his holdings in Mississippi. It was upon his return to the Palmetto State two weeks after Fort Sumter surrendered that Hampton began to organize his now famous legion. Not only its founder, the planter-turned-soldier became the legion’s 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 capital of Richmond, Virginia.4

Hampton’s many exploits as a military leader, first of his legendary Hampton’s Legion and then as cavalry commander, are well known. After the Confederate armies reorganized in the spring of 1862, the legion was split up and its commander became a subordinate under the renowned cavalry general, J. E. B. Stuart. Upon this legendary figure’s death in May 1864, Hampton’s distinguished service and abilities led to his promotion as Stuart’s successor as commander of all Confederate cavalry in the Army of Northern Virginia. During his long and distinguished service, the South Carolinian received many wounds in daring attacks against Federal cavalry and infantry from Manassas to Gettysburg to Petersburg. 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 seems more tragic because of his own personal losses. First, his brother Frank fell mortally wounded at Brandy Station in June 1863. Then, more than a year later, his son 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 also lost. Perhaps Hampton’s greatest capital loss, however, was the more than one thousand enslaved

4 Cisco, Wade Hampton, 51-52.
workers who now were free. The state's most distinguished Confederate military commander, in spite of all his dedication to the Southern cause, found himself virtually destitute financially, if not emotionally. 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 as some of his former Confederate comrades had done, he was slow to reconcile himself to the Confederacy's demise. In the summer of 1866, he told his former commander-in-chief, Robert E. Lee, that "I am not reconstructed yet..." and declared to him, "Time will prove that you have not fought in vain." Clearly, Hampton would not easily concede that four years of bloodshed and personal loss had been a national and personal waste.

As the defeated former 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 appeared that former Confederates would be able to resume the reigns of power with the blessings of President Andrew Johnson. But a Republican Congress soon refused to accept Johnson's lenient terms for the former Confederacy and reversed Presidential Reconstruction with a series of laws in 1866. Instead, they imposed severe restrictions on most of the old leadership and required the Southern states to accept former slaves as equals in political and social arenas for the first time. This was an affront, if not worse, to most whites and they soon showed their opposition.

Hampton expressed this bitterness to President Andrew Johnson in detail. He denounced what he perceived as a vindictive

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5 Ibid., 55-163; Charles E. Cauthen, ed., Family Letters of the Three Wade Hampton III, 1782–1901 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), 113-4; Wade Hampton III to E. Ham, 1 January 1877, HFP.
6 Wade Hampton III to R.E. Lee, typescript, 21 July 1866, HFP.
Congress that was led by Radical Republicans who usurped their authority and ignored the Constitution by forcing the Southern states to adopt the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments without due deliberation of their respective leaders. To Hampton, the amendments were forced upon the South illegally. Somehow he could not accept that Congress responded to thwart the South Carolina legislature who had passed a series of “Black Codes” the previous year that severely restricted the movement of freedmen and essentially returned them to the life of servitude that they had recently left. Nor could Hampton see the purpose of what he viewed as a corrupt Freedmen’s Bureau and “a horde of barbarians—your brutal negro troops” that imposed law and order in the South. Such organizations were an affront to whites, especially to former slaveholders who were accustomed to virtual life and death mastery over blacks. Such a response was natural for men like Hampton who had been raised to believe that only they had the ability and the right to govern the affairs of their state. That former slaves were now free men to whom Congress had given political rights was unfathomable to Hampton. Such a monolithic shift in social structure was incomprehensible, even if his beloved South was defeated.7

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. As in the antebellum era, Hampton and most of his class could not conceive that former slaves had the ability to behave rationally in the political arena. Former slaveholders believed that freedmen were still imbued with the traits relegating them to subservience, just as they had been in slavery. African Americans needed people like Hampton to instruct and prevent them from harming themselves. Such a conclusion came from the paternalistic, racist view that blacks were unable to think

7 Cauthen, Family Letters, 126-141.
for themselves or recognize their own best interests. By 1867 he told John Conner, a fellow South Carolinian and Confederate veteran, 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 them more trustworthy than “renegades or Yankees,” provided that “respectable negroes” were recruited. Presumably this meant freedmen whom whites knew could be relied upon, whether by bribery or intimidation, to accept and serve Southern whites in a loyal—i.e., subordinate—manner.  

The assumptions of Hampton and his associates were sorely tested during the following decade as the battle with Republican rule in the state ebbed and flowed. First, most white voters tried to forestall the election of delegates to a new state Constitutional Convention mandated by Congress. Since a majority of the state’s registered electorate had to ratify the call of such a convention, a large number of white voters registered their protest by not casting their ballots on election day in November 1867. Despite this unity, the vast majority of registered black voters—eighty-five percent—who voted for such a body were enough to validate the elections for the Constitutional Convention that met two months later. Not surprisingly its majority of black delegates drafted a new constitution that ushered in tax and land reform, the first formal public education system and more.

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 fall elections occurred. But Hampton’s assumptions proved false. The Radical Republicans won a significant majority and began to implement their reform agenda—including raising taxes, implementing land redistribution, and installing a grassroots public

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8 Wade Hampton III to John Connor, typescript, 24 March 1868, HFP. For the general attitude towards blacks by most whites in the state after 1865, one of the best overviews is Stephen Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 41, 44.
education system. These bold moves threatened white conservatives who feared losing control of black labor and the political process, the latter to a Republican Party with majority black support. Most white leaders believed that they had to prevent this and take back the reigns of power to forestall political and social chaos. Although some whites, even Hampton for a time, advocated some form of peaceful accommodation with the Republicans, most believed that only intimidation and violence could prevail and resurrect white control. Martin Gary and Matthew C. Butler characterized the dire nature of this new struggle as an attempt by Republicans to place the “negro over the white man” a maneuver that demonstrated Republicans were “at war with the noblest instincts of our [white] race.” Conservative radicals such as Butler believed that whites who tried to reach political accommodation with former slaves 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 victory for conservative Democrats. Such violence ranged from beatings to murder, with one of the more extreme cases being the assassination of a black leader, Benjamin Randolph. In October 1868, while campaigning in Abbeville for a seat in the legislature, several shots rang out in the local train station, killing Randolph instantly. Yet even in this violent atmosphere blacks and their white allies went to the polls in November to elect a Radical ticket.

Hampton could not legally run for political office because Congress 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 failed he seemed to discard his hopes in that arena. Instead, Hampton tacitly supported the Klan

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9 For the failed effort to forestall the election of delegates to the state constitution 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 plan led by people like Gary, see Richard Zuczek, State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 51.
violence that accelerated in the wake of the 1868 elections. Primarily in the Upstate, bands of vigilantes, often clad in frightening regalia, intimidated and attacked Republican supporters, white and black, with impunity. Unable to end the violence, Republican Governor Robert K. Scott appealed to the president and Congress for Federal troops to help stem the carnage. After the president invoked the Third Enforcement Act, commonly known as the Ku Klux Klan Act, in April 1871, 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 at least one historian has called the federal law timid and asserted that it should have been imposed earlier and more forcefully, the action ended most of the violence. Hundreds were incarcerated and trials were held. Unfortunately for the federal authorities, so many suspects turned themselves in, along with those captured, that the courts and jails could not process the huge backlog that was created in the legal system. This, coupled with the expert defenses that the accused received through the moral support and financial backing of people such as Hampton and Matthew C. Butler, meant that only a token number of accused Klansmen received convictions. Even those that did generally received light prison sentences. Although this spate of violence came to an end, the lull proved to be temporary. As the elections of the fall of 1876 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.\(^\text{10}\)

Although former Confederates at all levels were given amnesty by Congress in 1872, Hampton had remained too preoccupied with family issues and his poor finances to take a leadership role in the fight against the Radical Republicans. His

\(^{10}\) For the support Hampton gave the Klansmen indicted, see Zuczek, \textit{State of Rebellion}, 100. For the violence perpetrated by the organization, see Zuczek, \textit{State of Rebellion}, 94-100; and Cisco, \textit{Wade Hampton}, 204-206. Also see Lou Falkner Williams, \textit{The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials, 1871–1872} (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 53.
efforts to improve his financial condition collapsed when the insurance company he joined went into bankruptcy less than a year after his appointment to its board. Still, he maintained a keen interest in the political future of his home state. Thus, when ex-Confederate leaders approached him in June 1876 to be the Democratic Party's nominee for governor, he accepted.\(^\text{11}\)

Hampton's social position and heroic role as a Confederate leader made him the best standard bearer for the conservative Democrats. Unanimously nominated in an August convention, the soldier-turned-politician began a campaign across the state, from the Upcountry to the Lowcountry, defending the virtues of his party and castigating the corrupt and spendthrift ways of the Radical Republicans. But Hampton's speeches and his obvious public appeal as a hero of the defeated Confederacy were possible largely because of the political army—mounted Red Shirts—that bolstered his appeal and protected him in every community to which he took his campaign.

In Anderson, Sumter, Winnsboro and Yorkville during the fall campaign Hampton was met by an impressive entourage of local dignitaries, admiring young ladies and scores, sometimes hundreds, of mounted Red Shirts. For one campaign rally in Winnsboro on October 16, 1876, an elaborate itinerary was created and fliers posted throughout the community. It outlined where the local Democratic dignitaries were to stand, the place of "colored clubs" and how the "mounted men" should arrange 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. After castigating the corrupt Republicans in Columbia and their governor, Daniel Chamberlain, for the umpteenth time, he appealed for black support. Ironically Hampton claimed that blacks 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.” And yet just a decade before most blacks had been slaves for life to Hampton and his class, devoid of any rights whatsoever. Fear prevented many minority voters from asserting the courage to openly disagree with Red Shirts 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 rebut Hampton’s claims.12

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 Upstate 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.” 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 fifty blacks and one white Red Shirt lay dead at its conclusion. Similarly at Cainhoy, in the Lowcountry, blacks and whites faced off again. Here the black militia got the better of the action but still whites inflicted nearly as many casualties on the Republicans before they fled. With such brutal violence going on all around him, Hampton seemed to

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12 For details about the Hampton political rallies, see “Celebration in Honor of General Wade Hampton at Winnsboro,” 16 October 1876, HFP; and Yorkville Enquirer, October 19, 1876. The author wishes to thank Debra Franklin, Museum researcher, for taking extensive notes of the latter for this study.
remain above the fray, arguing before black audiences why they should support his election. Through an alliance with the whites, “who owned the land... pay the taxes,” blacks could help redeem the state. But, he warned, if they continued with their “carpet-bag friends [the Republicans]” they would lose aid or support when needed, presumably from whites.\(^{13}\)

Some former slaves seemed to take Hampton’s words to heart because, as Edmund Drago shows in his recent study, the white Red Shirt clubs had black allies. According to this historian, there were at least eighteen black Democratic Clubs organized during the 1876 political campaign. How many of these clubs actually were formed by political coercion from whites or from genuine disillusionment by blacks with the Republican leadership is difficult to determine. 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. Consequently in order to continue living and working in their communities some former slaves believed they needed to gain favors from white Democrats that would protect and sustain them during and after the elections.\(^{14}\)

Although black 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 campaign. And for those minority voters that switched their allegiance, most 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. Nonetheless,


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. In these two districts, county commissioners reported voter fraud where Democrats received more votes than actual voters available. This began the long stalemate over who had won the election. For the next several months Republicans and Democrats both claimed victory.  

Hampton declared himself the winner and demanded that his Republican opponent step down. Backed by Federal troops, Chamberlain refused, almost leading to a bloody riot during the last days of November 1876 as both Republican and Democratic legislators declared victory for themselves and proceeded to occupy the same chamber in the South Carolina State House. Led by dual speakers, E. W. M. Mackey for the Republicans and William H. Wallace for the Democrats, a tense atmosphere continued for four days with both sides refusing to leave the chambers.  

Surrounded by Federal troops, on the morning of the fourth day the Democrats reluctantly voted to leave voluntarily when the troops outside seemed poised to remove them by force. However, as this occurred, disgruntled whites had begun to arrive in Columbia from many areas of the state to gather around the still unfinished State House, seemingly bent on throwing out the Republican members regardless of the Federal troops. Before violence could break out, Hampton showed his true leadership. Appearing before

the mob, he requested that they disperse. As they did so, the authority of Hampton was obvious and the legitimacy of the Republican governor and his party was irrevocably compromised.\(^{16}\)

Yet 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 even though he lacked the legal authority. In December 1876 Hampton declared in his acceptance speech that he owed much of his success to black voters who “rose above prejudice of race and [were] honest enough to throw off the shackles of party.” Yet even though Hampton publicly claimed this support, others in his own party realized that it was the bands of Red Shirts, with their intimidation tactics and recourse to violence, who had really “won” the election for him. On election day in one Lexington precinct, a Democratic observer admitted that only ten blacks voted the conservative ticket. Although it is difficult to say how many blacks actually voted Democratic across the state, one historian estimates that probably no more than one hundred blacks in each county voted for Hampton and his party.\(^{17}\)

Nonetheless, even without substantial black support, Hampton eventually forced his Republican rival to resign his office. As he and Chamberlain disputed each other’s legitimacy into the spring of 1877, the hopes of Republicans that somehow the Radical ticket could still win grew ever dimmer. Hampton and his Red Shirts advised supporters to pay taxes to the Democracy, not Columbia, so that the Republican regime could not operate the daily duties of government. In fact, the power of the conservative Democracy had grown so that just before Chamberlain resigned his office in April 1877, Hampton reputedly claimed that if the former governor had not given up his office he would have had every tax

\(^{16}\) For an account of the stalemate in the State House after the election see Cisco, \textit{Wade Hampton}, 250-2.

\(^{17}\) For an account of Hampton’s inaugural address and its content see \textit{Charleston News and Courier}, December 14, 1876, extra edition, HFP; and Cisco, \textit{Wade Hampton}, 256-8. For estimates on the number of black voters that supported Hampton see Williamson, \textit{After Slavery}, 411.
collector in the state hanged. But the final chapter in Republican rule only ended after Hampton visited the president in Washington. There, after he assured the newly inaugurated Rutherford B. Hayes that he would guarantee political rights and protection to blacks as well as whites, regardless of party, the president agreed to pull out all remaining Federal troops from the state. With federal protection now gone, Chamberlain had no other recourse but to resign his office and leave the state.18

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. Just as they had directed the Red Shirt campaign, Matthew C. Butler and Martin Gary demanded that every white voter make sure that he intimidated every black voter he knew to either vote Democratic, or not at all, through whatever means he had. They were determined to use any means at their disposal to elect Hampton and throw out the Republicans.19

Whether Hampton considered that racial dominance was the essence of the 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 M. C. Butler were determined to eradicate black political participation, regardless of who might supervise black voters. Although Butler’s extreme position—advocating the removal of African Americans from the State House and all local offices as well—failed in the early post-Reconstruction era, over time black political participation was steadily eroded. It started within months of Hampton assuming undisputed office in the spring of 1877. In Richland County, Senator Beverly Nash and State Supreme Court Justice Jonathan

18 On the claim by Hampton, see Cisco, Wade Hampton, 267. For the end of Chamberlain’s tenure, see Cisco, Wade Hampton, 266-9.
19 For more, see especially William J. Cooper, The Conservative Regime: South Carolina, 1877–1890 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968).
Wright were forced to resign their offices by the fall of 1877 after trumped-up charges of corruption and drunkenness were brought against them. By the early 1880s most black politicians resigned even if they weren’t directly threatened, once they realized how tenuous their own position in the white-dominated government had become. But a few African Americans held onto their offices through the 1880s because they came from predominately black counties. Yet even the 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 nearly a century.

As for Hampton, his political leadership continued to have 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 decade of the 1880s under those who succeeded Hampton. But while Hampton’s legacy for equal education appeared genuine, that for equality in the political process never did. Constitutional offices during the Hampton years became all white.

In addition to legal ways of excluding African-American voters from exercising their rights at the ballot box, the former general’s party lieutenants also found ways to stuff ballots and restrict minority voters through literacy tests and grandfather clauses. And not only did Hampton oversee new voting rights restrictions, he did little to support the few remaining African Americans in local office. On Wright’s removal from office, see Richard Gergel and Belinda Gergel, “‘To Vindicate the Cause of the Down trodden’: Associate Justice Jonathan Jasper Wright and Reconstruction in South Carolina,” in At Freedom’s Door, African American Founding Fathers and Lawyers in Reconstruction South Carolina, ed. James Lowell Underwood and W. Lewis Burke, Jr. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 64-7. On Beverly Nash’s removal, see John Hammond Moore, Columbia and Richland County: A South Carolina Community, 1740–1990 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 265-6. For the general campaign used by Hampton and his allies to remove most blacks from office, see Moore, Columbia and Richland County, 267. For a comprehensive examination of the removal of blacks from politics in the 1880s, see Cooper, The Conservative Regime, 90-107.
offices, even if they were Democrats. The few that gained local offices did not keep them long after Hampton left to become United States Senator in 1879.21

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 regime, his presence on the political stage was no longer essential to white political dominance. Now over sixty, Hampton’s age was probably affecting his ability. And there were younger leaders, some former Confederates, who were ready to take over the reins of real political control. In late 1878, following a serious hunting accident, Hampton’s very survival seemed precarious. The conservative regime that Hampton had returned to power in 1877 continued to maintain political control through most of the 1880s, but their days were numbered as Ben Tillman’s star began to rise.

Even though the hero and leader 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 the U. S. Congress, Hampton’s tenure had little significance for the state or the nation. He rarely spoke to the assembled body and often missed sessions because of illness or infirmity. By the end of the 1880s, even his symbolic value to the state’s young Turks, led by Tillman, was finished. At the end of the decade the state senate voted him out of office.22

Hampton lived for another decade struggling to support his family while attending Confederate reunions inside and outside the

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21 On Hampton’s short tenure as governor and his modest success in carrying out his election promises to blacks, see Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 78-79; Williamson, After Slavery, 412-17; and Cooper, The Conservative Regime, 90, 96, 111-12. Also see Gergel, “Wade Hampton,” 9-14.

22 On Hampton’s health and waning influence see Cisco, Wade Hampton, 270-324; and Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 91-4, 185.
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 protect his state during four years of war. There is no denying that he was one of the last of the old cavaliers who fought ferociously for his state, but his political leadership during and after Reconstruction is not so clear. While Hampton continued to fight for his state, he did so from the perspective of an old guard trying to return the state to some semblance of its pre-war days. Steeped in the old white planter view of society where blacks and most whites accepted the planter oligarchy without question, Hampton envisioned an ordered world, as he perceived it had been before secession. Although he 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 to win back the state in 1876, most white supporters from that election later admitted that Hampton was misled. According to Ben Tillman, reflecting on these events years later, despite Hampton’s claim that he had won sixteen thousand votes from black constituents in 1876, “... every active worker in the cause knew that in this he was woefully mistaken.” A noble soldier, Wade Hampton was at best a resolute but reactionary politician. While he was willing to accept blacks in the political arena, it could only be on white terms.

Despite his rhetoric to the contrary, Hampton accepted white methods of intimidation and violence to save the state from what he and other white leaders considered chaos under a black dominated Republican Party. He, like most whites, believed that the best option for all, black and white, 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.23

23 Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman*, 78-79. Kantrowitz argues persuasively that Hampton’s paternalistic view of race was really little different from the violence which Ben Tillman and M. C. Butler advocated in 1876. In the end both sides believed that the only conceivable order of society was for whites to dominate blacks.
THE GOVERNORSHIP OF WADE HAMPTON

Robert K. Ackerman

The Papacy had its schism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, that is, a time of two competing popes; Georgia in 1946 had its schism of two competing governors; and South Carolina in 1876 and 1877 had its great schism of two opposing governors: Wade Hampton III, the Democratic or conservative claimant, and D. H. Chamberlain, the Republican or Radical claimant.

I shall treat Wade Hampton's gubernatorial career in two time segments: the first being the interim between his inauguration on December 14, 1876, several days after the inauguration of the Republican D. H. Chamberlain to the same office, and April 11, 1877, when Chamberlain ceded the office in the Capitol to Hampton, and South Carolina once again had one governor; and the second time segment being between April 11, 1877, and February 24, 1879, when Hampton's resignation as governor became effective, in preparation for his departure for Washington to become a United States Senator. In each of these time segments I shall examine several different themes.

In the first division of time, the first theme was Hampton's effort to assure the nation and especially the national Republican Party—that his administration would prove effective in guaranteeing equal legal rights for both races. In his inaugural address, Hampton reminded his audience that the Democratic Party was pledged to treat both races as equals before the law. He reminded his listeners that he had been an early advocate for a qualified suffrage for the freed slaves.¹ It is significant that the tone of Hampton's speeches vis-à-vis legal justice for blacks did not change after the election. It is as though he had convinced himself in the campaign of the rightness of extending justice to black citizens.

¹ Columbia Register. December 15, 1876.
The presidential election of 1876 left the country uncertain as to who had won: the Republican Rutherford B. Hayes or the Democrat Samuel J. Tilden. The issue was not settled until an electoral commission selected by Congress chose Hayes well into 1877. In December, Hampton wrote to both presidential claimants stating his opposition to the use of Federal troops to prop up the Chamberlain administration. Hampton assured Hayes and Tilden that South Carolina would abide by the decisions of the courts—a safe choice since the state supreme court favored Hampton by a margin of two to one. He declared that his administration would deal equitably with the black race. Hampton strengthened his case by appointing to office a number of Republicans, black and white. It is significant that a division within the Democratic Party became evident in this period. On January 10, 1877, *The Chronicle and Sentinel* of Augusta, Georgia, printed a letter from a “New York Democrat” which supported earlier charges that Hampton had thrown his support to the Republican Rutherford B. Hayes in the presidential election of 1876 to ensure his own election, and thereby contributed to the defeat of the Democrat Tilden. Hampton’s opponents used this as proof of treachery to the Party, added to accusations that the Governor was soft in his treatment of African Americans, a policy of “milk and cider,” as opposed to the more manly policy of violence promoted by Martin Gary of Edgefield.

Hayes became president on March 4, and he invited both Chamberlain and Hampton to come to the White House for discussions. Chamberlain went first, and Hampton left Columbia on March 28. Hampton met with President Hayes and achieved an agreement that the Federal troops would be recalled from the State House, in effect abandoning the Republican claimant. Hampton promised the president that his administration would protect African-American suffrage and provide public education for both races. The

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2 Wade Hampton to R. B. Hayes and to S. J. Tilden, 23 December 1876, Hampton Papers, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
3 *Chronicle and Sentinel*, January 10, 1877, Hampton Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.
governor's return to Columbia was a triumphal procession. He told an audience in Charlotte, "We are bound to carry out in good faith the pledges we have made them, that every citizen, regardless of color, shall be equal in the light of the law."4

On learning that the supporting Federal troops were being withdrawn, Chamberlain told his black supporters, "The government of the United States abandons you, deliberately withdraws from you its support, with the full knowledge that the lawful Government of the State will speedily be overthrown. . . . It is said that the North is weary of the long Southern troubles."5 Thus Radical Reconstruction in South Carolina ended on April 11, 1877.

The second theme in this period was finances. Hampton and his colleagues sought to starve the Chamberlain administration out of office—and they succeeded. During this time, there were two Houses of Representatives, the Wallace or Democratic House and the Mackey or Republican House. In December, soon after the Wallace House and the Democratic senators elected him governor, Hampton asked the banks to disburse no public funds without requests bearing his signature.6 Several taxpayers then managed to get the Republican Judge R. B. Carpenter to issue an injunction prohibiting the banks from disbursing funds based on requests signed by Republican State Treasurer F. L. Cardozo.7 The Ways and Means Committee of the Wallace House passed a resolution asking South Carolinians to refuse to pay taxes to the Chamberlain government and instead pay a voluntary tax to the Hampton administration.8 Hampton followed that by asking taxpayers to pay one-tenth of their 1876 taxes, assuring them that whatever was paid would count toward their 1877 taxes.9 The Chamberlain administration soon found itself without funds, even for such

4 Ibid., April 6 and 7, 1877.
5 Ibid., April 9 and 11, 1877.
6 Ibid., December 16, 1876.
7 Ibid., December 9, 1876.
8 Columbia Register, December 21, 1876.
9 Columbia Union-Herald, January 4, 1877.
institutions as the insane asylum. Dr. J. F. Ensor, Superintendent of
the Lunatic Asylum, reported that he had to use his own credit to
keep the doors open until funds came from Governor Hampton.10 A
writer for the News and Courier commented, “He who can collect
the taxes is Governor of South Carolina.”11 A reporter for the New
York Tribune interviewed President Grant, who admitted that the
citizens’ refusal to pay taxes would bring down the Chamberlain
administration.12 During the schism, the Hampton administration
collected a total of $135,859, from which the governor disbursed
$76,661, primarily to charitable and penal institutions.13

Hampton served uncontested as governor from April 11,
1877, until February 24, 1879. The first theme during this period
was his continuing concern for justice for black citizens. Soon
after his return from Washington, there were mass celebrations in
Columbia and in Charleston. Hampton told a Charleston audience
that while he was in Washington several Republicans asked him
for advice on how to restrict black voting. He replied, “We don’t
want the vote of the black man taken away or restricted, for besides
the friendship we bear the race, their right to vote gives us more
votes in Congress.”14 If he had been cynical in making promises
of justice to black voters before the election there would have been
some change in the tone of his speeches after the election. There
was none.

In August 1877 the former Radical governor, R. K. Scott,
told a newspaperman, “Hampton is honestly carrying out the
promises which he made during the campaign. He has already
appointed more colored men to office than were appointed during
the entire two first years that I was Governor.”15 Historian George

10 Charleston News and Courier, December 16, 1876.
11 Ibid., January 6, 8, and 9, 1877.
12 Quoted in the Charleston News and Courier, February 20, 1877.
13 Ibid., April 27, 1877.
14 Ibid., April 19 and 29, 1877.
15 Columbia Daily Register, August 28, 1877; and Kenneth Stampp, “Triumph of
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Tindall, in his book *South Carolina Negroes, 1877–1900*, notes that Governor Hampton appointed eighty-six African Americans to office. I actually counted 108. Most of these were minor offices, but the number included one sheriff, two clerks of court, five probate judges, and three county treasurers.

Hampton's policies vis-à-vis black citizens reaped some support from black voters. It is likely that enough voted for him in 1876 to have made a difference between victory and defeat; it is important to note that the margin was narrow. Once he was in office, he gained ever more vocal support from black constituents. W. B. Nash, a prominent leader of the black community and the vice president of the Constitutional Convention of 1868, said that considering Hampton's speeches and actions, he was ready to bury the hatchet. He wanted black citizens to "meet our white citizens half-way in a Christian-like spirit."

Hampton had promised public education for both races, and he set in motion increasing support, which continued as long as his lieutenants wielded influence. In the summer of 1877, the Hampton regime enacted a tax of two mills specifically for public schools. By 1879–80, state appropriations reached $168,516 for white schools and $182,574 for black schools. After the "wool hats" took over in 1890, the funding for black schools deteriorated. By 1927, the support for white schools was eight times the support for black schools. This was no accident. Martin Gary actively opposed expending taxes, paid largely by whites, for the education of black children. And Ben Tillman was a Gary protégé.

17 Letters of Appointment, Manuscript Compilation, Hampton Papers, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
The Hampton-led General Assembly enacted provisions for one white university or college and one black university or college. The act proclaimed that these institutions "shall forever enjoy precisely the same privileges and advantages with respect to their standards of learning and the amounts of revenue to be appropriated by the State for their maintenance." Obviously, such goals were not obtained, but what goals they were!

The legislature of 1877 declared the Charleston election of 1876 to be invalid because of fraud. This was in part in response to the Board of Canvassers having declared the votes of Laurens and Edgefield Counties invalid in the same election. In preparation for the next election, Governor Hampton sent word to the Charleston Democrats that they should include black representation in their slate of candidates. Accordingly, the re-election in Charleston resulted in the appointment of three black Democrats to the General Assembly. This was scarcely proportional representation, but it was a vast improvement over the total disenfranchisement of African Americans achieved by the Tillmanites.

Hampton's policies on pardons had racial overtones as well. The governor informed the senate that he would consult with the sentencing judges before deciding on pardons. He followed that rule, but did on occasion go against the advice of the sentencing judge. In one case he pardoned a man contrary to the advice of his political friend Judge T. J. Mackey. The governor was especially generous in pardoning black prisoners who complained of racial prejudice in their trials. By August of 1878, Hampton had pardoned a total of eighty-one prisoners of whom sixty-two were black.

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20 Acts and Joint Resolutions of The General Assembly of South Carolina, Passed at The Special Session of 1877 (Columbia: Calvo and Patton, State Printers, 1877), 315.
21 Charleston News and Courier, May 3, 1877 and June 23, 1877; and Jones, "Wade Hampton and The Rhetoric of Race," 224.
22 Governor's Message #36 to the Senate, 15 December 1877, Miscellaneous Letters, Hampton Papers, South Carolina Department of Archives and History; and William A. Sheppard, Red Shirts Remembered: Southern Brigadiers of the Reconstruction Period (Atlanta: Ruralist Press, 1940), 163-64.
In 1878, the Edgefield Democrats, led by Martin Gary, voted to exclude African Americans from their membership. Hampton decided to speak to that issue at a Fourth of July celebration at Blackville, South Carolina. He told the audience, “Those who raise the cry that this is a white man’s government know that they are thrusting a lighted match into a barrel of powder.” He declared that if the party went back on its pledges and decided to no longer consider African Americans as citizens he would refuse to serve in public office: “I tell you . . . if you countenance fraud, before many years pass over your heads you will not be worth saving and you will not be worthy of the state you reside in.”

On one occasion Hampton and the Superintendent of Education, Hugh S. Thompson, visited Claflin College and dined in the president’s home with several black guests. This took on political significance, and it is indicative of the ridiculous. Harry Golden of the Carolina Israelite speculated that if whites and blacks stood while dining together there might be no problem. If seated, however, this could engender real controversy, as crowed in a letter from one of Martin Gary’s supporters: “I have been blowing the nigger dining on Hampton, and it meets with universal condemnation.”

Another theme in the time that Hampton served as the uncontested governor had to do with his efforts at reconciling North and South and his attempts to remove South Carolina from its status as a pariah state because of its role in initiating the Civil War.

On March 6, 1877, the Republican chief justice of the state supreme court, F. J. Moses Sr., father of the notorious Radical governor, died. The chief justice and Hampton had been friends. The chief justice had played a key role in legalizing Hampton’s claim to victory in the 1876 election. Governor Hampton determined

23 Charleston News and Courier, July 5, 1878; and Columbia Daily Register, July 7, 1878.
24 Columbia Daily Register, June 30, 1877; and Ellis G. Graydon to Martin Gary, 19 August 1878, Martin Witherspoon Gary Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.
to replace Moses with another Republican, the New York-born Associate Justice A. J. Willard, who had also supported Hampton’s claim to office. The election of this carpetbagger as chief justice deepened a split in the Democratic Party. Martin Gary, who proved to be Hampton’s primary opponent before Ben Tillman, was aghast at the thought of the General Assembly electing such a Republican. Hampton had his way, and the hostility continued. One of the governor’s purposes in this move was to prove to the North that he was above party politics, and that he had not opposed all Northerners, only those who were a part of the corruption of the Reconstruction era. In his campaign speeches Hampton often said, “So help me God, I am no party man.” Gary could never forgive Hampton for that ingratitude to the party that had made him governor.

Hampton’s interest in reconciliation led him to travel and speak extensively. He told his Northern audiences that he was determined to treat black citizens equitably. He said that the victory of 1876 was more than political; it was a victory for civilization. He told an audience in Auburn, New York, that “the white men of the South were bound by every legal and moral obligation to protect” the rights of black citizens. He often reminded his listeners that he had achieved the election of a Northern-born Republican as chief justice.

Hampton accepted an invitation to participate in the Louisville Industrial Exposition in Kentucky, where President Rutherford B. Hayes was to be the primary speaker. Hayes introduced Hampton to the Louisville audience with great praise. Hampton then joined the presidential train to Nashville, Tennessee. The two became friends, and that friendship became another reason for the animosity that the Gary faction held for Hampton. South Carolinians seeking office in the Hayes administration often first sought recommendations from Governor Hampton. E. W. M. Mackey, who had served as Speaker of the Republican House of Representatives during the schism, noted bitterly, “It is understood in South Carolina that no

26 Columbia Daily Register, June 30, 1877.
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man can get a place from this [Hayes] administration unless he gets the endorsement of the Democrats.”

A continuing theme was finances. In 1873, the Republican-controlled legislature had sought to gain control of the state’s mounting debt by enacting a bill entitled the Consolidation Act, which declared part of the state debt invalid because of corruption and developed a plan to fund that part of the debt found to be valid. In the campaign of 1876, the Democratic State Executive Committee had promised that if the Democrats won they would honor the Consolidation Act. Hampton interpreted this to be a requirement for the honor of the state. Martin Gary argued for repudiation, stating that funding even part of the debt was to reward the corruption of the Radicals. Further, Gary argued that funding the debt would enrich the “bond ring.” This kind of class warfare became stock-in-trade with the Tillmanites. The implication was that the aristocrats led by Hampton were the bond ring to be enriched by taxing the poor citizens of South Carolina. This was the populist rhetoric refined by Tillman. The General Assembly of 1877 made provision for a commission to study the debt and to determine what part of it was valid and worthy of funding. The result was a partial funding plan to be executed by a bond court consisting of three circuit court judges who would examine and rule on the issue. Hampton had wanted full funding of the debt; he achieved partial funding and partial repudiation.

In 1878, the Democratic Party nominated Hampton to serve a second term. This time he drew even greater support from African-American voters. Nevertheless, the campaign of 1878 was again marred by some degree of violence and intimidation. Hampton repeatedly urged Democrats to avoid what he called the

27 Mayor Charles D. Jacob to Wade Hampton, 21 August 1877, Hampton Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina; and William J. Cooper, The Conservative Regime: South Carolina, 1877–1890 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 28.

28 Columbia Register, May 26 and 27, 1877; Charleston News and Courier, June 4, 1877 and February 8, 1878.
shotgun policy. In September 1878, he delivered a vigorous speech in Greenville in which he recommended political equality for both races and adequate educational opportunities for both white and black children. He strongly urged white Democrats to invite their black neighbors to join the Democratic Party, pleading: "In the name of our civilization and of all that is honorable in South Carolina, in the name of our state and of our God, I protest against any resort to violence . . . , any adoption of the shotgun policy. We cannot do evil that good may come of it."29 Hampton and Gary differed so sharply over the issue of race that Hampton forbade Gary's further participation in the 1878 campaign. The Republicans offered no opposition for the office of governor. There was even a move in the Republican convention to nominate Hampton, but E. W. M. Mackey, the former Republican Speaker, spiked that movement. Hampton won easily.

On November 7, 1878, the day after the election, the governor suffered a hunting accident which eventually led to amputation of part of his right leg. Chief Justice Willard administered the oath for his second term while Hampton lay propped up in bed. On the day of the amputation, the General Assembly elected Hampton to the United States Senate. He resigned from office effective February 24, 1879, and went on to serve two terms in the United States Senate.

How would I summarize Hampton as governor? He was honest, not completely efficient—there were complaints of unanswered letters, et cetera—and he was rather effective as a moderate in race relations. He did not promote social equality—neither did most of the country—but he did offer some hope of a measure of justice for the freedmen. Judgments of political regimes must necessarily be relative. Compared to the rule of the "wool hats" that Tillman introduced and which endured with few interruptions for several generations, he was remarkably good. The sad truth is that Hampton was a tragic figure. The cotton aristocracy he represented failed. The Confederacy for which he fought failed. The policies of

29 Charleston News and Courier, September 20, 1878.
moderation in race relations which he promoted failed, and South Carolina paid for it for a long time. As John Andrew Rice noted, the Hampton regime was not replaced by white supremacy, but by “white-trash supremacy.”

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"The cause for which they fought has failed and it is the duty of every patriot in this broad land of ours to obliterate the passions engendered by the late unhappy war and to make this country now consecrated to freedom for all time to come—the happy abode of prosperous and contented freemen."

Wade Hampton III, 1869