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Heritage Without History: The 1960 South Carolina Secession Reenactment And The Desertion Of Historical Authority In Confederate Commemoration

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HERITAGE WITHOUT HISTORY:
THE 1960 SOUTH CAROLINA SECESSION REENACTMENT AND THE DESERTION OF
HISTORICAL AUTHORITY IN CONFEDERATE COMMEMORATION

by

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ABSTRACT

In 1960 the South Carolina Confederate War Centennial Commission sponsored a reenactment of the 1860 secession convention as the keystone event for state observances of the Civil War Centennial. Local organizations such as the Richland Country Historical Society and WIS Television produced the reenactment, which featured politicians like Strom Thurmond and George Bell Timmerman in leading roles as secession delegates. The pageant had three live showings, and a televised version of the reenactment aired on WIS-TV, which broadcast the program across the state. Following the production's open-circuit broadcast, the SC Educational Television Center continued broadcasting it in state public schools between 1961 and 1966. Although the pageant in many ways hearkened back to similar programs in style and subject matter, the composition of the pageant and its historiographical underpinnings represented a departure from authoritative historical interpretations of secession and the Civil War promoted by South Carolina historians. By employing the rhetoric of secession and linking it with populist white Southern resistance to the federal government in 1960, the program's organizers used the reenactment to promote white supremacy and to reinforce white opposition to federal integration, Civil Rights, and racial equality. Furthermore, the state commission propagated this production through SCETV state educational programming.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Much has already been written about the centennial and its implications for Civil War memory. The publication of Robert Cook's *Troubled Commemoration* in 2007 and David Blight's *American Oracle* in 2011 reinvigorated interest in the Centennial. The research which they and other historians have done in anticipation of the Civil War Sesquicentennial (2011-2015) helped to develop "a deeper understanding of how memories of the Civil War—and the closely related Reconstruction era—were constructed by various groups in the United States after World War I (in other words, when most of the participants had died)." This thesis attempts to supplement these narratives by focusing attention on state-sponsored public media programming and its involvement in influencing public memory.¹

Admittedly, the mercurial nature of public memory studies makes writing about it difficult. It was Wulf Kansteiner's view that it is easier to study memory "in a roundabout way, more through its effects than its characteristics." Kansteiner and others have certainly demonstrated that studying the media of memory (i.e. art, architecture, landscapes, and visual/oral sources) is as useful as studying its effects.²

¹ David W. Blight, *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011); Robert Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965, Making the Modern South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

² Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (May 2002): 182.

Consequentially, this thesis is a review of the techniques, processes, and discursions employed by a group of people whom Kansteiner might call the “makers of representation” who attempted to recreate an historical event in the public eye. It is a brief study of how the intermingled authority of state and cultural institutions allowed political elites to employ public media (such as public broadcasting and educational television) in the attempt to construct a politically useful historical consciousness. This thesis also critiques the medium of that representation historiographically, drawing upon both contemporaneous and preceding historical sources to assess the program’s interpretation of the past.³

Although “Without End to Dare” was in some ways a typical example of many centennial-era pageants from the 1960s, the vast majority of those events were local productions with limited impact. “Without End to Dare” was not even the first reenactment commemorating secession in the state: the Abbeville and Greenwood historical societies co-sponsored a reenactment of the Abbeville Secession Hill meeting on November 22, a secession meeting which preceded the Columbia convention by several weeks. Like “Without End to Dare,” the Abbeville reenactment also attempted to portray itself “as faithfully as possible,” and in many ways appeared to share a similar concern with authenticity.⁴

However, studying a program like “Without End to Dare” is useful for two reasons. First, the topic of secession itself speaks broadly to the perennially controversial topic of Civil War causation (more specifically, who and what caused the war, and why it was fought). Reconstructing the event of secession for a televised reenactment forced its

³ Ibid., 192.

⁴ “Secession Meeting to Be Commemorated,” *The State*, November 18, 1960.

production team to try to explain why secession happened and what the ensuing conflict meant. Since “Without End to Dare” took the form of a reenactment rather than a simple commemorative ceremony, the program’s producers went to great lengths to *re-remember* the event of secession so they could reproduce it. Their interpretive choices illustrate their goals for the pageant: namely, to rally white opposition to integration in the aftermath of the previous Civil Rights victories of the 1950s.

Second, “Without End to Dare” represents a dramatic departure from established media used for state-sponsored Confederate commemoration. The decision to create a reenactment from a published work containing primary sources and a biographical directory, as well as the decision to televise the dress rehearsal of the reenactment for television, had several consequences for the interpretive coherence of the play as a commemorative exercise. The evolution of the play paralleled what Thomas Brown noted in *Civil War Canon* about the populist veneration of the Confederate battle flag which replaced more traditional elitist commemorations. “Without End to Dare” not only crossed radically different forms of media, from the printed book, to the formal pageant, to public broadcasting; it was also situated at a time in which Confederate commemoration was beginning to distance itself from academic interpretations of the Civil War.⁵

⁵ Thomas J. Brown, *Civil War Canon: Sites of Confederate Memory in South Carolina*, Civil War America (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 201–35.

CHAPTER 2

CONFEDERATE WAR CENTENNIAL COMMISSION

In the late 1950s, the Eisenhower Administration established a federal commission to facilitate a national commemoration of the centennial of the American Civil War. The centennial's purpose was to bolster American unity at home in the face of outside aggression abroad. Although it was not the first time that the federal government sought to promote social unity through pageantry and commemoration, the national scale of the centennial was bold in its attempt to organize inter-state cooperation to coordinate national and state commemorative exercises. However, the Civil War centennial presented the administration with a thorny task: how should the nation commemorate its Civil War without sparking sectional conflict? ⁶

Under the leadership of Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant III, the centennial commission struck for a reconciliationist interpretation of the war designed specifically to avoid offending the white South. White Southerners had resisted the idea of a national commemoration of the Civil War, which they assumed the North would use as a weapon against the South in the era of Civil Rights. Regardless, Grant and his colleague Karl Betts were able to convince most Southern states to participate in the centennial. These states organized their own centennial commissions and began to lay the groundwork for their own state-sponsored observances of the Civil War. However, despite some lukewarm

⁶ Richard M. Fried, *The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming! Pageantry and Patriotism in Cold-War America* (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 9–13; Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 11–14.

overtures to the reconciliationist narrative of the centennial, many of these Southern state commissions emphasized a Lost Cause narrative of the war which promoted the white South's cultural unity and moral superiority.⁷

Southern segregationists understood that participating in certain centennial activities and tapping into Southern historic memory could provide a useful weapon in the fight against integration. It is not to say that all Southern Civil War centennial commissions were established for political reasons. Robert Cook has noted that many secessionists were wary of any kind commemoration of the Civil War, since it might stoke the flames of an intersectional conflict that the South feared it could not win. At the same time, many Southerners were beginning to connect the centennial celebration with the fight against the federal government's tepid involvement in Civil Rights.⁸

In 1958 a group of South Carolinians, including state senator John D. Long, archivist J. H. Easterby, and Citadel Military College historian Charles Anger, began pushing the Hollings administration to participate in the centennial. It was shameful, they thought, that other Southern states such as Virginia had already established commissions of their own, while South Carolina lagged behind. In a letter to Governor Hollings which he later shared with Easterby, Charles Anger expressed his irritation at the absence of a state commission to commemorate secession and Civil War, claiming that "it would be most unfortunate if South Carolina—the leader and center of the movement—took no cognizance of this part of her past." The Civil War was "something the entire state glories in and should also share in." Easterby agreed with Anger's assessment of the importance

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 62–63.

of the war, assuring Anger that he and Senator Long were jointly drafting a resolution calling for the creation of a state commission to observe the centennial.⁹

Easterby and Senator Long carefully considered which name they should give to the proposed commission. Although they were modeling the state commission on what they called the “National Civil War Centennial Commission,” they decided that using the phrase “Civil War” to describe the conflict seemed inappropriate for a South Carolina commission. Instead, they adopted the name, “South Carolina *Confederate* War Centennial Commission,” in homage to the Confederacy. The federal commission raised no objections to this name, since doing so would have risked acerbating sectional divisions before the centennial observances even began. “Call it what you like,” said director Karl Betts when someone asked him about the name during a meeting in Charleston.¹⁰

The resolution creating the Confederate War Commission passed both houses of the state assembly by 1959. Representative John Amasa May from Aiken became the chairman of the commission, and several other politicians served on it in various capacities. Members included Easterby, who handled publications, and Dr. Daniel W. Hollis, who took charge of out-of-state activities. For weeks they met and deliberated on which activities the commission should promote for the centennial. They proposed a variety of

⁹ Charles L. Anger to Ernest F. Hollings, January 13, 1959, Confederate War Centennial Commission Folders, box 1, Office of the Director, Agencies, Commissions and Organizations (S108163), Records of the South Carolina Department of Archives and history, South Carolina Department of Archives and History; J. H. Easterby to Charles L. Anger, January 15, 1959, Confederate War Centennial Commission Folders, box 1, Office of the Director, Agencies, Commissions and Organizations (S108163), Records of the South Carolina Department of Archives and history, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

¹⁰ Karl Betts, “Civil War Centennial Commission Press Release No. 117,” July 30, 1959, Confederate War Centennial Commission Folders, box 1, Office of the Director, Agencies, Commissions and Organizations (S108163), Records of the South Carolina Department of Archives and history, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

programs ranging from editorial projects and other publications, essay contests, pageants, and the erection of historic markers.¹¹

They decided that the keystone event for the state's observance of the centennial would be some kind of commemoration related to South Carolina's secession convention of 1860. The commission considered its state's secession to be an event of which citizens should be proud. South Carolina had been the first state to secede from the Union following Lincoln's election and the dramatic rise of the Republican Party, and the state had paved the way for the creation of the Confederacy. Despite the disastrous devastation the South incurred during the war, the commissioners agreed that it was important to commemorate what they considered their ancestors' moral courage.

Indeed, the rhetoric of secession would feature prominently in the speeches and publications of the commission's leaders throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s. State Senator John D. Long, the original sponsor of the state commission, frequently employed the rhetoric of secession as a critique against the federal government. Seven months before "Without End to Dare" premiered, Long delivered a lengthy address to the state senate regarding the impending secession centennial. During his speech he expressed strong misgivings about the federal government's involvement in the Civil War centennial. "While South Carolina and the other Confederate States are being lured to prepare for a

¹¹ "S.C. Confederate Centennial Commission, Committee Assignments," n.d., Confederate War Centennial Commission Folders, box 1, Office of the Director, Agencies, Commissions and Organizations (S108163), Records of the South Carolina Department of Archives and history, South Carolina Department of Archives and History; J. H. Easterby, "South Carolina Plans for the Confederate War Centennial," n.d., 3, Confederate War Centennial Commission Folders, box 1, Office of the Director, Agencies, Commissions and Organizations (S108163), Records of the South Carolina Department of Archives and history, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

‘Love Feast’ the signs point to all out preparations on the part of the federal government to blacken and damn our good name forever beyond repair.”¹²

Long proceeded to lay out a comprehensive list of grievances against the tyranny of the federal government. For nearly an hour the state senator railed against Lincoln and his administration as the chief author of the “Confederate War,” pausing occasionally to highlight Sherman’s hypocritical racism and the federal government’s butchery of the Native Americans. Finally, Long turned to condemn the growing “centralization of power in a strong national government at Washington, at the expense of the several states Local self government is the only sure guarantee of human freedom.” He concluded his speech by pointing to the three flags hanging in the Senate building: the United States flag, the South Carolina State flag, and the battle flag of the Army of Northern Virginia. By supporting the secession centennial and associated programs like “Without End to Dare,” Long saw himself as defying the federal government’s efforts to undermine the Jim Crow South.¹³

In contrast, Long’s colleague John A. May was more reserved in his public statements about secession. While he served as chairman of the state centennial commission, May publicly seemed to express support for the reconciliationist narrative of Betts and the national Civil War Centennial Commission. In his public writings May argued that the centennial commemoration was “not a celebration; it is a commemoration, a commemoration of the valor of our forefathers, of a grand fight, a fight which both sides believed in with equal vigor.” Indeed, even the publication of *South Carolina Secedes*, an

¹² John D. Long, “Address by the Honorable John D. Long on the South Carolina Secession Centennial,” n.d., 7, South Carolina Secession Centennial by John Long folder, box 8, Archive, Confederate Relic Room.

¹³ Ibid., 30–31, 45, 56.

abridgement of the journals of the secession convention edited by John May and Joan Faunt, appeared to strike a neutral tone. On the surface all activities of the Confederate War Centennial, including the program “Without End to Dare,” seemed to have been intended to be educational as well as commemorative.¹⁴

Privately, however, May believed that “the world is coming to the conclusion that the cause of the Confederacy was right,” and he saw the secession commemoration as politically useful in white Southerners’ struggles against Civil Rights. At any rate May was eager to prevent the promotion of what he considered anti-Southern narratives related to the plans of the national centennial commission to commemorate emancipation. Indeed, May was quite clear in his opposition to any move on the part of the national centennial commission in threatening the political and racial status quo of the South. He later expressed a great deal of contempt when it seemed that black participants in the centennial were becoming increasingly assertive in promoting an emancipatory narrative of the Civil War. During the official commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation, it seemed to May that “the Negro[e]s did just what we predicted—attempted to take over the celebration.”¹⁵

In 1960 May and his colleagues in the Commission reached out to WIS-TV for help. WIS-TV’s Director of Creative Services, Payne Williams, Jr., volunteered to write the script for the reenactment. Williams was probably not an obvious choice for drafting this state-sponsored centennial pageant. The son of a New York colonel and an English

¹⁴ *South Carolina Commemorates The Confederate War Centennial: A Manual for Observance in the Counties and Cities of the State of South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Confederate War Centennial Commission, 1960), 8; John Amasa May and Joan R. Faunt, *South Carolina Secedes* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1960).

¹⁵ K. Michael Prince, *Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys!: South Carolina and the Confederate Flag* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 44; Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 149–51; *ibid.*, 178.

noblewomen, Williams was a cosmopolitan Yankee with no direct ties to the South. He spent much of his young adulthood touring Europe in the years before the Second World War. After Pearl Harbor he joined the Army Air Force where he served until the death of his father, who died in North Africa. Following the Allied victory Williams attended the Sorbonne before attempting a career in cinema. He was involved in two films: *Le Passe-Muraille*, in an uncredited role; and *An American In Paris*, as a member of the production team. Eventually he became a radio broadcaster with Radio Free Europe in Munich, a career which he continued when he returned to New York. He worked for several years as a broadcaster in New York and Chicago before moving to Columbia to join WIS-TV. In 1960 Williams began working on the script of “Without End to Dare.”¹⁶

¹⁶ “The Hon. Patrick Paine-Henderson’s Obituary on San Francisco Chronicle,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/sfgate/obituary.aspx?n=patrick-paine-henderson&pid=120002234>; “PATRICK PAINE-HENDERSON,” *Watertown Daily Times (NY)*, November 6, 2008.

CHAPTER 3

“WITHOUT END TO DARE”

“Without End to Dare” was a drama of three acts. The first and longest act focused primarily on the first day of the convention, with a brief scene transition to the gubernatorial inauguration of Francis Pickens at the old statehouse. Act Two covered the convention’s second session in Columbia covering the speeches by two envoys from Alabama and Mississippi and the dramatic climax when John Inglis (portrayed by John May) moved to adopt resolutions calling for secession. The third and final act depicted the subsequent meeting in Charleston after the delegates abandoned Columbia during a smallpox outbreak. The play ended with delegates would rise to sign the Ordinance of Secession.¹⁷

¹⁷ Payne Williams, “Without End to Dare: A Drama of the Secession” 1960, Call No. 812 1960, S.C. Historical Society Pamphlets, Special Collections and South Carolina Historical Society Archives, College of Charleston; Payne Williams, “Without End to Dare: A Drama of the Secession” 1960, Call No. PS3545.I53375 W58 1960, Special Collections, Strom Thurmond Institute, Clemson University. I have only been able to track down two copies of the script, hereafter cited as “Charleston text” and “Thurmond text,” respectively. A textual analysis reveals that the Charleston text was probably an older production copy of the script that was donated to the SC Historical Society in Charleston sometime in the Sixties. The Thurmond text is an inscribed spiral-bound copy which Payne Williams had made for Strom Thurmond as a gift; he seems to have made several of these copies for prominent performers in important roles. Neither text should be considered a definitive copy of the final script. Consider, for example, the Narrator’s Prologue and Jamison’s first address to the convention. The Charleston text includes the Narrator’s Prologue, and the Thurmond text includes Jamison’s first address. However, while the Thurmond text includes a cue for the Narrator’s prologue, it does not provide his dialog; similarly, the Charleston text marks the cue for Jamison’s first address, but without his dialog. This is not the only problem I encountered when reconstructing the production. Both texts are missing some pages which are present in the other copy. The Charleston text also contains a few pages printed in different color ink, which implies that someone attempted to copy missing pages from another copy of the script that may have been missing. I have meticulously attempted to reconstruct the play from these scripts, but until I find a more definitive script or even the production’s videotapes, I cannot determine what else is missing. Especially problematic is that the script’s pagination includes sub-pages: page 11 of the Charleston text is followed by a page labeled “11-A” and contains the entire interview scene between the Narrator and two bystanders. This entire page is missing in the Thurmond text, which is particularly troubling, since the

Publicly, Williams argued that his reenactment script would present a “concise and accurate statement of the South’s position” at the time of secession, marketing his production as a faithful recreation of the events of 1860. Backing up the play’s authenticity was—as he claimed—*nine months* of research with historical monographs and archival records. Williams likely did most of the work in piecemeal, since it is unlikely that a man managing several WIS-TV projects and television programs would have spent an extensive amount of labor writing this script *pro bono*.¹⁸

Most of the script drew heavily from the published journals of the secession convention. As the official publication of the secession convention, it presented a thorough account of the speeches, resolutions, motions, and votes that members made on the convention floor. However, it is also reasonable to assume that Williams took most of his research from John May and Joan Faunt, who had already been working on *South Carolina Secedes*. Indeed, over two-thirds of the play could have been ripped directly from *South Carolina Secedes*, and it probably was. Notably, a portion of the manuscript copy of *South Carolina Secedes* containing the portraits of convention members was used later by the cosmetic team to make the actors look like the convention delegates. The similarities suggest that Williams, May, and Faunt collaborated on the script of the “Without End to Dare.”¹⁹

Although May and Faunt could have directly contributed to the script’s composition, there is little reason to question Williams’ primary authorship. As a radio and

Thurmond text was printed and bound *after* the production aired. If I had only the Thurmond text I would have never known that page 11-A existed, and I still do not know if every page of the script made the final cut.

¹⁸ “SC Secession Convention Re-Enactment to Open Tonight,” *The State*, December 16, 1960.

¹⁹ *Journal of the Convention of the People of South Carolina, Held in 1860, 1861, and 1862* (Columbia, SC: R. W. Gibbes, 1862); Eleanor Roberts to Mrs. H. B. Sheely, n.d., Organizational Meeting 9-30-60 Richland County Historical Society folder, Richland County Historical Society Papers, 1960-1969, box 1.

television broadcaster, Williams was able to draw on the work of other radio and television broadcasters who had engaged in similar projects before him and was well-qualified to put secession on television.²⁰

The script was not merely the sum of quotations ripped from primary sources. Williams used established radio narrative techniques to provide historical interpretation of the secession movement with an omniscient narrator. In this case, “Without End to Dare’s” narrator was an omniscient a twentieth century news broadcaster reporting on the proceedings of the nineteenth-century secession convention as it unfolded, commenting on the proceedings and interviewing historical characters at different points in the play. William’s “broadcaster-observing-history” literary device probably came from the popular *You Are There* radio and television series by CBS. Those programs featured news broadcasters observing historical events as eyewitness observers, with diverse commentaries and interviews with historical figures incorporating multiple perspectives of a particular event. In the words of one historian, by setting up a reenactment as a newscast, the *You Are There* series could present multiple perspectives as “a surrogate form of historical analysis, offering precisely the kind of balanced presentation of the facts that links news reporting to more conventional modes of historiography.”²¹

The narrator’s prologue describes the event of secession in the authoritative tone of a television news broadcast: “December 17th, 1860 an eventful day in the history of our Nation. We are speaking to you from the front portico of the First Baptist Church, Columbia, South Carolina. Within this building, Secession, will, in a matter of hours

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C. Rollins, eds., *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age* (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 27.

become a reality and the first steps toward inevitable Civil War will be taken.” The narrator set the scene of secession with brief references to the victory of “Mr. Lincoln’s Party” in the 1860 election and the sense of anxiety it had brought to the South. “The time has come when the people of the South feel they must conform to the Northern ideal of civilization, secede . . . or die.” William’s designed the prologue to foreshadow the act of secession as the attempt by a free people to defend themselves against federal tyranny.²²

The choice of framing the reenactment with an omniscient narrator allowed Williams and the Commission to inject their own interpretations of secession and more directly than they would had they let the characters speak for themselves. Despite this creative control over the use of primary sources in the secession convention, their interpretation of secession assumes the quality of historiographical potpourri. By critiquing the pageant’s omniscient narrator *historiographically* we can begin to untangle the interpretive metanarrative grounding the script within the historiography of the Civil War insofar as it abandoned established historical interpretations of secession.

In 1960 the Confederate War Commission expressed interest in the copious literature covering the history of the American Civil War. Notes from the meetings of the commission show that there were several historic resources they intended to consult during the centennial. Charles Cauthen’s *South Carolina Goes to War* (1950) and David Duncan Wallace’s *History of South Carolina* and *South Carolina: A Short History* (1934 and 1951) received particular attention from members of the commission. Easterby had previously cited Wallace’s work as one of the best comprehensive histories of the state. Meanwhile,

²² Williams, “Without End to Dare (Charleston Text),” 2.

Cauthen's political history of South Carolina during the Civil War became a valuable resource for commemorating the centennial in South Carolina.²³

The commission would have also been able to tap into the broader historiography of the Civil War from the past century. At any rate, commission members like Easterby and Dan Hollis would have been aware of the works of historians like James Ford Rhodes, Avery Craven, and Charles and Mary Beard; to more contemporary historians like Bruce Catton and Allan Nevins. Unsurprisingly, this historiography was highly complex, and historians in different decades often presented conflicting interpretations of the war. Notably, James Rhodes famously argued that the Civil War was an inevitable conflict which eventually united the nation; revisionists such as Avery Craven and James Randall, writing in the aftermath of WWI, portrayed the Civil War as an avoidable conflict which only took place because of the actions of irresponsible politicians.

In most commemorative activities related to the centennial, historians and archivists in South Carolina were able to build upon a foundation of prior editorial projects from previous decades. Before and during the centennial historical institutions in South Carolina took great care to control the content they disseminated into the public. Joan Faunt's aforementioned work on the biographical directory of the South Carolina Senate was one of several initiatives to publish and disseminate historical knowledge about the state. Similarly, the South Caroliniana's work on *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* and Alexander Salley's work on the William Gilmore Simms Letters represent what Thomas

²³ Charles Edward Cauthen, *South Carolina Goes to War, 1860-1865*, vol. 32, The James Sprunt Studies in History and Political Science (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950); David Duncan Wallace, *The History of South Carolina*, vol. 3 (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1934); David Duncan Wallace, *South Carolina: A Short History, 1520-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951).

Brown has described as “historiographical planning.” Such exercises in historical editorial initiatives were extensive undertakings that sometimes took decades to complete.²⁴

Notwithstanding the influence of Joan Faunt and John May’s editorial work in *South Carolina Secedes*, the secession reenactment possessed a number of awkward interpretive dissonances. On its surface “Without End to Dare” attempted to rise above historiographical debates about the Civil War, attempting instead to cut through the pretensions of historical interpretation in order to establish a simple, authentic portrayal of the past. Nevertheless, the play’s script indiscriminately incorporated various historiographical arguments about the war into its narrative.

At least five distinct historiographical arguments are easily identifiable in the author’s interpretation of secession. First, the author of the Charleston text opens the script with the narrator declaring that (1) *the conflict was irrepressible*: “Within this building, Secession, will, in a matter of hours become a reality, and the first steps toward inevitable Civil War will be taken.” Eschewing the Revisionists like Craven and Randall, the author instead evokes arguments from Rhodes and Woodrow Wilson who described the Civil War as essentially unavoidable and irrepressible. Moreover, the author also argues that (2) *the North and South had irreconcilable cultural differences*, considering Southern civilization totally distinct from and threatened by Northern culture and its influence through the federal government: “The time has come when the people of the South feel they must conform to the Northern ideal of civilization, secede . . . or die.”²⁵

²⁴ “Introduction by Thomas J. Brown - South Carolina & the Civil War - University of South Carolina Libraries,” accessed March 19, 2017, <http://library.sc.edu/digital/collections/civilwarbrownabout.html>.

²⁵ Williams, “Without End to Dare (Charleston Text),” 1–2; 11A.

On a similar vein, the script highlights the theme of (3) *Southern cultural and moral superiority to the industrial North*. The author depicts a South defending itself from the influences of Northern corruption, which represented an existential threat to the Southern way of life. The author implies that no one can blame the South for the Civil War. “Secession is, in the eyes of most Southerners the final attempt at self-preservation,” argues the narrator. “One sentiment echos [sic] from the mountains to the seaboard; ‘Resistance to Tyranny is obedience to God.’” Consequentially, the agrarian South was the cultural heir of American republicanism, actively defending the republican tradition from a tyrannical federal government. Such themes were common among proponents of the Lost Cause, as well as among scholars associated with the “Southern Agrarian School” at Vanderbilt and other Southern universities in the Thirties and Forties.²⁶

However, the author departs from the Agrarians’ political conservatism by connecting South Carolina’s secession with the radical republican and revolutionary political rhetoric of the French Revolution, quoting the famous declaration of Georges Jacques Danton in the preface: “De l’audace, encore de l’audace, et toujours de l’audace.” Admittedly, Jamison quoted Danton in his first address to the Secession Convention in 1860. However, in the script’s preface Williams linked revolutionary political rhetoric of the French to the languages of state’s rights, arguing that due to the South’s moral (4) *the South seceded and fought the Civil War in defense of states’ rights*. Williams considered this argument important enough to defend in his own voice (not his narrator’s voice) in the preface: “That men of honor might forever know the responsibilities of freedom, dedicated representatives met in convocation that dark December day in Columbia, to stand and be

²⁶ Donald Davison et. al., *I’ll Take My Stand* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930).

counted for their heritage and convictions. Abiding Faith in the Sacredness of States Rights provided their Creed.” Incidentally, this part of the preface appeared in the programs passed out in First Baptist Church during the live performances of the reenactment.²⁷

By relying on abstract political ideologies like republicanism and states’ rights to explain the causes of South Carolina’s Secession Convention and, by extension, the Civil War itself, the author of “Without End to Dare” was also arguing that (5) *slavery was not a significant cause of the Civil War*. Interestingly, extant copies of the script reveal glaring incongruities regarding how the narrator represents the issue of slavery during the reenactment. On the one hand, the play is heavily quoting from primary sources that directly comment on race and slavery in the U.S. South. For instance, the script preserves Jamison’s historic address to the Secession Convention in its entirety, including Jamison’s comments on the threat of abolitionism, the “erection of California as a free-soil State,” the violence against “Southern settlers of Kansas,” and the nullification of the fugitive slave laws by Northern states. Furthermore, the inclusion of Governor Pickens’ inaugural address incorporates the Governor’s comments on race. The lines for Pickens include arguments about the existence of “two entirely distinct and separate races” in the Southern states, and about the federal government “wanton and lawless” interference with the South’s peaceful “subjection” of black people.²⁸

Nevertheless, at no point did Williams or his narrator acknowledge the existence of slavery in the preface or in other parts of the script. When Williams interpreted secession in his own words he never mentioned slavery, even though the characters of his play

²⁷ Williams, “Without End to Dare (Charleston Text),” 1–2; “Without End to Dare Program,” n.d., 812S W67wi, South Caroliniana Library.

²⁸ Williams, “Without End to Dare (Charleston Text),” 2, 6.

eagerly discuss slavery in the context of secession. By highlighting the political rhetoric of revolution and states' rights, yet minimizing the issue of slavery, Williams was attempting to sidestep difficult conversations about race and oppression in South Carolina's history.

Interestingly, despite the SC Confederate War Centennial Commission's open endorsement of the works of South Carolina historians Cauthen and Wallace, Payne Williams apparently ignored both historians while writing "Without End to Dare." In fact, in 1934 Wallace directly condemned the kind of political abstraction Williams was endorsing:

The idea that the South fought to maintain abstract constitutional rights accuses her of a gigantic crime, unless those abstract rights were designed to protect some enormously important particular interest; for nations do not and should not fight over abstractions. It was the sincere belief that abolition would mean Africanization. Secession was therefore to them a moral imperative.²⁹

Similarly, Charles Cauthen argued in 1950 that, despite well-placed attempts to characterize South Carolina's secession movement as the product of growing Southern nationalism, even the notion of cultural and regional distinctness were "fundamentally grounded in the issues of slavery."³⁰

Minimizing slavery in the play also complicates the reenactment's treatment of the long term political debate between "Fire-eater" Disunionists and "Cooperationist" Unionists in South Carolina prior to the Civil War. In the play's second act, the Narrator breaks the fourth wall by interviewing James Petigru and Benjamin Perry, two Unionists in South Carolina:

²⁹ Wallace, *The History of South Carolina*, 3:156.

³⁰ Cauthen, *South Carolina Goes to War, 1860-1865*, 32:73.

Narrator: . . . Mr. James L. Petigru, we are informed that you are a staunch Unionist and do not approve of Secession. May we have your comment on this?

Mr. Petigru: Young Man, I tell you there is a fire. They have this day, set a blazing torch to the temple of Constitutional Liberty, and, please God, we shall have no more Peace, forever.

Narrator: Then, is it safe to assume that you do not approve of the action being taken by this Convention?

Mr. Petigru: You are correct, Sir. It is a tragedy . . . without an end.

Narrator: Thank you Mr. Petigru. We shall now speak with another advocate of Unionism . . . It is known that you have long actively opposed Secession. May we have your reaction to our present Convention activity?

B.F. Perry: It is, as Mr. Petigru has stated, a tragedy . . . But, if South Carolina chooses to go to Hell . . . then I shall go with her.³¹

By including Unionist voices in the secession reenactment, Williams was providing the proverbial “exception that proved the rule.” Every other voice in the play advocated for secession, and the vote on the secession measure was unanimous.

However, as Cauthens, Wallace, and other historians had amply demonstrated by the 1950’s, support for secession among South Carolina’s political elite was by no means guaranteed until late in 1860, when the Republican Party’s threat to the continuation and expansion of slavery seemed most imminent. The conflict between South Carolina’s fire-eaters and cooperationists, as well as the conflict between the Northern and Southern Democrats at the 1980 national convention, are not mentioned in the reenactment. Williams’s silence on the issue implies that a more thorough treatment of the state’s political disagreements would have undermined his assertion that South Carolinians were unified by the abstract politics of states’ rights.

Elsewhere Cauthen had pointed out that the unanimity of secessionist sentiment at the end of 1860 was “all the more remarkable in view of the fact that the antebellum history

³¹ Williams, “Without End to Dare (Charleston Text),” 11–A.

of the state was marked by frequent, and often bitter, factional conflicts . . . the half dozen years before secession were characterized by confusion in leadership, divided counsel, and party bitterness.” Only when Lincoln’s election seemed secure did the state of South Carolina rally behind the secessionist’s banner. On this point Wallace went further back, arguing that John Brown’s raid in 1859 and the perceived threat of abolitionist insurgency made South Carolina “more and more determined upon secession if Lincoln should be elected.” Avoiding the issue of slavery complicates the play’s central argument that abstract political principles and cultural distinctiveness led South Carolina to secession.³²

When Payne Williams drafted this script, he made several clear interpretive choices, from favoring the official journals of the secession convention over other sources, to ignoring the work of South Carolina historians which would have complicated the play’s political message. By abstracting the politics of secession and distancing the event from its historic context, Williams crafted the reenactment with a message that fit within the prevailing segregationist discourse of the Fifties and Sixties, when resistance to integration and Civil Rights could draw upon the abstract principles of states’ rights and liberty from federal centralization. More importantly, Williams also distanced the commemoration from the interpretations of South Carolina historians.

Even if John May and other members of the Commission had little hand in drafting this script, Williams certainly understood the politically charged nature of his work. He shaped his play to support the state’s political objectives in using Civil War commemoration to rally support from lower- and middle-class whites in its fight against Civil Rights. As a reward John May would later appoint Williams to serve as the state’s

³² Cauthen, *South Carolina Goes to War, 1860-1865*, 32:31–32; Wallace, *South Carolina: A Short History, 1520-1948*, 523–24.

representative to the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association in 1961, followed closely by another state appointment as the chairman of the South Carolina monument commission at Gettysburg—his name is engraved on the reverse side of the state monument.³³

³³ “Payne Williams Is Named To Gettysburg Association,” *The State*, March 15, 1961.

CHAPTER 4

REENACTING SECESSION

With the script well underway, the pageant's sponsors set out to organize the production and select cast members. Since the commission was busy organizing other state-wide activities and did not have enough funding to pay for "Without End to Dare," it sought out other community partners to produce the reenactment. "Without End to Dare" received public and private sponsorship from multiple levels of South Carolina society. Although the municipal and county governments publicly funded the reenactment, the pageant's organizers were the Richland County Historical Society (RCHS) and WIS-TV of Columbia. Furthermore, a number of other organizations, such as the Wade Hampton chapter of the UDC and the newly formed South Carolina Educational Television Center, also sponsored the reenactment.³⁴

When the newly-created RCHS held its first meeting on September 10, 1960, its members were eager to take on the secession reenactment as its first project. Although the historical society's constitution and bylaws did not mention the Civil War centennial, it is possible that the organization had formed in direct response to the state commission's call for local support of the anniversary. During its first five years, the RCHS devoted much of its time and resources on centennial-related events and maintained strong ties to the centennial commission. In fact, Joan Faunt was one of its charter members while she was

³⁴ Easterby, "South Carolina Plans for the Confederate War Centennial."

serving as the commission's secretary under John May, opening a direct line of communication between the RCHS and the commission.³⁵

The Historical Society's vice president Elizabeth F. Moore took charge of the reenactment as the chair of its steering committee. Moore's role in the secession reenactment had been considerable. In October, she and RCHS president Edward Wright lobbied extensively for public funding for the secession reenactment and succeeded in securing grants from municipal governments. *The State* newspaper credited her for urging the Columbia City Council into allocating public funds for the event. "For once we have a first," she exclaimed, arguing that secession was one of the state's most important contributions to the nation's history. By the end of October, she had secured \$1,575 from the City Council of Columbia and \$2,000 from the Richland County delegation. Most of the money went to renting at least two hundred antebellum costumes for the performers in the pageant. The remainder went to purchasing Max Factor theatrical cosmetics, hundreds of reenactment programs, and dozens of invitations for state dignitaries and important guests.³⁶

Concurrently, WIS-TV also contributed to the pageant's production by agreeing to televise it before a regional audience. Not only did WIS-TV's Payne Williams agree to draft the reenactment, but station personnel also arranged for experienced NBC producer

³⁵ "Charter Members, Richland County Historical Society, 1960-61," n.d., Organizational Meeting 9-30-60 Richland County Historical Society folder, Richland County Historical Society Papers, 1960-1969, box 1, Richland County Library, Columbia, SC; "Constitution and Bylaws, Richland County Historical Society," n.d., Organizational Meeting 9-30-60 Richland County Historical Society folder, Richland County Historical Society Papers, 1960-1969, box 1, Richland County Library, Columbia, SC. At time of writing these archival materials were newly uncovered at Richland County Library and did not had a proper archival number.

³⁶ "Council Votes \$1,575 Toward Secession Drama," *The State*, October 20, 1960; "Richland County Historical Society Report of the Treasurer," February 1, 1961, Centennial Celebration 12-17-60 folder, Richland County Historical Society Papers, 1960-1969, box 1, Richland County Library, Columbia, SC.

Sidney Palmer , who had considerable experience with live musical performance and would later produce televised operas, to direct the pageant. Furthermore, WIS-TV allocated \$1,180 to cover the cost of cameras, personnel, booms, and logistics required to film the reenactment. The station also decided to air the program without commercial interruption, allowing for a full-length hour-long broadcast.³⁷

Williams, Palmer, Moore, and their community partners made arrangements to host the pageant on the site of the original secession convention inside First Baptist Church of Columbia. The building's history gave audiences a physical link to the events of the historic convention. Additionally, the production team took great steps to emphasize the sense of place that the church provided, bringing the reenactment strong religious overtones. Religious music played a significant role in the reenactment—the church choir provided musical interludes throughout the production, demarking scene transitions with Christian hymns.³⁸

Williams and Palmer cast the roles of the reenactment with volunteers rather than professional actors. Most of the cast were extras in non-speaking roles wearing period clothing: reportedly, many of these extras were college students and women from the UDC. Other cast members had minor scripted roles with few lines of dialog, and in several cases these roles went to the direct descendants of the convention's original delegates. It is possible that the pageant's organizers wanted to cast the pageant with members of the same bloodlines as the people who attended the convention 1860, thus adding to the air of authenticity in the reenactment. Notably, W. A. Jeter portrayed his great grandfather

³⁷ "Council Votes \$1,575 Toward Secession Drama."

³⁸ "Secession Centennial Reenactment Set Saturday," *The State*, December 11, 1960.

William Henry Gist, the former governor of South Carolina who originally called for a state secession convention in 1860.³⁹

The most important roles of the reenactment went to some of the most prominent politicians and public figures in South Carolina in the 1950s and 1960s. These included U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond; former Governor George Bell Timmerman; University of South Carolina President Robert L. Sumwalt, Sr.; and State Senator John Amasa May, the chairman of the State's Confederate War Centennial Commission. Most of these men had busy schedules; for example, Thurmond was often out of the state for long stretches of time. Therefore, the production team had to take great pains to schedule rehearsals and recording sessions that fit within their schedules. Each man received a special copy of the script with an inscription from the author.⁴⁰

For the part of the omniscient narrator, Williams cast Mackie Quave, a regionally popular radio and television personality in North and South Carolina. Quave had started his career in Asheville, NC, before moving to Columbia in 1947 to work extensively with WIS Radio as a broadcaster and an entertainer. As an entertainer, he was particularly popular among children; his most memorable role at WIS was the cowboy "Cactus Quave" on the children's program of the same name. He was also a well-known educator who lectured courses about radio broadcasting at the University of South Carolina.⁴¹

On December 15, 1960, the cast and crew met onsite at First Baptist Church to film the first full run-through of the reenactment for television. This recording session was followed by three live performances on December 16 and 17, all of which were open to the

³⁹ "Without End to Dare Program."

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ "Quave Will Narrate Secession Re-Enactment," *The State*, December 9, 1960.

public. Several-hundred people attended the live performances of “Without End to Dare” at First Baptist Church of Columbia. Over the course of its three performances on December 16 and 17, the church hosted a large number of attendees from across the state. The Historical Society had allocated over a hundred and sixty dollars for printing invitations and event programs. Many families attended these performances, and children were an important target demographic. Some of the children could at least recognize the man who played cowboy “Cactus Quave” every week on Channel 10. One columnist for *The State* noted that the impression the pageant had “on young minds and old could be seen as Jimmy Bruner and Frank Dana, both age 10, almost fell out of the balcony trying to see Mr. Byrnes and to recognize Strom Thurmond . . . and people around us tried to make out what was said by Maxcy Gregg (Neill Macauley) and to hear the background narration of Mackie Quave.” Overall, the pageant’s live performances were a resounding success.⁴²

⁴² “People and Things,” *The State*, December 21, 1960.

CHAPTER 5

PUBLIC MEMORY, PUBLIC MEDIA

As a commemorative event, “Without End to Dare” had a unusually extensive career in the public eye, in no small part because of advances in television technologies that greatly improved the Commission’s ability to reach large audiences over time. The Commission knew the broad impact of mass media technologies available in the late Fifties and early Sixties. In the official observance manual distributed to local organizations, the commission urged citizens across the state to use television and radio to maximize the impact of local programming and events. The manual particularly emphasized television programs more than radio, claiming that “no other medium will reach as many people with as much information and emotional appeal.” Although it is unlikely that the Commission planned to film part of the reenactment for television, the Commission certainly understood the usefulness of mass media broadcasts.⁴³

On December 15, the production team filmed a closed dress rehearsal of “Without End to Dare” and aired the rehearsal on WIS-TV two days later. Critical reception of the program was generally positive, although some reviewers thought that the televised version was less impressive than the live performances. One reviewer for *The State*, John Hussey, highlighted the passionless performance of most of the performers, admitting that he had “a hard time believing that those angry men meeting December 17, 1860, were as calm and collected as they seem in this show.” Many of the performers depicted their antecedents

⁴³ SC CWCC *Manual for Observance*, 13.

with a gravitas and sobriety that, in Hussey's view, did not characterize the tone of the original convention. Eventually he concluded that "if the job was done to show just what happened, historically, then it was a success. But as far as leaving the impression of truth and realism in this real-life drama, then it can only be described as weak." Another reviewer shared Hussey's opinion, arguing that the live reenactments were superior to that of the televised program since the one put on television "was the first run through." The performances, he argued, improved during the live presentations so that the final performance on Saturday garnered tremendous applause. The people who watched the event on television "got a poor idea of the live performances."⁴⁴

On the other hand, reviewers generally praised centennial chairman John A. May for his "booming and convincing presentation of the original secession resolution," as well as the performances of Thurmond and Timmerman. One reviewer noted that it was important to remember that the performers were not actors, but amateurs who had volunteered their time for the event, and arguing that "the jobs done by these and other outstanding South Carolinians cannot be criticized, for they are not actors." Even if the reenactment was not entirely realistic in its delivery, it was still considered a worthy entry in the state's Confederate War Centennial Commemoration.⁴⁵

Segregationist whites were quick to exploit the play's political message, and a number of South Carolinians had already begun to compare the events of 1860 with those of 1960. "The points made in 1860 for Secession sounded, in the commemorative repetition here last week, familiar indeed to the South Carolinian of 1960," argued one editorial from

⁴⁴ John F. Hussey, "Secession Drama Falls A Little Short of Goal," *The State*, December 17, 1960; "A Poor Substitute," *The State*, December 20, 1960.

⁴⁵ Hussey, "Secession Drama Falls A Little Short of Goal."

The Columbia Record just days after the reenactment: “Of this, we were strikingly reminded as South Carolinians last week authentically re-enacted the 1860 Secession convention in the First Baptist Church of Columbia.” Essentially, the editorial found the reenactment germane to the contemporary political climate of the 1960s, if not in terms of their contextual similarities, then at least in terms of emotion: “One could reach back into the spirits of our ancestors and even today feel the same emotion they felt. It was, and is, the simple but fundamental emotion of the righteousness, the freedom and good sense of as much local self-government as is possible.” The editorial argued that not only were the values of their slave-owning ancestors not wrong, but that these values ought to inform the political consciousness of white Southerners in 1960.⁴⁶

In fact, these connections were what many of the reenactment’s organizers wanted. The state’s Confederate War Centennial Commission understood that evoking the memory of the Civil War wielded a certain amount of political power. By encouraging South Carolinians to celebrate the political rhetoric that justified secession, the reenactment also encouraged them to employ this rhetoric in the contemporary fight against the federal government. Indeed, in the months after the reenactment, pageant participants like Strom Thurmond and John May would go to great lengths to drive this point home to their constituents.

On December 20th, 1960, three days after this reenactment aired on television, Senator Strom Thurmond and his colleague William Jennings Bryan Dorn met in Edgefield, South Carolina, to speak about the struggle of secession and its continued relevance. An assembly had gathered in Edgefield’s First Baptist Church to celebrate

⁴⁶ “1860 and 1960,” *The Columbia Record*, December 20, 1960.

Confederate heritage and listen to speeches from their elected representatives in Congress. A massive crowd had filled the sanctuary. The color guard stood near the church organ, brandishing the Confederate battle flag, the United States flag, and state flag of South Carolina. At the head of the congregation were a number of state and local dignitaries, including John A. May, Senator F. E. Timmerman, and Mrs. Archie Watson, president of the SC division of the UDC.⁴⁷

The two men presented remarkably similar interpretations of the meaning of South Carolina's secession in 1860 and why secession was still important to them in 1960. "In America and in the free world today," argued Dorn, "we see a renewal on a large scale of the never-ending struggle against centralization and federalism." The times were changing, and Southern Democrats needed to combine with Western Republicans "to save the American people from a socialistic, sociological supreme court" and an "empire-building federal bureaucracy." Dorn was referring to *Brown v. Board of Education* and the recent push for national Civil Rights legislation in Washington.⁴⁸

Strom Thurmond agreed with Dorn's assessment and went a step further, arguing that the struggle against federal "centralization" which Thurmond was fighting in 1960 seemed to be the same principal cause of South Carolina's secession in 1860. He quickly ran through a list of Confederate apologetics for explaining the history of secession: that South Carolina had entered the United States voluntarily and could leave at any time; that abuses of federal power, and not the preservation of slavery, had forced the state to secede; that had *he* lived in the antebellum South, he would have been opposed to slavery; that slavery was forced onto the South by the North, and yet also taken away by the North once

⁴⁷ "Thurmond, Dorn Recount Secession," *The State*, December 21, 1960.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the slaves started to benefit Southern states; and that slavery was about to die out anyway before the federal government intervened. Indeed, to Thurmond, the South only intended to preserve its own freedom against Northern cupidity and federal aggression. Likewise, Thurmond argued, the federal government was again engaging in such abuses of power. Referring to *Brown v. Board*, he declared that “the move in 1954” had shown that the federal government was willing to misinterpret or disregard constitutional law and trample on the rights of Southern states. The South had no other recourse but to resist. “We have a great heritage,” concluded Thurmond. “Our ancestors fought and died in a war in which there is no loser; a war of principles. Today we must be willing to carry on the fight.”⁴⁹

Not only was Strom Thurmond making connections between 1860 and 1960, but also John May, the chairman of the Confederate War Centennial Commission. In an October 12, 1961 address to the South Carolina Division of the UDC, May argued that South Carolina’s secession was useful for making sense of the contemporary political landscape. The South, he argued, was beset by challenges from a domineering and lawless North that trampled upon the rights of Southerners. “When we rebuke the decisions of the Supreme Court,” argued May, referring to *Brown v. Board*, “we are rebuked and told that we should obey the law of the land.” It was hypocritical for the North to do this, he argued, since the North was critical of “the Dred Scott Decision that slaves were property,” which was not “what the Abolitionists wanted.” With a flourish May openly compared John Brown’s raid to the brutality of “Russia, Red China, Cuba and far too many other places today.” He compared *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* to *Mien Kamptf* and *Das Kapital*. Additionally, he indicted a seemingly lawless North of violating the Fugitive Slave Law by means of the

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Underground Railroad, which he considered to be “the same thing in the 1850s and 1860s as we in the 1906s now know as The Freedom Riders.” To May, the act of remembering the history of secession necessitated political action by the South against Northern aggression.⁵⁰

The political implications of “Without End to Dare” were not lost on members of the Richland County Historical Society. Vice president Elizabeth Moore was fairly vocal about the relationship between her historical activities and her politics. In one letter to Strom Thurmond, Moore thanked him for agreeing to participate in the pageant despite his busy schedule. “I feel very strongly,” she wrote, “that you taking the part of Jamison made our secession drama an important and memorable event.” In the same letter, Moore also thanked Thurmond for his opposition to the 1960 Democratic National Convention, which had adopted a more progressive platform, for “in the matter of disapproving of the Democratic platform as set forth at Los Angeles you certainly have many who agree with you in South Carolina—I among them.” To Moore the secession centennial partly served as a protest against the policies of the incoming Kennedy administration.⁵¹

Elizabeth Moore’s anxieties about the changing sociopolitical landscape of 1960s help to illustrate why “Without End to Dare” may have been popular with white audiences. By 1960 some Southern states were seeking ways to minimize integration in their schools. Student activists were agitating against segregation in major cities. South Carolina had begun to experience sit-ins in the style of those in other states. In fact, a few days before

⁵⁰ John Amasa May, “Address by Rep. John A. May Delivered before the South Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy Annual Convention” October 12, 1961, Civil War Centennial Folder 1 (1959-62), Box 10, Archive, Confederate Relic Room.

⁵¹ Mrs. W. Bedford Moore to Strom Thurmond, December 29, 1960, Personal 2-5 (Session Convention Re-enactment), January 2, 1961, Box 23, Subject Correspondence 1961, MSS 100, Strom Thurmond Collection, Special Collections, Strom Thurmond Institute, Clemson University.

the secession reenactment there had been a string of sit-ins in Columbia. It would have been difficult for many of the pageant's organizers and audiences to separate themselves from the demonstrations happening mere blocks away from First Baptist Church. Furthermore, by putting the drama on television they were competing with news programs documenting the Civil Rights struggle.⁵²

In many ways, the drama's organizers were televising a comfortable vision of white patriotism, or at least depicting a certain vision of Southern whiteness to a troubled audience. White audiences may have found it appealing to view a performance where the faces on stage or on television were all white; where white politicians and public figures wore shirt tails, cravats, and hoop skirts; where blackness was absent or, if visible, was in its proper place; where white supremacy still seemed secure; and in which categories of whiteness seemed unchallenged. If anyone watching "Without End to Dare" had needed such reinforcement, then the secession reenactment helped to satisfy that need by reminding its audience that there were still people in South Carolina—from politicians and broadcasters, to educators and historians—who supported the racial status quo.⁵³

It is difficult to estimate the full reach of the reenactment's initial December 17 television broadcast. Williams had originally attempted to open negotiations with a national television network to boost the broadcast over other networks, but these efforts never came to fruition. Nevertheless, his employers at WIS-TV helped maximize the pageant's audience by using quality, cutting-edge mass media technology that allowed them to record and quickly air the program across the state.⁵⁴ As one of the largest television

⁵² "Negro Sit-Ins To Continue 'Indefinitely,'" *The State*, December 16, 1960.

⁵³ This paper will not attempt to explore the subject of whiteness in the theater to great detail. For work in this area, see Mary F. Brewer, *Staging Whiteness* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2005).

⁵⁴ "Secession Centennial Fund Is Approved by Delegation," *The State*, October 15, 1960.

stations in Columbia located near the state's geographic center, WIS-TV could reach a large portion of the state population. Newspapers as far away as Greenville and Rock Hill included WIS-TV's Channel Ten in their daily listing of television programs, and some contained a few articles highlighted the pageant proceedings happening in the capital city. Whether most of the residents of these cities had access to Channel 10 or knew enough about the secession program is difficult to determine.⁵⁵

Regardless, "Without End to Dare" was re-aired in subsequent broadcasts through other stations in Columbia, Greenville, and Charleston in subsequent years to maximize its impact. On February 5, 1961, WIS-TV re-broadcast the program on Channel 10 to accommodate viewers who missed the initial December broadcast. This airing preceded two additional broadcasts in 1961 through WNOK in Columbia and WUSN in Charleston. A few years later, WNTV in Greenville and WITV in Charleston rebroadcast the program in 1963 and 1964, which essentially ensured that the program's audience was truly statewide. Because of these re-airings, it is likely that several thousand South Carolinians watched the secession reenactment on television.⁵⁶

Rather than televise "Without End to Dare" over a live circuit feed, the WIS production team decided to record the reenactment using quadruplex videotape recording devices. Videotape technology had been popularized by the company Ampex in the late fifties, and by 1960 it was considered cutting edge technology for recording audio and video. Instead of celluloid film, videotape consisted of magnetic tape, a precursor to the

⁵⁵ "Television Listings," *The Greenville News*, December 17, 1960; "Area Television Program Schedules," *The Evening Herald*, December 17, 1960.

⁵⁶ "TV Center to Broadcast Confederate War Story," *The State*, January 24, 1961; "Pageant 'Without End to Dare' To Be Re-Telecast Here Sunday," *The State*, February 4, 1961; Henry Cauthen to Strom Thurmond, April 16, 1968, Williams Payne "Without End to Dare" folder, SC-ETV Administrative Services files, box 102 (S154011), Records of the South Carolina Department of Archives and history, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

technology later used in VCRs and cassettes. Broadcasters like Shafto and others at WIS-TV were particularly interested in the utility of videotape technology, noting that “the marvelous Video Tape Recorder has enabled stations to record a television program and within minutes to faithfully reproduce it.” Such a medium seemed perfect for recording a dramatic reenactment like “Without End to Dare” since it allowed for quick turn around after recording. Videotape also allowed broadcasters to preserve television programs for later use, allowing centennial organizers to preserve the reenactment for future generations.⁵⁷

Unfortunately, WIS-TV had not yet purchased any videotape recording devices in 1960, possibly due to network policy. In order to tape the secession convention on videotape, the station enlisted the assistance of a state agency with access to that technology. Therefore, they turned to the recently incorporated South Carolina Educational Television Center, which had purchased a number of videotape recording devices, and was willing to donate their equipment to record the centennial.

South Carolina chartered the Educational Television Center in 1958 as an experiment to bring closed-circuit educational television, prerecorded educational lessons, lectures, and other programs into classrooms across the state. In the early years of the program, SC-ETV recorded lectures from local educators who taught in different subjects, such as mathematics, history, English, and science. Then, they broadcast those recordings over a closed-circuit channel in participating South Carolina school systems.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ “Industry Agrees to Standardize Tape Recording on Ampex Lines,” *The Billboard*, October 28, 1957, <http://www.billboard.com/magazine-archive>; Shafto, “Address to SCBA,” 11–12.

⁵⁸ “The South Carolina ETV Story,” n.d., S.C. Educational TV folder, Topics, Gubernatorial Papers 1952–1963 box 20, Ernest F. “Fritz” Hollings Collection, South Carolina Political Collections, Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina.

In 1960 the program department at ETV was still building its collection of educational programming and needed as many programs as it could acquire. For much of that year ETV Program Director Henry Cauthen had been sending ETV representatives to schools across the state to shoot film of some of the lessons being taught in the classroom, intending to use those tapes on ETV's closed circuit television network. At the same time, ETV was expanding its television network into more school systems across the state, which meant that acquiring new educational programming was vital for ETV's success.⁵⁹

In exchange for donating its videotape equipment to record "Without End to Dare," ETV was able to keep the reenactment tapes to use as educational programming. By January, Henry Cauthen had integrated "Without End to Dare" into ETV's history education programming. Writing to Strom Thurmond several years later, ETV Manager Henry Cauthen acknowledged that ETV had frequently broadcast the reenactment in South Carolina classrooms: "The one-hour videotape 'Without End to Dare' was divided and made into lessons number 85 and number 86 in a 160-lesson series on South Carolina history. This series played on the state-wide closed-circuit network every school year beginning in January, 1961, through 1966." By that point ETV had established a television network which reached 70 high schools in 21 different school systems. The number of students who saw "Without End to Dare" during this time are too great to count. Indeed, the secession reenactment may have influenced the education of an entire generation of South Carolina children during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, making the study

⁵⁹ Henry Cauthen to C. O. Bonnette, October 1, 1960, Correspondence-Cauthen, Henry J. folder, SC-ETV Administrative Services files, box 15 (S154011), Records of the South Carolina Department of Archives and history, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

of this program useful for contemporary scholarship about Civil War memory in the Deep South.⁶⁰

At time of writing, the fate of the secession tapes are unknown. It is likely that ETV recycled the tapes and recorded over the program. On the other hand, the tapes could have been surrendered or destroyed in a copyright settlement with their writer, Payne Williams. In a 1968 letter to ETV's general manager, Payne Williams accused ETV Center of breaking copyright by using the program for educational television without his permission:

This work, was done completely on my own time; researched and written at my own expense, over a nine month period, as both Mr. Kalmbach [from ETV] and Mr. Shafto [from WIS] were wholly aware. According to my information, my work has been programmed, state-wide at least twelve times on your system, and, in competition with commercial television, on open channels, at least twice. The added news, that my Copyrighted work has been physically altered, without my permission, or, even consultation, into two programs, comes as a damaging shock.⁶¹

Consequentially, ETV owed Williams royalties for showing the production. According to Williams, the royalty charges due for closed circuit and open circuit showings were nine thousand dollars. Whether ETV paid this sum to Williams, and whether they also purchased the copyright for the production, is also unknown.

⁶⁰ "The South Carolina ETV Story"; Cauthen to Thurmond, April 16, 1968.

⁶¹ Payne Williams to Henry Cauthen, July 1, 1968, Williams Payne "Without End to Dare" folder, SC-ETV Administrative Services files, box 102 (S154011), Records of the South Carolina Department of Archives and history, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

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