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The Danville riot of 1883: its effect on politics in Virginia

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THE DANVILLE RIOT OF 1883: 
ITS EFFECT ON POLITICS IN VIRGINIA

BY

WILLIAM CARRINGTON TATE, JR.

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY 
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Richard Barry Martin
Dr. Richard L. Morton, a Virginia historian who lived in the early twentieth century, wrote, "the recrudescence of the race question has occurred in Virginia politics only in times of political stress, when the negro vote has been necessary to keep certain elements in power."\(^1\) Probably no more powerful example of Dr. Morton's words has occurred in the Old Dominion than that outbreak of passions between blacks and whites in the streets of Danville on November 3, 1883, only three days before the legislative election for the state was to take place.

In the pages of this thesis I will attempt to present a true description of Virginia Democrats struggling to claim the place of political prominence in view of the challenge of the Republicans who were still attempting to gain the confidence of the majority of the Virginia voters and the Readjusters, a new and strong third party of former Democrats.

Southern historian C. Vann Woodward has written that the period of Southern history from 1877 until the turn of the century when the Jim Crow segregation laws emerged with such impact surely could be the period in which the Negro enjoyed more freedom and integration than at any other time during the ninety years from the emancipation until the Supreme Court's decision in Brown vs. the Board of Education in 1954.

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Woodward hastens to remind his readers, however, that this period was filled with violence and race conflict.\(^2\)

Again this seems to be an adequate description of the situation in Danville. First, the Negro is an accepted part of the city scene. Then he is the third and reluctant party in a massive power struggle. He rises to the call of the men who have become his leaders. He is injured and demoralized by the opposition's power and determination, and he must return to his home to patiently await more competent leadership.

As the news of death in the streets of Danville spread rapidly throughout the state, the Negro was again the principal loser. He was reluctant to go to the polls and cast his ballot. Thus, the Democrats regained a hold in the state that they have not yet relinquished. The Readjusters had been ousted after a brief reign over Virginia politics. Their leaders would soon fade away and their party would die.

I will not attempt to place the responsibility for this outburst. Nor will I attempt to justify or denounce it. It is a part of history that needs to be told and might well serve as a warning in the troubled times of 1968. To understand more clearly the events discussed in this paper, it is necessary to explain the make-up and the philosophy of the political parties involved.

The Democrats in Virginia will also be referred to as Funders and

Conservatives. Generally composed of old Whigs and former Confederates, they strived to restore the state to normalcy and prominence by regaining its good name and credit through payment of the debt. To accomplish this, they were willing to sacrifice progress in agriculture, education, and social adjustments.

The Readjuster Party, made up of former Whigs, moderate Democrats, and Republicans, was born out of discontentment within the Democratic Party. When this Democratic faction was unable to impress upon the Conservatives their belief that the debt must be revised or readjusted in such a way to pay the debt and at the same time save the public school system and aid the low economic classes, they separated themselves and formed a third party.

Primarily composed of Negroes, carpetbaggers, and scalawags, the Republicans were never a powerful opponent to the Democrats after 1870. Because the National Republicans under Garfield and Arthur preferred to enter into alliances with the Readjusters rather than their own state party, the Virginia Republicans who refused to join the Readjusters will be referred to on occasion as "Straight-out" Republicans.

In Danville the Democrats were opposed by the Readjusters known as the Coalition Party. Because the Readjusters had allied themselves with the so-called "Negro Party," the Coalitionists were often called the "Black-and-tans."

A very large part of the text of this thesis was taken from the United States Senate publication entitled Alleged Outrages in Virginia, Volume six, Report number 579. However, information was also taken from
Volume two, Report number 211 of the same volumes and appears in Chapter VI. Therefore, after citation twenty-two in Chapter VI any reference to Volume six will read "U. S. Congress, Senate Report, Vol. 6, op. cit."

I wish to acknowledge those people who patiently helped me so greatly in the completion of this work. I am indebted to the capable staffs of the Virginia State Library, the Perkins Library of Duke University, and the Boatwright Library of the University of Richmond who guided me to such a vast amount of material; to my ever willing and devoted wife, Leslie, who acted as my proofreader; to Dr. R. Barry Westin, whose enthusiasm, encouragement, and advice brought about this finished product; and finally, to my parents, William Carrington and Mary Sue Tate, who even after five years, never lost their faith in their son.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. SOUTHERN POLITICS: 1865-1879</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The National Political Situation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics in Virginia</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. READJUSTMENT CONTROL: 1877-1883</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE POLITICAL BATTLE IN DANVILLE</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danville: A Description</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel Sims Challenges the &quot;Danville Circular&quot;</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE DANVILLE RIOT</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. ELECTION DAY</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. THE AFTERMATH</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions Expressed</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Local Front</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Effects on the National Front</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS IN THE SOUTH: 1865-1879

I. THE NATIONAL POLITICAL SITUATION

As the Civil War came to an end, Union soldiers had rushed home to prosperous communities and employment. But Southerners found impoverished communities with few jobs to offer. The returning farmer found devastated and exhausted farms and only one third of the arable land in cultivation. He found that luxuries such as tea, coffee, and sugar were practically nonexistent, as were window glass and china dishes.¹

The returning “Rebel” found that the emancipation of the slaves had shattered the social order of the Old South and had demobilized the work force. The Negro with the long desired but confused new freedom wandered from the farm to the city in search of the new life he had been promised.²

²Ibid., p. 23.
As the soldier viewed the destruction of the South, he may have felt great depression over the loss of his wealth and/or his high social rank, but he had been fortunate enough to cling to his life—something that a quarter million young Southerners had not been allowed to do. Thus, he began to rebuild with his hands, his strong back, and his mind the South that had suddenly become a primitive frontier. Although he might lose that land that he had cultivated in the pre-war years, he would not be driven from the South. He would be guided by some ante-bellum leaders—Herschel V. Johnson, A. H. H. Stuart, and Robert Toombs. He would be deserted by others—Jubal Early, Matthew Fontaine Maury, and Judah P. Benjamin who went into exile, and Edmund Ruffin of Hanover who took his own life. The soldier would soon live in an occupied land with blue clad Union soldiers observing his activities, but he would live to rebuild the South.3

Politically, the Republican Party during the Reconstruction Period was a minority and sectional party that realized that a reuniting of the Northern and Southern Democrats could mean disaster at the polls for them. Thus, a struggle began between the Northern Democrats and the Republicans over which would restore the South in a manner that would assure Southern support.4

Andrew Johnson of Tennessee boldly attempted to carry on the

3Ibid., pp. 23-24.
generous reconstruction plans of Lincoln. Under Lincoln's ten per cent plan, civil governments with Southerners in key offices had been organized in Virginia, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Arkansas by early 1864. Disregarding warnings from the Republicans, President Johnson appointed Southerners as provisional governors in the Confederate states and instructed them to call conventions to repudiate secession, invalidate the war debt, abolish slavery, and to fix their own qualifications for voting and holding office.  

The Whigs of the ante-bellum period seized upon this opportunity to begin the building of a South closely resembling the pre-war state. Some state conventions refused to fly the Stars and Stripes during their sessions. Some refused to denounce their secession as unlawful although they did agree to a repeal. Some states elected to Congress former high officials of the Confederacy including the former Vice President, Alexander H. Stephens, and six former cabinet members. Not one state constitution gave the vote to literate or property owning Negroes as Johnson had requested. All states harshly enforced the "black codes" which kept the Negro a second class citizen.  

Certainly by late 1865 the ex-Confederate was no longer in such a depressed state of shock as in the year before.

Fearful of this sudden emergence of political strength, Republicans, led by Thaddeus Stevens in the House and Charles Sumner in the

5Ibid., pp. 359-60.
6Ibid., pp. 360-61.
Senate, stepped forward to denounce the liberal reconstruction policy and refused to admit the newly elected Southern representatives to the opening of the December, 1865, Congress. Gaining support from those who believed that the South should be more severely punished, the Republicans championed the passage, over Johnson's veto, of the 1866 Civil Rights Act which repealed the "black codes" and guaranteed all freedmen equal protection under the law. To support the act, the Republicans proposed the Fourteenth Amendment which was at first rejected by a solid block of Southern states. Seeking to punish the ten states that had rejected the amendment, the Radicals passed, over Johnson's veto, the harsh Reconstruction Act which grouped the ten states into five military districts, each controlled by a major general and his troops. The generals were to direct the framing of new constitutions that would provide for Negro suffrage and the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. Only after these regulations were met could the states be received into the Union and send representatives to Congress. 7

By June of 1868, seven such governments were set up in Arkansas, Florida, North and South Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia. Ruled by carpetbaggers, scalawags, and their Negro allies, supported by troops, these governments enthusiastically supported the Republican Party in the Presidential election of that year. But these governments were usually sorry affairs controlled by a few strong political bosses. For instance, in South Carolina the legislature was made up of ninety-eight

7Ibid., pp. 361-63.
Negroes and fifty-seven whites. Of the total only twenty-two were literate and only one third paid taxes.

The Southerner was now alone. He could expect no aid from the powerless Johnson who had been impeached over the "Tenure of Office Act" dispute, and he viewed Grant as a villainous Radical. Many seized the lone alternative that existed. Secret organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan sprang up in the communities throughout the South. Since the bulk of the votes cast in the South were by Negroes, these organizations attempted to spread terror among the Negroes, hoping to frighten them out of political prominence into obscurity. Scalawags and carpetbaggers were often beaten or shot. Military rule was tightened in many areas. Violence had again erupted on Southern soil.

In the election of 1868, General U. S. Grant, the Republican candidate, defeated Democratic Governor Horatio Seymour of New York. Receiving an electoral majority of 214 to eighty, Grant carried every reconstructed state with the exception of Georgia and Louisiana. However, his popular margin was only 300,000 in a vote of 5,700,000. Without the Negro votes cast for him he would have suffered a defeat at the polls.

As a former soldier, Grant approved heartily of the Force Acts of 1870 and 1871, which imposed severe penalties for preventing a free vote,

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9 Clark and Kirwan, op. cit., p. 19.
10 Blum et al., op. cit., p. 365.
and of the suppression of the Ku Klux Klan. In the fall of 1871 he had used military force to put down terrorist activities in South Carolina and had declared martial law in nine counties. 11

It soon became obvious to Grant and those who had persuaded him to control the South by force that puppet governments could not continue. Every year young white Southerners to whom the disqualifying clause of the Fourteenth Amendment did not apply were reaching voting age. Despite the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, Negro voters were decreasing in number. During the Campaign of 1868, the Democrats had declared the issues of slavery and secession were settled and demanded full restoration for the South. By 1871 representatives from Virginia, Georgia, and North Carolina were admitted to Congress. In 1872 the Republicans, pressured by public opinion, passed the Amnesty Act which removed political disqualifications from all but five hundred former Confederates. 12

The Democrats now made their move. In 1874 they carried Alabama, Arkansas, and Texas. In 1875 Mississippi was carried. With only a few reconstructed states remaining loyal to the Republicans, the stage was set for the Compromise of 1877 and the return to "home rule." 13

Economically the South with her cotton crop exhausted was bankrupt and without credit. Even many formerly wealthy plantation owners

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., pp. 367-71.
13 Clark and Kirvan, op. cit., p. 16.
lacked the capital to buy tools, fertilizers, and animals, or to pay wages. Many of the rich estates were broken into small farms or rented to sharecroppers. Emphasis on single money crops had faded and variety crops had become not only desirable but essential. Their farmers who had secured loans demanded that the federal government aid them through the continuation of the circulation of inflated dollars known as "greenbacks." On the other hand, bankers and moneylenders favored the return of gold valued at one hundred cents per dollar. The Republicans, having lost control of the House in 1874, hastily passed the Resumption Act during the last session. This act provided for paying off the "greenbacks" in gold on January 1, 1879. Fearing the loss of cheap money, many farmers became dissatisfied with the two major parties and searched for a third and more sympathetic party. The most notable of the early parties was that of the Green- backers who entered the 1876 Presidential election with a farmer's platform, but polled slightly over eighty thousand votes.  

II. POLITICS IN VIRGINIA  

The Civil War had caused in Virginia as it had in each of the Confederate states a great physical loss. Virginians viewed with sorrow their losses but attempted to muster confidence in a reconstruction that could be successful and rapid.

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15 Ibid., pp. 48-49.
The major problem was the state debt. Prior to the war Virginia had relied heavily on the assets of the great public works system to offset the small debts. But the public works along with the thirty-five million dollar canal from Richmond to the Valley and the seventy million dollar railroad network were ruined by the devastation of war.\footnote{Charles Chilton Pearson, \textit{The Readjuster Movement in Virginia} (New Haven, 1917), pp. 5-7.}

The tax-paying capacity of the people was sadly reduced. Little return was brought from the once precious public works bonds. Although out-of-state markets clamored for the agricultural products, the deteriorated farm land could not respond to the challenge. With such conditions prevailing, the state debt increased by wartime interest to $639,000,000.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 7-8.}

Because of a scrupulous regard for the state's unblemished fiscal record, the state legislature on March 2, 1866, assumed full responsibility for the entire ante-bellum principal and authorized the funding of the wartime interest to begin the following year. However, Virginians needing immediate revenue searched out wealthy northern and foreign buyers for the bonds instead of retaining them for future income.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 10-12.}

The economic collapse was felt greatly by transportation as the state, fearing bankruptcy, was forced to sell stock in the roads to individuals. State aid for education which had amounted to $214,000 in
1860 was cut drastically.\textsuperscript{19}

The public works system was the principal target when the Constitutional Convention of 1867-1869 adjourned. Dominated by Negroes, scalawags, and carpetbaggers, the convention removed the tax burden from the poor by limiting the state poll tax to one dollar and the local poll tax to fifty cents. To provide the capital needed to maintain the state's canal and roads, the convention directed the revenue collectors to levy taxes on those persons with over $600 of business capital and income.\textsuperscript{20}

Confronted with the loss of their political power and fearing "Africanization" and "Yankeefying," the "old guard" stepped forward. Under the leadership of such former Confederates as Colonel H. E. Withers, Raleigh T. Daniel, John B. Baldwin, and A. H. H. Stuart, a Virginia Conservative Party was organized.

Basing their campaign on the elimination of corruption, of concentrated power in the legislature, of extensive public charities, and of Negro jurists or public office holders, the Conservatives attempted to create a new movement to avoid the unpleasantness of radical or military rule. A lack of capable leadership caused the party to succumb as the Republicans gained an overwhelming victory in the 1868 election.\textsuperscript{21}

This party had, however, presented to Virginians an idea of

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., p. 17.
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., p. 20.
conservatism which was picked up by some moderate Republicans who supported for governor Gilbert C. Walker, a carpetbagger but a moderate and intelligent man. Heartily supported by members of both political factions, Walker caused the bitter withdrawal of the Bourbon gubernatorial candidate. 22 A handsome Norfolk banker who had moved from Chicago in 1864 to the warm climate of Virginia for health purposes, 23 he showed great interest in the repayment of Virginia's debt and, despite a heavy Negro vote, he was easily elected over the Radical candidate. 24

With the state's assets yielding little dividends and a lack of capital hampering commerce, advancements came slowly. Huge plantations of the ante-bellum period were being divided into small farms for the landless. Gentlemen rolled up their sleeves to enter the occupations of truck-farming, cattle-raising, and oyster-farming. Property value began mildly inflationary movements and Virginians once again appeared cheerful. 25

Believing that this prosperity was to remain, Virginians eagerly borrowed large sums of money at high interest rates in attempts to hasten their personal reconstruction. As farm productivity was increasing, the farm prices began a downward trend in 1870, and both city and

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22Ibid., p. 21.


county realty lost value steadily. 26

Under the guidance of Walker who had won the title of "Political Savior of Virginia," Virginia had returned fully to the Union in January of 1870, and the first reconstructed legislative body including twenty-seven Negroes faced a debt of $45,000,000 or thirty-six dollars per each person in Virginia. 27 In a desperate attempt to stabilize the crumbling values, Governor Walker submitted his "Restoration of Credit" policy. Designed to preserve the state's credit, this policy called for the funding of forty-five million dollars in debts into uniform coupon bonds, the exchanging of the state's interests in public works for state bonds, the curtailing of expenses, the taxing of all property at the 1860 value, and the searching out of new sources of income under the new Constitution. 28

The Conservative opposition in the legislature, impressed with Walker's optimism and appreciation of Virginia pride, responded rapidly to the policy. A six point plan was immediately given legislative approval. Funding of the debt was authorized; a liberal railroad policy was adopted; a tax law of greater scope was enacted; and protection was provided for suffrage. Furthermore, the legislature moved toward the repeal of the constitutional restriction of private interest rates at twelve per cent, liberally interpreted the exemptions of the Constitution,

27 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
28 Ibid., pp. 26-27.
and created a modern free school system.\(^{29}\)

Among the railroad acts permitted was one allowing General William Mahone and others to merge the management of three railroads into the vast Atlantic, Mississippi, and Ohio line. Mahone, after working as an engineer with the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, had been hired to oversee the building of the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad in 1851. Within ten years he had risen to the presidency of the road but then left the position to accept a commission of Lieutenant Colonel in the Sixth Virginia Volunteers. In a celebrated military career Mahone rose to the rank of major general and was hailed as the Confederate hero of such battles as Second Bull Run, Malvern Hill, and the Crater. Returning to civilian life, he created out of three state-owned railroads the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Ohio Railroad. From this successful operation he became extremely wealthy.\(^{30}\)

Governor Walker viewed this merger as a potential boost to the state's economy and aided Mahone's group in smoothing over stern opposition. Walker moved a step further in his policy of "free railroads" when he introduced legislation calling for the sale of the remaining state holdings in public works. This latter move did not please Mahone, however, as he felt that this policy would be dangerous to the interests of his railroads, and his vigorous but vain opposition lost him valuable

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\(^{29}\)Ibid., pp. 27-29.

Meanwhile, the joint committee on finance created with the governor’s blessing a bill for funding the debt in interest bearing coupons at one third of the debt. Although this was quite unpopular in many circles, the bill passed with heavy Republican support. With the endorsement of the press of eastern Virginia, the “restoration of credit” policy with heavy pressure applied by lobbyists was put into operation, opening the way for connections with northern businessmen.  

Yet the economy had not reached the desired stability. The state’s most valuable asset had been peddled away for an assurance of prosperity, and the interest as set by the Funding Act equaled the estimated revenue less the minimum education appropriation. Many leading citizens continued to speak out against the “restoration” policy, and disputes continued to break out among the Conservatives and the Mahone ranks over the validity of the Funding Act.  

Although advised to align with the Republican Party in order to gain federal patronage, the Conservative faction of 1870 ignored national matters and placed home rule as the paramount issue facing Virginians in the off-year election. Again the Conservatives’ following was strictly white, and the Republican candidates won eight of the eleven Congressional seats.

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32 Ibid., pp. 31-32.
33 Ibid., pp. 36-38.
34 Ibid., p. 38.
The Conservatives saw a ray of hope, however, as their candidates received a majority of 2,239 votes in the state as a whole. These results caused a number of Conservatives to run in the ensuing elections for local offices. Equally unentrenched, the Republicans were divided into factions of Carpetbaggers and Negroes challenging scalawags over the distribution of federal patronage.35

Conservative leaders wisely chose this moment to summon a state convention to be held in Richmond and called forward old Confederates to add enthusiasm. Six Negroes were present in an effort to encourage Negro support. However, few delegates desired Negro candidates, so a faction headed by H. H. Riddleberger proposed the electing of the members of the central committee by the majority vote of the delegates instead of the convention president who might be pressured to select a Negro member. Through the adoption of this policy, a bi-racial ticket was avoided and the campaign issues remained the same as the year before.36

To meet the enthusiasm created by this action, the Republicans revised their policy and used patronage to gain harmony. Their platform seriously questioned whether a sufficient number of Negro schools would be operated under the Conservatives and whether the Negroes would be given full rights to jury duty in the Conservative courts. The platform further questioned whether the people of the state should bear an increased tax burden imposed by the Funding Act.37

36 Ibid., p. 40.
37 Ibid., p. 41.
When the campaign was completed and the votes were tabulated, the Conservatives, inspired by their "old guard," won an increased majority in both houses. However, the campaign issues remained. The Republicans took every opportunity to question the quality of the public schools, the absence of Negro office holders and jurymen, the salaries of legislators which they believed were too high, the railroad policy which they believed aided the individual, and the tax increase under the Funding Act.  

In December of 1871 the new legislature voted by a majority of 119 to 33 in both houses to suspend the operation of the Funding Act, but this move drew a veto from Governor Walker. Disregarding Walker's warning that such a move was economically unsound, the legislators passed a bill prohibiting the receipt of coupons for taxes and payment of four per cent interest on the whole debt, but the state supreme court by a three to one vote declared the legislation in violation of the contract between the bond holders and the state. Under this decision a preferred class of bonds, known as "consols," was created to the amount of twenty million dollars. Finding this unsatisfactory, Walker suggested and the legislators adopted a joint resolution petitioning the federal government to assume the entire debt. The only result was a slight rise in the bond market.  

An investigation of state institutions, the repeal of an act for

the general sale of railroad assets and the James and Kanawha Canal, the challenge to railroad consolidations which had brought about the demise of numbers of small lines, the limitation of private interest rates to eight per cent, and a call for easier redemption of lands for delinquent taxes were accomplishments of the Conservative legislators. After strengthening their position in local government, they shifted the tax burden from the farmer and laborer to luxury items and corporate wealth only to find revenues decreasing. 

Although these measures were extreme, the supporters of the Conservative Party expected more. These people, mostly upper and middle class, encouraged the expulsion of "Yankees" and their federal patronage, the opposition of the court's activities, and the sterner control of the state's finances. Thus, by 1873 party lines and policies were definitely established, the Republicans following national policy, the Conservatives promising native white rule. 

By July of 1873 when the Republicans called their state convention, it appeared that they were definitely controlling state politics. At their convention which was strongly dominated by federal employees and Negroes, Robert W. Hughes was nominated for governor. Hughes, a federal district attorney and a favorite of Grant, presented a party platform designed to gain strong support from his native Southwest. He offered development of the resources in Southwest Virginia through

\[\text{Ibid., pp. 18-19.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., p. 18.}\]
outside capital and federal aid, a "free policy" to the railroads, and impartial justice and free elections for minority groups.\(^1\)\(^2\)

As the Conservatives refused to debate any issue except Negro rule under federal patronage, the "old guard" again stepped forward to denounce Radicalism. Their brief platform reasserted the pride in the school system under William Henry Huggins, a Conservative, and agreed to co-operate with President Grant in cultivating good will and in hastily completing the state's canal system. As governor the Conservatives nominated General James L. Kemper, a friend of Mahone, and as lieutenant governor, an ex-bourbon and enemy of Mahone, Colonel R. E. Wither.\(^1\)\(^3\)

General Kemper, after receiving a severe wound during the Battle of Gettysburg, had commanded the local troops at Richmond until the end of the war. Having served in the legislature for ten years and having carried on an active law practice in Madison County, he was extremely popular with the people of Virginia.\(^1\)\(^4\)

The Conservatives' singular policy of 1874 gained an overwhelming number of white votes, and Kemper was elected by a large majority. The party was in a position to repay the Republicans for eight years of indignities.\(^1\)\(^5\) By 1876 the Conservative legislators supported by Kemper finally and completely broke the Republicans' hold on state politics.

\(^1\) Ibid., pp. 50-51.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) Pearson, op. cit., pp. 50-51.
by approving legislation which disqualified voters for failure to pay the poll tax and for convictions of petty crimes.  

Kemper, now virtually unopposed, attacked the debt. He called a conference of "consol" holders and attempted to induce them to exchange their tax-receivable coupons for four per cent in cash and a deferred interest of two per cent. The "consol" holders feared the loss of their position of preferred creditors and refused to accept this policy. Realizing that further attempts to delay payments would be disastrous to the state's economy, Kemper accepted the fact that the debt must be paid in full. With the aid of the state's upper classes, a program of the "debt payer," calling for the reduction of expenses, the increase of revenues, and the reorganization of the state's fund, was decided upon.  

In a vigorous attempt to cut expenses, Kemper approved the legislators' constitutional amendment for the reduction of state clerks and members of the legislature and the substitution of biennial for annual sessions. However, interested parties moved rapidly to block this effort, stating the possibility of the loss of white legislators was too great, and the amendment did not become law until 1880.  

The taxpayer, noting that realty values were down twelve per cent over the last five years, refused to consider a tax increase. Then when attempts to gain revenue through the creation of dog and liquor taxes

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66 Ibid., pp. 52-53.  
67 Ibid.  
68 Ibid., p. 55.
and through an increased poll tax failed, the legislators joined two
sinking funds created from proceeds from public works. This fund
created a net gain which would enable the state to pay in full the
interest on the current debt. 49

However, this effort did not satisfy all parties. Farmers num-
bering nearly 19,000 banded together in 685 grange chapters and demanded
favorable legislation on transportation, immigration, and tobacco and
fertilizer inspection. When the Conservatives did little to aid the
farmer, many searched for more radical leadership. 50

To the majority of Virginia's middle class, the idea of raising
the Negro to a status of equality through public education was totally
objectionable. These citizens viewed this experiment as socially unac-
ceptable and too costly, while their opponents citing the breakdown of
the old social system deemed public education an immediate necessity.
To satisfy both factions, William Ruffner, a capable and energetic man,
had been selected state superintendent of schools in 1872. 51

Ruffner immediately selected poverty stricken ladies of quality
and disabled veterans as teachers in Negro schools—a step favorable to
the white social classes and to Negro parents. But this action did not
settle the entire needs of the school system. Even the popular Ruffner
could not convince the farmers and ex-Confederates to support higher

49 Ibid., pp. 56-64.
50 Ibid., p. 59.
51 Ibid., p. 60.
taxes. Thus, many schools closed and teachers were unpaid. 52

Finding that the federal government intended to pay no reparations for West Virginia, the legislators again began to bombard the Funding Act. However, in 1875, 1876, and 1877 the courts refused to lessen the state's credit problem. 53

Believing all other remedies futile, Headjusters separated themselves from the Conservative ranks and began to fight the tax-receivable coupons in the legislature and gained the support of the press in forcing the issue. 54

When the legislature convened in December of 1877, first on the docket was the creation of a finance committee with James Barbour as chairman. Barbour, one of the original Headjusters, carefully guided his committee through the writing of a bill—known as the "Barbour Bill"—designed to scale the debt of Virginia. The preamble of the bill declared that the present rate of taxation, fifty cents on every one hundred dollars of assessed value of property, was the limit to which the Assembly should proceed in levying taxes. However, the bill continued by recognizing that the present tax system was not sufficient to meet the present needs for the state. Therefore, the bill provided for the use of the present tax in the following method: twenty-five cents should be devoted to the necessary expenses of maintaining the government,

52 Ibid., pp. 61-63.
53 Ibid., pp. 64-65.
54 Ibid., p. 66.
ten cents to public free schools, and fifteen cents of the interest to be applied on the public debt. It was the hope of this committee to remove Virginia from the financial embarrassment with the consent of the creditors. Well calculated to force the creditors to consent to a more equitable settlement of the debt, the bill pushed through the General Assembly with a minimum of effort. Governor Frederick N. Holiday, the lawyer-soldier who had lost his arm at Cedar Run and who used his veto power often while dealing with readjuster legislation, vetoed the measure. He stated that the bill had been designed to rob the creditors and to push the Funding Act back to the courts.55

It was now obvious that the only remaining course of action would be to appeal to the creditors for a compromise. On March 14, 1878, the Locock-Fowler Act co-sponsored by Thomas S. Locock, a Planter from Appomattox, and L. C. Fowler, a Readjuster from Washington County, became law. The act directed the Auditor of Public Accounts to pay to the public school system the funds approved by the assembly in quarterly cash installments. The Auditor construed, however, that the act meant that funds would be issued only when they could be spared. This interpretation caused the failure of the act, and the state looked for still another answer.56

In March of 1879 the McCulloch Act, or Brokers Act, was passed by

56Ibid., p. 323.
the assembly and signed by the Governor. A compromise between the Head-justers, who pleaded for funds to carry on the rural schools, and the Funders, who asserted that Virginia could not borrow until the creditors were satisfied with payments, resulted in the passage of this bill named for Hugh McCulloch, the leading representative of the British bondholders. 57

The McCulloch Act divided the debt into two classes. In class one were the "consols" and the convertible bonds, and in class two were the "peelers" and one half of the interest unpaid since 1871. Provisions were made for the funding of the classes in the proportion of at least two of the former to one of the latter, this being the ratio of the outstanding "consols" and "peelers." The new bonds were to mature in ten to forty years and were to bear interest at the rate of three per cent for the first ten years, four per cent for the next twenty years, and five per cent for the remaining ten years. Under these new bonds certificates were to be issued for one third of the original debt, and the acceptance of these was to constitute a complete and final release of Virginia's obligation. Beginning in 1885 a tax of two cents was to be levied on all real and personal property to aid in the reduction of the debt. The General Assembly was to provide for the prompt payment of the interest on the bonds. The adoption of this act nulli-fied the Rocock-Poole Act and all other acts inconsistent with its pro-

57 ibid., p. 328.
58 ibid., pp. 328-40.
The McCulloch Act, along with the Henkel School Act which required all cities and counties to reserve out of the taxes three fourths of the estimated school appropriation for improvements in such things as physical plants and instructional personnel, promised to reopen schools that had closed and return nearly 100,000 students to the classroom and to materially lighten the fiscal burden of the state. For this reason the leading classes and friends of the public schools gave the act their constant support. The complete execution of the bill, however, depended upon the good faith of the funding monopolists and upon the ability of the state to meet the new interest payments promptly. The Readjusters were most apprehensive regarding the intentions of the monopolists. Also, they were firmly convinced that the state could not possibly meet the interest payments except by increasing the taxes or by sacrificing the school needs or charitable needs.

Again the Readjusters called to the masses, asserting that the state should not pay a rate of interest that the people could not bear. They attacked the McCulloch Act as unreasonable and unworkable. Allying with greenbackers, inflationists, Radical Republicans, and Negroes for additional votes, the Readjusters illustrated that they were ready for the coming election as Mahone was able to nominate a governor, gain more control in the Congress, and have himself and Middleberger named as candidates for the United States Senate.

59 Pearson, pp. cit., p. 27.
60 Ibid., pp. 88-92.
61 Ibid., pp. 93-94.
CHAPTER II

HEADJUSTER CONTROL: 1879-1883

With the arrival of the election year of 1879, both Headjusters and Funders were quite eager and determined to seize control of state politics. General William Mahone of the Southside selected his Headjuster lieutenants from sectional Virginia. The Piedmont was ably represented by James Herbou as well as John E. Massey, one of the most colorful politicians of the state. Colonel Abram Fulkerson of the Southwest and Harrison Holt Middleberger and John Paul of the Valley provided the party with tested politicians. However, the Funder Democrats were adequately supplied with formidable campaigners in John Randolph Tucker of Lexington, John Goode of Norfolk, John W. Daniel of Lynchburg, and J. L. M. Curry of Richmond College, along with General W. C. Kickham of Hanover, a Republican ally.¹

Since both factions were bidding to claim the party name of

Conservative, the State Central Committee, though reluctant to award either the privilege, finally on August 7, 1879, identified itself with the Funders. The Committee then defended the McCulloch Act as a conservative measure and denounced the Headjusters' opposition to the act. The Committee further asserted that the Headjusters desired the demise of the Conservative Party, and "if they succeed in their plans, the disruption and downfall of our party is inevitable."\(^2\)

Such an action might have crushed the ambitions of a less determined political party, but the vigor and enthusiasm of General Mahone, W. E. Alam, editor of the Headjusters' Richmond Whig, and Mahone's lieutenants forced the faction onward. Mahone's marvelous administrative and organizational powers along with his enthusiasm and energy were inspirations to the younger men. "He was a superior organizer and leader of men; he had great personal magnetism and will-power. He was of very small stature, but he was a bundle of nerves and a prodigy in energy."\(^3\)

To work in close conjunction with editor Alam, Mahone set up an office in the Whig building and began to formulate a clever plan by which he could draw the Funders into open debate and discussion of key campaign issues. "In March, prominent Headjusters began to invade the

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 179.

\(^3\)Charles T. O'Farrell, *Forty Years of Active Service* (New York and Washington, 1904), p. 211.

precincts of Funder legislators, compelling them to defend themselves and sometimes to call in their more eloquent friends." It was obvious from the beginning that the Readjusters through their preparation and talent would gain greatly from this maneuver. The Funders, totally unprepared, immediately assumed "a haughty attitude, and relied too much on appeals to sentiment." But the Readjusters presented too many facts and figures on the points of the validity of the debt, the McCulloch Act, and the purposes of readjustment.

As a result of these public discussions, tempers ran high, rude interruptions were common, and coarse jokes were relished. Spectator fights were common and a general riot seemed imminent. Yet the Readjusters gained vote after vote by this bold tactic.

Mahone, keeping in close contact with the progress of the campaign, held conferences and meetings in key places such as Norfolk, Petersburg, and Southside communities. He was "everywhere—planning, speaking, bargaining. It was a new type of leadership, and one with which Funders for four years were utterly unable to cope."

Public opinion was divided over the debt question. The Negroes cast their support with the Readjusters, for they considered the debt a

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5 Pearson, op. cit., p. 121.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., p. 115.
part of the ante-bellum period, and the payment of the debt would gain them nothing. The white farmers felt that the debt would impose upon them an unfair tax burden. On the other hand, the existing classes from eastern and central Virginia favored rapid payment to secure sound credit. Thus, definite lines were again drawn—the Negro, small farmer, and those of modest means versus the "Bourbon aristocrats" and the prosperous businessmen. ¹⁰

The Readjusters gained additional support when cases of corruption on the part of Conservative officials were exposed. In 1873 "the Conservative state treasurer of Virginia had been indicted for defalcation and embezzlement, but escaped trial upon the plea of insanity."¹¹ By 1877 another Conservative official was brought to trial for huge embezzlements of illegal bond refunds and was found guilty. These acts, contended the Readjusters, simply added to the already staggering debt and tax burden of the people. ¹²

Not until late in the campaign was the Negro vote given serious consideration by either faction. The Funders "committee of 39" called on the citizens without regard to party or race to preserve the state's credit.¹³ At the Mozart Hall Convention in Richmond, the Readjusters


¹²Ibid., pp. 67-68.

¹³Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 152.
invited a few Negroes from Halifax and New Kent to observe the proceedings. "Parson" Massey, in a September sermon in Petersburg, eloquently promised the Negro voter rights in return for his cooperation, and the Funders announced the nomination on their ticket of Republicans in several counties in an attempt to split the Negro vote. In a dramatic move Funder John W. Daniel, speaking to a Negro audience in Lynchburg, held up high the hands of two Negro ministers, a Rev. Roane and a Rev. Derrick, and declared, "When the best men of both races unite in a cause it must prevail." 

As the election polls opened in November of 1879 great confusion and excitement filled the air. With increased Negro support the Roadjusters received 22,000 of the 113,000 votes and won fifty-six seats or a majority of twelve in the House and twenty-four, a majority of eight in the Senate. Eleven Negroes were admitted to the House and two to the Senate.

To the Funder "rascality had won; the Negro was the cause..."

The Roadjusters, elated over the victory, gave credit to their ability to remove the disguise with which the Funders had covered the debt problem.

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11 Pearson, op. cit., p. 97.
15 Blake, op. cit., p. 182.
16 Fendleton, op. cit., p. 345.
17 Pearson, op. cit., p. 129.
18 Ibid.
19 Blake, op. cit., p. 183.
In the final analysis, ten years of Conservative rule reminded the Negro and the farmer of their attitude toward them. The Negro felt that the headjuster, however, could open schools, pay the teachers, abolish the whipping post, and open a well-equipped asylum. The farmer had high hopes for increased government aid. 20

The Headjusters' victory of 1879 restored the Negro to political prominence. Although there was no special attempt to elevate the Negro, he was placed in positions of prominence in several locales. Actually, there was no evidence that the Headjusters were giving the Negro a great many public offices, but in many cases they were offering fair treatment. 21

Although their enthusiasm was somewhat dampened by the powerful governor, P. H. N. Holliday, the firmly entrenched Headjusters had a majority of twelve in the House and eight in the Senate when the Assembly came to order on December 3, 1879. The Speaker of the House was Benjamin H. Lacy, a headjuster from New Kent and Charles City counties. P. H. Rhett was selected as the Clerk of the House, and other Headjusters controlled the offices of Sergeant-at-Arms and Doorkeeper. Although the President of the Senate, Lieutenant Governor James A. Walker, was a prominent Runder, the Clerk's office, held by Charles A. Causey, and most subordinate offices in the Senate were in the hands of Headjusters. 22 John L. Hassay was named Auditor of Public Accounts, and

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20 Jynes, op. cit., p. 20.
21 Ibid., p. 21.
22 Pendleton, op. cit., p. 336.
"all the State offices elective by the legislators, including the county judges, were filled with Readjusters."\(^23\)

Although they realized that Governor Holliday would not hesitate to veto Readjuster legislation, the Assembly promptly began work directed at removing the debt problem. The result was the "Middleberger bill."\(^24\) Designed by the Readjusters as "an act for the preservation of the credit of the state,"\(^25\) the bill called for one third of the principal and accrued interest as of July 1, 1861, to be set aside for West Virginia. After tabulating the principal and unpaid interest, the bill announced the debt to be $21,025,377 as of July 1, 1862. The bill further provided new bonds dated July 1, 1832, bearing three per cent interest, which were offered in exchange for the various classes of bonds. These new bonds became known as "Middlebergers."\(^26\)

To accompany this act, two supplement bills had already been passed. These bills forbade tax collectors from receiving coupons unless verified by a "jury of the county"\(^27\) and unless the coupons were accompanied by the amount of tax in cash.\(^28\) Thus, the Readjusters hoped to offer Virginians a future of uniformity in repaying the debt and

\(^{23}\text{Ibid., p. 337.}\)
\(^{24}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{25}\text{Pearson, op. cit., p. 112.}\)
\(^{26}\text{Ibid., p. 113.}\)
\(^{27}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{28}\text{Ibid.}\)
reduction in the yearly interest. But Governor Holliday promptly vetoed the "Middleberger Bill" in the name of the preservation of the state's credit.29 Although the Redjuster legislators discussed daily debt and tax reforms, no further attempts were made until the election of Governor William E. Cameron in 1881.30

On one very important matter, however, the Redjuster Assembly was quite successful. A United States Senator was to be elected to succeed Robert F. Wither in March of 1881. Wither, as the incumbent, was the logical choice of the Funders; General W. C. Wickham was the leading Republican hopeful; and Mahone, as his party's most prominent member, was unanimously hailed by the Redjusters.31

Because of the weakness of the Republican Party, the election became a battle between the two Democratic factions. Even before the general election it was the consensus of the Assembly that a Redjuster should represent the state.32 When a joint ballot was cast on December 16, Mahone received seventy-nine votes, Wither, fifty-three, Wickham, five, and John W. Daniel, one. The people then followed suit and Mahone won a great victory within the state.33 He was hopeful that his victory would provide the impetus to propel his party to their strongest

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29Ibid., p. 112.
30Wendleton, op. cit., p. 337.
31Blake, op. cit., p. 193.
32Pearson, op. cit., p. 135.
33Blake, op. cit., p. 184.
position during the coming years.

The State Electoral Committee was the next target for the Readjusters. It was their hope to control the committee, select and heartily support the winning presidential candidate, and apply for increased federal patronage. Fearing that they could not gain control of the Committee, the Readjusters attempted to form a coalition ticket with the Republicans on a basis of six Readjusters and five Republicans, with all electors pledged to the incumbent, Grant. The Readjusters were blocked momentarily as the Republicans, meeting in convention under General Wickham, defeated this unifying plan.\(^34\)

The Readjusters then met in convention in July of 1880 and, standing alone, nominated an electoral ticket which pledged itself to General Winfield S. Hancock, the Democratic candidate. The result was a disappointing showing of 30,000 votes for the electoral ticket. However, the Readjusters were successful in electing two of their most capable men—Abram Fulkerson and John Paul—to Congress.\(^35\) In the November presidential contest the Readjusters cast only 31,674 votes for Hancock, while the Funders cast 96,912 for the Democrat, Garfield, the winner, received 90,020 votes from the state Republicans and Readjusters who had switched tickets after the electoral defeat.\(^36\)

\(^34\)Pendleton, op. cit., p. 330.

\(^35\)Ibid.

\(^36\)The Warrock-Richardson Almanack, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina Almanack, 1882 (Richmond, 1882), p. 31.
The electoral defeat did not end the Readjusters control of state politics as the Funders had hoped. Instead, they eagerly began to prepare for the gubernatorial and legislative elections of 1881. Their task was made easier as Mahone was seated in the Senate, swinging the balance of power to the Republicans. This won for the Readjusters the favor of President Arthur and other prominent Republican leaders. The Funders, considering the favoritism offered to Mahone a return for his "treason" to the state, denounced him bitterly as a repudiator. Republican Senator Don Cameron rushed to Mahone's defense declaring, "All that we ask is that they shall stand with us in favor of securing to each lawful voter the right to cast one free and uninhibited vote, and to have it honestly counted." 37

On June 2, 1881, the Readjusters convened in Richmond to nominate a gubernatorial ticket. "An enthusiastic and militant gathering," the convention was characterized by the presence of John F. Lewis and other leading Republican delegates who announced that their purpose for attending was "to coalesce with the Conservative Readjusters." 38

Three men emerged as outstanding possibilities for the position of governor of Virginia—John S. Wise, John E. Massey, and William D. Cameron. It was apparent, however, that Wise could not rally the necessary support, and soon he removed his name. This left a heated contest between Massey, the early Readjuster and fiery orator, and Cameron who

37 Pendleton, op. cit., p. 338.
38 Ibid.
was from a well known political family. The latter finally emerged the party nominee. 39

As were his running mates, Cameron was of unusual ability and proven courage. A resident of Petersburg in the heart of the "Black Belt," the former newspaper editor and mayor of Petersburg appeared determined to clean up the state's election procedures. "He was thoroughly familiar with the unlawful tricks used by the Conservatives to circumvent and nullify the Negro vote in the counties east of the Blue Ridge." 40 Lewis, from the Valley and the leading Republican, was the nominee for Lieutenant Governor, and Frank J. Blair of the Southwest was tapped as the candidate for Attorney General. Both Lewis and Blair represented white sections where the Readjuster vote promised to be "invincible." Fearing the popularity of this ticket, the Funders ridiculed the nominations and the platform. 41

The Readjuster-Republican platform was well constructed to appeal to the masses. In reviewing their two year record, the party cited that they "had not only increased their revenues but had opened 4,854 public schools for five month terms, as against 2,504 for the previous year with terms of three months." 42 It was also brought to the attention of the voters that the Readjusters had repaid much of the funds

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39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., p. 310.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
taken from the state colleges and humane institutions.

Pledging to settle the debt, the following resolution was written into the platform:

We reassert our purpose to settle and adjust our State obligations on the basis of the bill to re-establish public credit, known as the "Riddleberger Bill," passed by the last General Assembly and vetoed by the Governor. We maintain that this measure recognizes the just debt of Virginia in this; that it assumes two-thirds of all the money Virginia borrowed, and sets aside the other third to West Virginia to be dealt with by her in her own way and at her pleasure. ³

Of the remaining proposals, the platform called for regulation of the railroads in the interest of the people, the repeal of the poll tax as a voting qualification, and aid for the development of mining and manufacturing by soliciting federal grants.

Assuming the title of the Conservative Party, the Funders met in Richmond on August 6, 1881, and nominated candidates, all from east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. For the position of governor an ardent Greenback in 1878, John W. Daniel of Lynchburg, was nominated. A gallant and honest man who was often hostile toward Mahone, Daniel was joined by James Barbour and Philip W. McKinney for Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General. Barbour of Culpeper had switched from the Readjusters on the urgings of his brother, John Strode Barbour, President of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Major McKinney of Farmville lived within the "Black Belt" and had served with the old whig and "Know Nothing" parties. These candidates composed a good selection as each represented "an -ism

³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
that appealed to the whites of eastern Virginia.\footnote{15}

Confident of the urban vote and hopeful of some Republican support, the Conservatives then set out to minimize the difference in the platforms. In an effort to force the voter to make a choice of personalities and traditions, the Conservatives promised to pay all school funds appropriated by the state constitution, give fair elections and jury service regardless of race, and settle the debt without an increase in taxes.\footnote{16}

Many Virginians did not believe the Conservative promises, however. Mahone's followers declared loudly that the opposition candidates had constantly opposed Readjuster measures offered in the General Assembly "to prevent diversion of the school funds to the coffers of the bondholders. In 1878 more than a million dollars had been diverted."\footnote{17} On May 12, 1879, Daniel had provided kindling for the Readjusters' fiery charges. During a speech in Wytheville he stated, "... rather than vote for the Jassay Bill," which called for the payment of the school tax in cash as opposed to trade items, and the bills which were to follow, he would "see a bonfire made out of every schoolhouse in the State."\footnote{18} Daniel had also opposed the "Barbour Bill" which cited the need of the payment of public school expenses.

\footnote{15} Fowle, op. cit., pp. 212-13. 
\footnote{16} Ibid., p. 213. 
\footnote{17} Pendleton, op. cit., p. 322. 
\footnote{18} Ibid.
The Conservatives' promise of fair elections indicated, according to the Readjusters, that the elections had previously been unfair. In answer to the promise of the use of all "lawful and constitutional means in their power to secure the settlement of the debt upon the basis of a three per cent bond," the Readjusters pointed out that Daniel had fought bitterly against the Funding Bill and the McCulloch as well as the "Fiddleberger Bill."\(^{50}\)

At an early stage of the campaign it appeared that the Coalition candidates had an edge over the Conservatives. Realizing this, the Funders appealed desperately to the Negro voter by hiring Negro speakers, forming Negro booster clubs, and nominating Republicans for local offices.\(^{51}\)

Although the Conservative campaigning was fast and furious, their damaging past record led many Virginians to lean to Cameron and his ticket. When the ballot count was completed, the Readjuster-Republican ticket had received 113,473 votes to 100,756 for Daniel.\(^{52}\) Furthermore, the Readjusters and Republicans had continued their control of the Senate, 23 to 17, and the House of Delegates, 58 to 42.\(^{53}\) Of the members of the Senate three were Negroes, and eleven Negroes were seated in the

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\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 343.

\(^{50}\)Ibid.

\(^{51}\)Wynne, op. cit., p. 19.

\(^{52}\)Barrock-Richardson Almanack, 1885, op. cit., p. 32.

\(^{53}\)Ferrall, op. cit., p. 214.
With the governor's seat filled by a man who would favor their legislation, the Readjusters began to issue a great number of reform bills. Without the fear of veto or negative voting, the legislators and Cameron passed bills dealing with the following:

1. The abolition of the poll tax as a qualification for voting.

2. The elimination of the whipping post. (If a person was legally whipped, that person was barred from voting.)

3. The revision of the state's tax rate. (In this legislation, the tax rate was lowered from fifty cents to forty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value, the social elite were forced to pay back taxes, and the railroads, whose taxable values had tripled, became liable for local taxes.)

4. The creation of a state university for the Negroes. (Virginia State College was founded in Petersburg in 1882.)

5. The building of an asylum for Negroes with mental illnesses to be staffed by Negroes. (Insane Negroes had been housed in former army barracks and treated by white doctors.)

6. The increasing of the school fund by fifty per cent.

7. The reimbursement of teachers' unpaid salaries.

8. The approval and chartering by the score of labor unions.

9. The strict enforcement of regulations on the bonding of insurance companies.

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10. The attention was given to Oranger proposals for legislation to prevent fraud in the manufacture of fertilizers, to establish experimental stations, to provide state supervision over the warehousing and sampling of tobacco, and to regulate the rates and management of the railroads. Each of those things had been neglected by the Funders in order to pay debts and to preserve credit.

During the years of 1881 to 1883 the Readjusters were successful in passing most of the reforms that they had promised to the voters. On the other hand, the Funders without a hold in the executive or legislative branches concentrated their attack on Readjuster officials, accusing them of Negro party domination and the lack of a "strong, continued, liberal program." But these charges did not influence Readjuster support.

To many of the blacks and whites, the most popular of the Readjuster reforms was the repeal of the constitutional amendment of 1876 which made the payment of the poll tax a prerequisite for voting. In November 1882 the white farmer and the Negro illustrated their continued support for the Readjusters by abolishing the tax by a vote of 107,303 to 66,131.

Under the Readjusters the Negroes found justice and freedom that they had not experienced before in Virginia. In fact, the state's Negroes were receiving fairer treatment in 1882 than the Negroes of any

55 Woodward, op. cit., p. 96.
56 Ibid., p. 61.
57 Wynes, op. cit., p. 23.
other Southern state. By that year fifteen Negroes were prison guards at the State Penitentiary, one was the assistant postmaster in Norfolk, and some were school board members, others held federal positions as well as jurors. 59

"Justice, not Negro rule, had gained for the Readjusters . . . regard in Negro circles." 60 In many Virginia counties Negroes and Republicans had a clear majority. Yet they continued to place white candidates, even white conservatives, into county offices. 61

As the decisive voter in the Senate, General Mahone gained for himself and his party considerable favor and vast patronage. President Garfield in April of 1881 wrote to a friend concerning continued patronage for Mahone saying, "When our friends have secured all the committees by the help of Mahone, they ought to stand by him until he is reasonably satisfied." 62 Garfield never agreed to complete recognition of the Readjusters but did endorse those programs dealing with the upgrading of the Negroes. While Garfield divided his favoritism between the Readjusters and the Republicans of the state, President Arthur worked solely with Mahone and disregarded the Republicans. 63 Mahone's pledge to support

60 Wynn, op. cit., pp. 26-27.
61 Ibid., p. 27.
63 Ibid., pp. 150-53.
Arthur in the 1884 presidential election brought to him the power to become the strongest figure in his party. Arthur showed his appreciation as he "brushed aside the straight-out Republicans of Virginia and turned over to Mahone 200 offices in the Treasury, 1,700 in the Post Office, 70 in the Federal Courts, and many in the Norfolk Navy Yard." Mahone's use of this patronage brought strong Republican and Negro support from the Tidewater area.

As the legislative election of 1883 approached, the Funders were well aware of their position. The Readjusters, with Mahone and Riddleberger in the Senate and Wise's 99,992 to 91,184 victory over Massey who had been secretly urged by Democratic leaders in Washington to contest for a Congressman-at-large seat as an independent candidate, had obviously broken the "Solid South." 65

To regain their earlier stronghold on state politics, the Funders realized that they needed new and more powerful strategy. First, they denounced their claim to a monopoly of Conservatism; second, they renewed their campaign based on the race issue; and third, they called for more popular and effective leadership. Accordingly, in the early spring a state convention was called. The site was not Richmond as was the tradition but, instead, Lynchburg in the heart of the white Readjuster Valley. As to the election of delegates, the planning committee advised that all Conservative Democrats would be welcomed. 66

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Then on March 20, 1882, Andrew Antoni, who owed the state of Virginia taxes in the amount of three dollars and fifteen cents, sent to Samuel C. Greenhow, the treasurer of the city of Richmond, fifteen cents in coin and an 1871 coupon valued at three dollars. When the payment was refused, Antoni on March 28 petitioned the state's Supreme Court of Appeals for a mandamus to require its acceptance. On March 30 after Greenhow had proclaimed that he would accept the coupon in payment if it was proven genuine and receivable, a demurrer was filed. Upon the hearing of the demurrer, the Appeals court was equally divided on Greenhow's question and denied the writ. The case was then taken to the United States Supreme Court by the bondholders symbolized by Antoni. William L. Royall, a Conservative and enemy of Mahone, was the legal counsel for the plaintiff, and Frank S. Blair, Attorney General of Virginia, represented the defendant, the State of Virginia. In October of 1882 the Supreme Court rendered a decision for the state of Virginia, stating that the coupon killer impaired the obligation that the state had made with the bondholders, thus sustaining the Readjusters' program for the debt settlement.67

Although some Funders attempted to find loopholes in the decision, the majority of the party members welcomed it as an opportunity to honorably withdraw and end the matter. At the Lynchburg Convention in July of 1883 the party declared that it had accepted as final the

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settlement of the debt and would oppose any attempt to reopen the question. 68

Furthermore, in an attempt to minimize the danger of a Readjuster-Republican victory on a local level, the Funders advised Negro leaders on maintaining control over their parties and their federal patronage. "At the same time they could by these means identify the Republican Party with the colored race, and more easily solidify their own party by the old cry of white supremacy." 69 Finally, during the campaign the Funders abandoned the names of "Bourbon," "Conservative," and "Funder" and called themselves "Democrats" for the first time. 70

Many Democrats felt that Anthony M. Keiley, chairman of the Conservative Party, did not have the qualities necessary to offset the personality and enthusiasm of Mahone. Therefore Keiley, formerly a newspaper editor and Mayor of Richmond, was ousted. 71 The search for more vigorous leadership ended with the selection of John Strode Barbour, President of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Barbour, who had been elected to the House of Representatives in 1861, resigned this position to assume the position of chairman of the Democratic State Committee. 72

This man was able to see the weak and the strong points in the old methods of campaigning. He knew the value and the limitations

69 Woodward, op. cit., p. 103.
70 Rymes, op. cit., p. 29.
71 Blake, op. cit., p. 225.
72 Pearson, op. cit., p. 163.
of tradition and of men of social prestige in the party. He was
determined to pay less attention to appeals to state pride,
oration, and fanfare, and more to organization and work.73

Immediately concerned with streamlining the organization, Barbour
brought in young men devoted to the party in time and organization.74
These men, such as Fitzhugh Lee and Charles T. O’Ferrall, both of whom
later served as governors of Virginia, sought out a history of each
registered voter and the political preferences of the local wards. Then,
after an evaluation of the situation, Barbour ordered the creation of
committees to register all Democrats.75

Voter organizations were formed in a military fashion. Companies
of fifty voters were assigned to a "Captain." Within each company, five
"chiefs" were responsible for ten voters each as to voting and attend-
dance at the polls. Speakers traveled to critical areas on county court
days, attacking "bossism" of Mahone and the Readjusters’ affiliation
with the Negro and the Republican Party.76

The Democratic press issued editorials denouncing Mahone and his
followers as traitors to the Democratic Party membership. On August 15,
1863, the Richmond Daily Dispatch accused Mahone and Riddleberger of be-
coming Republicans: "He (Riddleberger) and General Mahone are stalwart

73Allen W. Foger, "The Origin of the Democratic Machine in Vir-
ginia," Reprinted from The Journal of Southern History, VIII, No. 2 (May,
1942).
74O’Ferrall, op. cit., pp. 221-22.
75Mahone Scrapbook, Volume XXXI, p. 2. (How the Funders Love
Them!)
76Ibid.
Republicans, fully proposing to send delegates to the next Republican National Convention to support for President of the United States the nominee of that convention.  

Two days later the Dispatch's attack shifted to Cameron, Wise, Wyatt M. Elliot, S. Brown Allen, N. B. Meade, and other notable "Mahoneites." The paper charged that, as Hancock supporters in 1880, each of these men succeeded in obtaining impressive state and federal offices—Cameron, governor; Mayo and Elliot, Representatives; Wise, Senator; Meade, a state judge; and Allen, state auditor. Now with these offices secure these men, the Dispatch charged, have turned their backs on those who supported them in 1880 and have cast their lots with Arthur's Stalwarts in 1883.  

As the Democratic Convention came to order in late July, the delegates formally buried the debt issue—a strategic move hailed by the Baltimore Sun as a "heartily [sic] and complete" attempt to fuse the Rucker Democrats and the Readjuster Democrats. Designed to stir the Conservatives, a statement of opposition to the Readjusters' program was issued. Among the charges were the following:

1. The Readjusters sought to establish a "servile press."

2. The Readjusters rewarded friends by creating jobs at unwarranted salaries.

3. The Readjusters had replaced judges whose terms had not

77Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 15, 1883, p. 2.

78Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 17, 1883, p. 2.

The Headjusters had made the State Asylum for the Deaf and the Blind, Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College, University of Virginia, Virginia Military Institute, and the public school system part of a vast machine bent on plunder.

5. Mahone was accused of "claiming the conscience of legislators by exacting written obligations from them in advance to support measures dictated by caucus."

6. Mahone had concentrated the power of the state and the federal government in the hands of a corrupt oligarchy which was subordinate to him.

The Democrats did not publicize the race issue, although the Richmond delegation wanted to draw color lines into the platform. Encouraging those who desired to use race as an issue during the campaign was the United States Supreme Court's invalidation of the Civil Rights Act, indicating that the federal government could not protect the Negro from a private individual, thus allowing a color line to be drawn without fear of federal intervention.

Of the actions taken at the Democratic Convention the Daily Dispatch reported:

The declaration avoids no issue that should not be met. It is broad, liberal, decided. It relegates to the past all former

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80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 DeSantis, op. cit., p. 218.
dissensions; it grapples manfully with the present; it looks hopefully to the future. It leaves no room for any Virginian, who believes in the supremacy of the white race and the rule of honesty and intelligence, to entertain a doubt of his duty. . . . We are confident that it is now only necessary for the Democrats of Virginia to thoroughly organize under the plan of the party organization agreed upon by the convention, in order to make their platform the death-warrant of bozalism, ring rule, and political corruption in the State.83

As the Headjusters began their campaign, they emphasized their achievements during their brief period in office, reminded the voters of the problems under Bourbon and Runder rule, and emphasized the justice offered to the Negroes. Developing their plan of action, the Headjusters constructed a list of all party members in the hotly contested districts, grouped voters into squads of ten to fifteen with an active worker in charge, instructed each squad leader to know how each member was to vote, give to the reluctant or undecided copies of the Weekly Whig, and see that each member voted on election day.

Again the Negro was in the middle of a political battle. Mahone was considered by most Conservatives as the leader of the Negroes. Thus the Democrats, realizing that a split in the Negro vote was unlikely, sought an all-white front. John W. Daniel summed up the feeling of the bulk of the Democrats when he declared, "I am a Democrat because I am a white man and a Virginian."85

With the Legislative and local election near at hand, opposition

84 Mahone Scrapbook, Volume XXXI ("Mahone to County Chairman," Petersburg, July 11, 1883).
85 Wyne, op. cit., p. 29.
factions issued numerous warnings to the white population of Virginia.

A circular published by the Democrats of "white" Carroll County warned readers to consider the candidates and the platforms very carefully.

PAUSE, VIRGINIANS! READ BEFORE YOU VOTE.
REMEMBER IF YOU VOTE THE CAMERON TICKET THIS DAY, REMEMBER

1. You vote you and your state a repudiator.
2. You vote for mixed schools now and mixed marriages in the future.
3. You take the African side in the Cameron side on your own race.
4. You vote the named Confederate soldiers must be kicked out of offices to make room for negroes.
5. You vote to perpetuate strife in Virginia.
6. You endorse Mahone's treason to the National Democracy last year and to Virginia this year.
7. You endorse his destruction of more than six and one-third millions of Virginians' property.
8. You vote for Conkling and Dawes who persecute Virginia against Layard who loves her and Hampton who fought for her.
9. You turn your back on National Democracy and embrace her enemies.
10. You belte your vote for next November.
11. You endorse the infamous political record of John F. Lewis.
12. You vote against three as gallant Virginians as have lived.86

The Bourbon newspaper, the Lynchburg News, declared in its headlines, "Negroes to control the schools to which your little children go.

This is racism. Remember it, 'white people,' when you come to vote."

The editor of the Star, a conservative publication printed in Richmond, revealed the feelings of the white Democrat in an answer to an editorial previously printed in the rival Readjuster paper printed in Richmond, the World:

The editor of the World may have no objection to the negro, look upon him as his equal, regardless of color; and he has a perfect right to do so; but here in Virginia we have never and never will place the white race on the same level with the negro, save in matters of common humanity. Socially and politically we do not admit his equality, but insist upon his inferiority and the supremacy of the white race.

"The Mahonesites band the negroes together to beat us," warned the Democratic Danville Times, "and we must unite the parties to meet them. So that, and we can always carry enough of the colored vote to elect our ticket."

Major John W. Daniel was quoted frequently. In 1871 during his unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign Daniel had declared, "As to submitting the debt settlement to the people for satisfaction, I had no idea of letting the ignorant black horde of Eastern Virginia vote on this question." An excerpt from a speech given by former Governor "Extra" Billy Smith in Harrisonburg on September 27, 1879, was widely circulated by the Readjusters:

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87 Ibid., p. 4.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Wahone Scrapbook, Volume XXXI, p. 2. (How the Funders Love Them!)
When I was in the legislature three years ago, the headjusters wanted to make an appropriation to build a large asylum for colored lunatics, and actually passed the bill in the Senate. But I and other Funders defeated the bill in the house and thereby saved a large amount of money for the bondholders, instead of wanting it on fine public buildings, in which lazy negroes could lie flat on their backs and toast their shins by the fire.91

In predominantly white areas the Headjusters issued circulars accusing the Democrats of collaborating with the Negro Funders and "Straight-out" Republicans. In one such circular the Headjusters charged that a barbecue given at Spring Grove on September 1, 1863, was advertised and planned by the Republicans of Surry and Prince George counties but was paid for by Funders' money. Ringed among the negroes were several prominent white Democrats including Mann Page, the Democratic senatorial candidate. The circular further commented:

What a picture! and thus voters of Virginia are the "Democratic" and "white man's" leaders playing their game of deceit in the colored sections, while in the white sections they affect a horror of all contact with the negroes!92

The state-wide fervor was intensified when Richard P. Leirne, editor of the Star, used the word "nigger" in his editorials. William S. Hlan, editor of the Headjusters' Richmond Whip, challenged Leirne to a duel near Waynesboro after a heated argument. Leirne proved to be the most effective dueler as he wounded Hlan, putting an end to the incident.93

91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Richmond Daily Dispatch, July 1, 1863, p. 1.
Although there was discord within the Headjusters' ranks, it seemed unlikely that the Mahoneites could be ousted from control of state politics. Such a campaign provided the perfect setting for the Danville Riot a few days before the election.

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94 Pendleton, op. cit., p. 353.
CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL BATTLE IN DANVILLE

I. DANVILLE: A DESCRIPTION

Picturesquely situated on the south bank of the Dan River, Danville, Virginia, was a sprawling city of nearly thirteen thousand residents in 1850. It occupied the land in the concave portion of a horseshow curve made by the broad and shallow river with its light rapids over granite rocks. It was a graceful and handsome city of three bridges, vast tobacco warehouses and manufacturing plants, necessary stores, shops, and neatly refined homes, each in its own way reflecting the great sense of local pride which the people had in themselves and their properties.¹

On the north side of the Dan lay the new daughter of Danville called North Danville—a rapidly growing community. Between the two towns spanned three bridges which proved quite adequate to accommodate

the private and commercial traffic of the day. The lower bridge—about one-half mile east—belonged to the Richmond and Danville Railroad Company and was used as a viaduct. The middle bridge—about one-half mile from the others—connected the business portions of both towns and gave rapid access to the passengers of the Virginia Midland Railway trains. The western-most bridge provided convenient access to stores and tobacco and produce wagons.²

Possessing nine months of good weather blessed with cool mountain breezes, Danville is located in the richest tobacco region of Virginia and North Carolina. Interest was so great in the tobacco industry that in 1880 there were to be found no less than twenty-five manufacturing companies of plug and twist tobacco, three stripping and steaming plants, and seventy-three repriming and broker's houses. However, Danville's industry was not limited to this great operation. She was the proud possessor of five successful tannks, two grain mills, one foundry and machine shop, a planing mill, and a door and sash factory.³

The Richmond and Danville Railroad ran through the city providing north and south connections. The Virginia Midland Railway traveled to Lynchburg and back daily providing eastern and western connections. On the narrow gauge roads the Danville and New River Railroad gave convenient transportation to Martinsville, Stuart, and Leaksville, North Carolina. A second train operating from the line carried passengers up the Valley

² Ibid., p. 2.
³ Ibid.
In 1880, however, the people began to feel that Danville could offer more and, after Mr. J. H. Gill's study of potential was completed, Danville strove to take on a new look. Gill, an assistant engineer assigned to the Department of War, projected that the resources of water-power for manufacturing was very great and should be utilized to a high degree. The Dan was navigable for some sixty-two miles from the batteaux to Madison, North Carolina, and had been deepened through the River and Harbor Act of 1879. The construction of a dam during 1882 and 1883 just above the upper bridge provided a large quantity of power. In an attempt to further encourage industry, the city council offered a ten year tax exemption to anyone who would initiate new industry. The acceptance was immediate and by 1883 two large cotton mills were built. Each hoped to someday rival New England mills.5

The area of Danville was about one thousand acres, or one and one-half square miles, with a population of some thirteen thousand (estimating five persons for each registered voter, as was the rule of the day).6 The population was represented by two major political parties—the Coalitionists and the Democrats. Under the leadership of the Head-Juster Collector of Revenue, J. E. Raulston, the Coalition Party was able to elect two Magistrates, one being a Negro, five Council members,
of which three were Negro, and the Council clerk and auditor in the May, 1882, election. The Democrats, headed by former Confederate Colonel George C. Cabell, elected their party members to the positions of Clerk of Court, Commonwealth Attorney, City Treasurer, and Magistrate. Democrats J. N. Blair and Albert Gerst acted as President and President pro tem once respectively of the Common Council, on which five Democrats sat. J. H. Johnston, the mayor, James Wood, the city sergeant, two Council members, and the Commissioner of Revenue had filed as independents. Of the forty-four city officials eighteen were Coalitionists, twenty were Democrats, and six ran as Independents. As to the racial breakdown, thirty-five of the office holders were white and nine were Negro. 7

This busy city blended its natural beauty and the unmistakable picture of people of pride, of thrift and industry, of energy and enterprise. This picture of Danville in the 1880's is truly one of peace, of relative prosperity, of uncomplicated living, but soon clouds of anger and bitterness, pain and death, humiliation and remorse would cover this peaceful haven and convert it into a center of political unrest.

II. COLONEL SIMS CHALLENGES THE "DANVILLE CIRCULAR"

By 1882 the Headjuster Democrats had allied with the Republicans to form the new Coalition or "Black-and-tan" party. This alliance gave to Mahone and his party great strength in cities and towns of Virginia and allowed the Headjusters to begin drastic alterations in municipal

governments. In opposition was the minority alliance of Under Democrats and "Straight-out" or Conservative Republicans.

In the southside community of Danville the "Black-and-tans" had succeeded in electing many of their candidates to the Common Council and town offices. Among the new office-holders were a colored magistrate, four Negro councilmen, and four Negro policemen. To the white Democrats these Negroes represented a radical change in the social make-up of Danville—a change so radical that the Democrats were aroused to a pitch of emotional fervor.

Although Negroes worked in white homes and Negro children played in the streets, a friendly or even a public association with a Negro by a white person often resulted in retaliation by the ultra-conservatives of Danville. One instance occurred during the summer of 1883 as W. R. Robinson, a former city magistrate, accompanied a Negro laborer to the outskirts of town. As they parted and entered the city from different directions, Robinson met a man who passed him walking rapidly in the opposite direction. Robinson had proceeded about ten steps when he heard a shot.

Well, I don't know whether he shot at me or not, I never could hear a pistol ball pass anywhere, I am a little deaf but that sort of thing made me feel in danger and I walked rapidly. I think he may have shot at me. I know how times were, and I met right opposite Peter Gould's house, a white man there, and I got within fifty feet of his back door and I heard somebody say, "I, God damn you." I turned to look and saw the man take aim at me and fire. I drew a

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8 Ibid., pp. 152-55.
9 Ibid., pp. 391-97.
pistol and ran after him and he ran. He was at the top of the hill and he fired as he ran.\textsuperscript{10}

It is apparent that complaints of certain activities in the city were frequent. A public notice issued by Mayor J. M. Johnston on July 20, 1883, declared that all complaints made to the Mayor's office had been promptly investigated, but insufficient or vague evidence usually hampered the investigations. The notice further offered prompt action and protection for citizens of both races:

It is my desire and purpose to discharge . . . and, to that end, I hereby invite and request every citizen, white and colored, who feels himself aggrieved by the conduct of any official, over whom the charter and ordinances of the town give the Mayor supervision, to present their complaints to me at my office in a formal and definite manner, together with the evidence to sustain their charges; will be dealt with to the full extent of the law in each such case.\textsuperscript{11}

Although no formal complaints came to Mayor Johnston following the posting of the notice, numerous rumors of such instances spread throughout the town. One such rumor told that a Negro woman approached Mrs. Cobb, a white woman, and, blocking her path, exclaimed, "Next time I meet you, get out of the way, and save the trouble of being knocked off."\textsuperscript{12}

Racial tensions exploded in Denville three months before the legislators' election of 1883. On August 13 a well respected white man, William F. Shepherd, was waylaid, robbed and murdered by three young Negroes three miles outside of the town. The three Negroes, one of whom

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 600.
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 616.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
was known as Lawne Younger and the others only as Keen and Evans, were immediately arrested by County Sheriff. Oberley and, after admitting their guilt, were imprisoned in the Danville jail. After an autopsy had shown that Shepherd, a father of nine children, had been shot four times, crowds of irate whites began to gather and speak of lynch justice. Oberley then announced that he intended to transport his prisoners by the late evening train to the Chatham jail, but he was advised by Mayor Johnston that this was not wise at the time.

Wisely, the sheriff accepted the mayor’s advice. Not knowing of the plan change, a mob of about one hundred and fifty disguised men stopped and boarded the west-bound train some five miles from Danville. When the prisoners were not found, the mob returned to Danville but found that the jail was so well fortified that they could not seize the prisoners. After several days signs of mob violence had disappeared.

Justice came swiftly to the young Negro: ‘... they were tried, convicted and hung very quickly. According to the word of the law ... it was all done in less than a month.’

Speeches and circulars rapidly flowing from both sections intensified the situation. As the election neared, the situation seemed to become worse causing a Danville merchant to write to the Democratic

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13 Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 11, 1883, p. 1.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 399.
Convention in Lynchburg:

White women are rudely shoved off the pavement by dirty buck Negroes and encouraged to do it by the truculent Negro policemen appointed by the Bahore ring. The black guardians of the Negro men is politeness compared with the brutality of the black women who flaunt their tawdry, cheap finery about the streets looking for the opportunity to insult white women.17

The new and vigorous leadership of the Democrats saw vast possibilities in exploiting the situation in Danville. Timed to gain the greatest advantage, the Democrats of Danville issued the circular entitled "Coalition Rule in Danville" only days before the election, disallowing any formal counter-circular by the Headusters. Issued on October 23, 1880, the circular, supposedly representing the feelings of the merchants, manufacturers, and mechanics of the city, denounced the harsh and absolute domination over Danville by the "Radical or Negro Party" under the leadership of William Mahone and his representative in Danville, J. B. Baulston. Stating that the Negroes in Danville outnumbered the whites in population, the circular charged that the whites during the taxable year of 1882 had paid $38,694 of the total property tax of $10,000; thus, the Negroes had paid only $1,296.63, or 67% less than the city appropriation for Negro schools toward the support of the city.18

The circular then charged that the "Negro Party" having obtained an amendment to the city charter requiring that the single voting precinct be divided into three wards, each responsible for the election of


18 Ibid., pp. vii-ix.
four Councilmen and one magistrate, had been able to create two wards with Negro majorities. Thus, the party elected seven of twelve candidates for the Council and their candidates for magistrate in each ward. At this time the problems of the town and the whites began. 19

Of the nine policemen selected, the circular said, four were Negroes—the first in Danville's history. One acted as the health officer and another acted as Clerk of the Market and weighmaster. Within the market twenty of the twenty-four stalls were rented to Negroes. As a result the market place, once a place of cleanliness and enticement, had become a "scene of filth, stench, crowds of loitering and idle negroes, drunkenness, obscene language and petty thieves." The white merchants were forced to set up their businesses in less desirable locations. All pleas to the Council for corrections of these "outrages" were disregarded by Council president, J. B. Maulston, "the Governor's Collector of Internal Revenue" from New York, who was particularly offensive to the whites of Danville. 20

Through clever use of federal patronage and the hiring of several Negro Councilmen "to scrub the floor of the Custom House, Maulston controls the Council, the distribution of city tax money, the making of laws and intends through these methods to 'build up the radical Negro party." 21

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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
Charging that the police Court was a "scene of perpetual mockery and disgrace," the circular stated that the court's most active justice was Wesley Jones, who was once indicted for but acquitted of the seduction of a young girl under the promise of marriage; that white violators whose crimes were "too frivolous for the law" were brought before the magistrates, charged excessive fines or imprisoned, and harassed by the Negroes congregated outside of the court house; and that in October two of the Coalitionists' magistrates were removed from office—one for embezzling state funds and the other under suspicion of embezzlement, who fled from Danville to escape indictment. 22

As the news of the conditions spread throughout the surrounding counties, large numbers of vagrants had come to Danville, had become dangerous and disrespectful when meeting whites on the streets, had made incendiary speeches at mass gatherings designed to inflame the Negroes against the whites, had schemed to pressure the Council to annex the large Negro community of Jacksonville, and had made Danville so undesirable that tobacco growers from the surrounding areas would travel "five times as far" to sell their products. 23

Finally, appealing to the citizens of the Valley and the Southwest of Virginia, the circular expressed the feelings of its signers as it stated:

We cry out to you in our affliction to deliver us from this awful state of humiliation and wretchedness ... help us to throttle

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
this viper of madness and to death, by voting against the
Coalition-radical candidates who are yelling and screaming
with delight at the prospect of its fastening its fangs into
us forever. 24

After twenty-eight of the leading Democrats had signed the circu-
lar, it was carefully distributed to the "white" counties of Virginia.

A fine climax to their campaign, the Democrats, now having placed great
emphasis on the race issue, suddenly showed great enthusiasm and predicted
a victory by a two-thirds majority. For the first time during the cam-
paign, the Headjusters were concerned about their chances. 25

Upon the receipt of a copy of the "Baneville Circular," General
Mahone personally issued a brief counter-circular on October 26 which
denounced the circular as a deceitful piece of trickery.

To the People of Virginia: A Circular Address entitled "Coalition
While in Baneville" has been secretly prepared and held for sudden
distribution in the white counties of Virginia among the white
people thereof... Be forewarned of this fiendish attempt to
excite and deceive you, fellow citizens, and you are forewarned. 26

But Mahone realized that he and his party had been outmaneuvered,
and he hurriedly lashed out at the circular in the Valley Virginian, a
Headjuster paper.

The inflammatory character of this paper—its fabulous recitals,
it must be seen, are put in terms expressly designed to excite
the prejudices and passions of the white people at a moment just
before they are to vote, and to influence their votes before they
shall have time for reflection—before they shall have time to

24 Ibid.
25 Valley Virginian, Staunton, Virginia, November 5, 1863, as quoted in the Mahone Scrapbook, Volume XXI, p. 27.
26 Ibid., p. 25.
enquire into the truthfulness of the statements made—before any exposure of them can be made.

The fact that this circular is directed to the people of the white section of the state—and is to be there suddenly and secretly circulated on the day of election—and a few days before—must fill every fair-minded man with contempt for the truth thus devised to influence the white vote of the state.27

To the Coalitionists of Danville the circular was as shocking as it had been to the Readjusters of the state. In a letter to J. F. Lewis and John Paul, dated eight days after the release of the circular, Judge John B. Blackwell expressed his amazement.

I have today seen for the first time the circular. . . . I have read this circular with mingled feelings of astonishment, sorrow, and indignation—astonishment and sorrow at seeing the names of some people of known integrity and truth affixed to a document containing so much falsehood, and these elements so ingeniously confounded together that entire false interpretation is left to the reader. . . .

I am free to say that I am perhaps as well acquainted with the behavior and conduct of the people of this town as any citizen in it and I believe the statement made in the said circular are utter false and without foundation in fact. Indeed I have been able to find but two statements that are true. These are in reference to the removal of two Justices of the Peace.28

Following "shone's counter-charges, the Coalitionists of Danville sought out the most powerful Readjuster to answer the charges in the circular. On November 2, 1883, the faction published a notice inviting the public to an address by William F. Sims.

Col. W. F. Sims will speak tonight at eight o'clock in front of the old Post-office to answer that circular . . . sent to the Southwest and to the Valley, by the Democratic State Committee.

27Ibid., p. 27.
This circular contains some injurious allegations against the town of Danville, that has been concealed from the people of Danville. They ought, therefore, to attend the speaking and to learn what is against them for political effect by their pretended political friends. Come one! Come all!!

Colonel Sims, a graduate of Yale Law School, a former Whig, and a lawyer in Chatham, the county seat of Pittsylvania County, was the Head­juster County Chairman. He had run as the Headjuster candidate for Congress in the Fifth Congressional district the year before only to be defeated by Colonel Cabell, the Danville Democratic Chairman, who had been the incumbent. Sims was now a candidate for the state Senate for the twenty-fourth district, and also coordinator of precinct and registration organization in his county. A Canvasser for the state at large, Sims normally reasserted party positions, promised debt settle­ments, and attacked the failure of the Democrats to keep their campaign promises during his speeches. However, after reading the circular received from a "political friend" while traveling to Danville by train, Sims was shocked. He expressed his amazement to a fellow passenger, W. N. Ruffin, who approached him on seeing the circular in Sims's posses­sion. After he had inquired as to how Sims had obtained the copy, Ruffin remarked that there was apparently a leak in the party, as the circular was not to be released in the Pittsylvania County area.

29 Ibid., p. xii.
30 Ibid., pp. 698-701; Catell received 12,942 votes to 11,489 for Sims. W. P. Rock-Richardson Almanack, 1864, op. cit., p. 35.
32 Ibid., p. 702.
Enraged by Ruffin's comments, Sims busily prepared a speech designed to counter the harmful document.

Upon his arrival in Danville, Sims was briefed on the validity of each statement in the circular by Robinson. He then walked to the old post-office where he found a large crowd listening to the speech on the political issues of the upcoming election by Mr. A. M. Wheeler. Upon taking the platform, the candidate immediately concentrated on answering the charges of the circular. He reminded his audience that the Headjusters had a "legitimate majority" of over twelve hundred votes in Danville and the surrounding county, and that the Democrats intended to overcome that majority by some means. Charging that the circular was such an attempt, Sims began to reveal the contents to the crowd saying, "that out of over a thousand persons who were present, not five Coalitionists had ever seen the circular, and . . . that a good many white Democrats were ignorant of its contents."

Sims then took a copy of the circular, "took up each allegation," and denounced as false forty statements. His first attack was directed at the charge concerned with the creation of three voting wards. Denouncing this as a lie, Sims stated that 1,850 white citizens had signed and sent to W. T. Clark, a member of the Democratic Council, a petition asking him to request the division of the precinct into three wards.
This petition was unanimously passed by resolution of the Council and turned over to Judge A. N. Aiken, who created two predominately white wards and one predominately negro ward.\textsuperscript{36}

Sims then charged that of the four policemen named in the circular, only two actually functioned as policemen. One Negro acted as the town scavenger, and the other as Clerk of the Market. Neither, contended Sims, had police powers. He further declared that one Negro was Superintendent of the Poor House, a position that he had held for several years under the Democratic regime.\textsuperscript{37}

Sims charged that the circular was filled with lies concerning the condition of the city market. He answered the charge of "filth, stench . . . loitering and idle negroes, drunkenness, obscene language and petit thieves" as ridiculous. Relying on the information received from Robinson in their brief conversation, Sims stated that the Danville market was as clean as the large markets throughout the state, and that the Clerk, having a large hose, daily washed the brick pavement and the rock-paved streets at the close of market hours.\textsuperscript{38} As to the statement that "white men had been driven out," Sims replied that of the twelve stalls rented by the Common Council, six were leased to white merchants and six to colored merchants by Councilman Arlington, who was in charge of such transactions.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., p. 390.
\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 391.
\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. 393.
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., p. 392.
In defending his fellow party member, J. B. Raulston, who was charged with ignoring the problems of the whites and aiding the Negroes to render the whites powerless, he stated that this was a lie. If the Negro did take the whites' power, the Negro would have to be in constant fear of the white man's violence, as the "people carry guns in town." He remarked that if Raulston had been elected by the Democrats, he would not be called a "carpet-bagger." Furthermore, the native of New York had voted the Democratic ticket during his eighteen years as a resident and merchant of Petersburg and had married a Danville woman. Sims then charged that the Democrats had expressed no other charge against Raulston other than the selection of the Negro policemen in a city where the Negro was in the majority.

Reading loudly from the circular that the "Police Court ... is another scene of perpetual mockery and disgrace," Sims remarked that since the mayor, the president of the Common Council, and three court-appointed registrars made up the Police Court, the circular was accusing these highly respected civic leaders of disgraceful behavior. In defense of Wesley Jones, the Magistrate that the circular named "the most active," Sims replied that Jones was a "very well educated Negro and wrote a beautiful hand ... and whites would prefer to have him try

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10 Ibid., p. 399.
11 Ibid., p. 39h.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., pp. 39h-95.
Furthermore, a white magistrate, "Mr. Hoseley, held open court all the time. You could go there anytime of the day and Mr. Hoseley would try any kind of case at any time."

To the charge that the courts tried cases "too frivolous for the law to take notice of," Sims said he knew nothing of this but commented that often the law is frivolous. The magistrate must try those arrested for such crimes and acquit or convict those persons under the law. He told his audience that if the Negro policemen and magistrate harassed white violators, the white people of the town would have to strike out in rebellion. Furthermore, the accusation was totally unfounded as each violator, white or black, had the privilege to request of whom the magistrate, and in each case was granted that privilege.

Sims, after reading that "Idle and filthy" Negroes were carrying on uncivilized and unattractive activities in Danville, offered the opinion that he did not believe that the Negro came to Danville intending to become a vagrant. The city ordinances were clear on this issue and arrests had been made. Sims then read the statement that charged that Negroes impeded the sidewalks, forcing white women into the streets, and replied that if this were true, the victims would have informed the

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11 Ibid., p. 396.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., p. 397.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., p. 398.
Magistrates immediately of the actions. The accusation that a Negro committee under the leadership of a postal clerk would keep the whites from the polls on election day by summoning federal troops was denounced by the speaker as "hurricane."  

Sims then provided the reason for the absence of tobacco farmers at the Danville markets. Saying that he had never heard a farmer express any criticism of the Negro policemen or Negro rule, he explained that the farmers were traveling to Durham, North Carolina, to sell their tobacco simply because they received a better price there.  

Finally, Sims read the charge dealing with the dismissal from office of the two Magistrates for crimes against the city and the state and declared it a true but misleading statement. He charged that the circular implied that the Magistrates were Negroes. Sims continued by saying that both men were white and only one, W. H. Luck, who fled and was never indicted, was an active Roadjuster. The second Magistrate, R. E. Lee, who had been elected in a white majority ward, announced shortly after his conviction that he was from that time on acting with the Democratic Party.  

Sims then challenged the white Democrats in the audience to correct him if he had "misstated a single fact from the records. Not one

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49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., p. 100.
51 Ibid., pp. 100-01.
52 Ibid., pp. 397-98, 367.
I appealed to the white men present and asked them if it was not mean and cowardly for white men, rich men, intelligent men to slander and vilify the Negro race when they knew how faithful the colored people had been to the Southern people during the late war; when they knew how respectful and polite the colored people were even up to that time; when they knew the ignorance of the colored people, owing to their late condition of slavery, and when they knew that on the white people of the South, on their kindness must to a great extent depend the elevation and education of these people who had been so true to them. . . . I felt indignant that men who pretended to be Confederate soldiers should allow party zeal to carry them to the extent of vilifying the colored people. . . .

Sims then offered advice to his supporters, mostly Negroes, who were gathered around him.

I told my constituents that I was satisfied that an effort was being made to create a race excitement so as to have difficulties on the day of election, and if possible in that way to throw out the vote of the precincts where my party expected large majorities. I told them I was satisfied from the developments that any excuse would be seized on by the Democrats to offer violence to the colored people; that I had heard that the Democratic Party claimed that they feared violence from the colored people, and while everyone knew that such an excuse was ridiculous, yet I hoped that the colored people would refrain from even a sign of violence; that if any of them had any weapons they had better leave them at home, and stop wearing them; . . . that if a white man offered any of them any indignity or insult or violence up to or including the day of election, they ought to pocket the insult, and bear the violence without saying one word, but go to the polls and vote their honest sentiments. . . .

The Negroes in the crowd agreed to follow the advice given by Sims, and their response led him to believe that the Negroes would avoid

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53 Ibid., p. 703.
54 Ibid., p. 702.
55 Ibid., p. 703.
any violence. Sims later reflected, "They had followed my advice on previous occasions and, I believed, had sufficient confidence in me to follow it again."56

When Sims had completed his talk, he was approached by a messenger from Mayor Johnston warning him that he would be seized and lynched if he went out on the street. Thus, he hastily went to the mayor's office to await friends who would escort him to his lodgings. While Sims waited, Dr. R. V. Barksdale entered Johnston's office and identified himself as a spokesman for the Tarville Democrat. Barksdale demanded that Sims publicly retract his statement and apologize to those citizens whom he had denounced as "liars, scoundrels and cowards." Sims' refusal caused the Democrat's abrupt departure. Sims, accompanied by several friends, then made his way through the streets to his place of lodgings and slept peacefully through the night.57

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., p. 70b.
CHAPTER IV

THE DARVILLE RIOT

Adjusters throughout the state expressed to General Mahone their concern over the Danville Circular and the effect of the circular on the people of their districts, and they anxiously looked to the former Confederate for leadership. "The inflammatory circulars of Danville are being circulated all over Carroll and other mountain counties. You must offset," was the plea of C. S. Wingfield to Mahone on November 2, 1863.¹

Mahone immediately called out to his lieutenants to unify and oppose the sectional unrest with a solid state-wide front, but none could leave his locale for fear of a political uprising as a result of the distribution of the Danville Circular. Not even Governor Cameron felt that he could leave Richmond. When requested by Mahone to meet with him in Petersburg on election day, the Governor replied:

I find the plans of our opponents such that my presence here is absolutely necessary. . . .

The necessity for my presence here is official to prevent or suppress the organized lawlessness on election day. . . .

I shall take every precaution and will exhaust all the power of the State and the law to see that every Virginia voter shall have the right peaceably to cast his ballot as he pleases.  

Thus, Readjusters in the various districts were advised to calm the local situation and work for fair elections. On November 3, E. B. Jeffreys wrote to Mahone concerning the situation in South Boston and his progress there:

We now ask for no aid. I went to town today and took out the property holders and business men and told them I wanted to put a stop to such doings as were being carried on by drunken men shooting about the street, and alarming women and children. That the cold [sic] people only asked to be let alone and threatened, that they were for peace and desired to cast their votes as they chose without any intimidation. This they promised and assured me they would do. I therefore do not anticipate disturbance at election and that we can take care of ourselves if we have no law.  

At this time the Australian or secret ballot had not been introduced in Virginia. Instead, each party was responsible for the printing and the distribution of their ballots. To simplify voting for the illiterate, the parties used colored ballots, that is, the Democrats' ticket might be blue and the ticket bearing the names of the Readjuster candidates might be green. Political candidates and party members,

2E. B. Cameron to William Mahone, Richmond, November 2, 1863, Mahone Letters.

3E. B. Jeffreys to William Mahone, South Boston, November 3, 1883, Mahone Letters.
therefore, while observing balloting at any precinct could easily determine who was supporting them and who was not. An anonymous writer at the G. O. Machine Shops in Richmond notified Mahone of the concern over the use of this type of ballot before the election.

... could you do something thru U. S. Senate, to have all the tickets printed on the same paper and in such paper that they could not tell the funder ticket from the readjusters—every body had been made to contribute this time both for the city and Chesterfield county—Heaven and earth has been move [sic] this time to beat you. We will have to trust to judges of election and the majority...]

On the Saturday morning following his speech, Sims boldly carried on the familiar activities of a visitor in Danville. Rising early in the morning, he proceeded to the hotel for breakfast and then on to the barber shop to be shaved. The candidate next went to a printing shop where he inquired about the reward posters that he had ordered, offering the sum of twenty-five dollars to anyone exposing attempts at bribery during the election.5 After a brisk walk down the street, Sims entered a predominantly Negro bar operated by a colored man named Nicholas. After refreshing himself, he walked out to the street and climbed into the buggy driven by Verser. As the buggy was moved from the hitching post, a group of about thirty white men gathered to watch his departure. At that same moment, there appeared some one hundred and fifty Negroes who formed a line along the sidewalk directly across the street from the

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4Anonymous to William Mahone, Richmond [5], (October 30-November 16, 1883), Mahone Letters.

white men. As both crowds looked on, the buggy carrying Sims to his next speaking assignment passed by.

A Negro in the crowd, Davis Lewellyn, commented to Frank Corbett, "I expected to see Mr. Sims interrupted. If they had, there would have been a mob there." Lewellyn then asked Corbett if he was carrying a gun. When Corbett questioned why Lewellyn believed trouble was imminent, he was told, "It seems you don't understand what's going on here."

Although Sims had left Danville, the tense and nervous condition of the town remained. For three weeks Negroes and whites in general conversation had predicted a violent explosion. The feeling of the conservative whites toward what they considered Negro rule and the pompous attitudes of certain Negroes was summed up by Mr. Vass, a hardware store owner, who remarked, "Before we are going to stand it, we are going to shed blood." The whites were not alone in the boasting of their intentions. Negroes throughout the city boldly spoke of what they intended to do to the whites when an opportunity arose. One such incident took place on the Sunday following the Shepherd murder. A Negro laborer while waving a revolver in the air announced in a loud voice that he "wished to God that he had a chance to shoot some damned white man. . . ."

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7. Ibid., p. 1034.
8. Ibid., p. 1033.
9. Ibid., p. 505.
10. Ibid., p. 999.
He continued by expressing the wish that he could kill all the whites as "nothing would do him so much good..." 11

During this period prior to the election day, friends warned friends of the possible trouble ahead. About two weeks before the election, Verser, the well-liked deputy Revenue Collector, was approached on the street by E. W. Graves, a grocer, and was told, "There is going to be trouble here on the day of the election, and I would not like to see you hurt. You take my advice and stay in your room that day." 12 On the following day the Collector was advised by W. E. Woolfork to "go to the polls early and then go to the country." 13

On the morning of November 3, in an attempt to protect a Negro friend who had been raised on his plantation near Jacksonville, Minbush Young warned Elijah Cousins to "get out of the street, and tell all the boys from Jacksonville to get off the street, because some of you are going to get killed here this morning." 14

William Davins, a popular colored barter, who catered entirely to the white, was warned by "some rough crowd" to stay off the street that day. He complied by remaining in his shop all day. 15

The situation worsened as the morning went by. Incidents
uncertain in Danville were being observed. In Minns' barber shop two customers, Mr. Traver and Mr. Jefferson, checked and loaded their pistols. Traver explained his actions to the inquiring barber by saying that he "didn't want to get hurt and didn't want to hurt anybody, but would like to have protection, provided if anything should happen." 16

Elizabeth Cousin, while entering the office of Haffen, Coelfolk and Blair Insurance Company early that Saturday morning, observed four youths each carrying two breach-loading shot guns. Later, while walking down an alley to the home of Mrs. Mills, a woman who did his laundry, Cousin observed two young boys "rubbing off the barrels and loading" new breach-loading rifles. 17

A colored cooper, Granderion Potest, witnessed an unusual incident between eleven o'clock and noon as he reclined in a back lot off Fenton Street near the court house. Two former white policemen, Edwards and Williams, while running through an alley near to Potest's position, expressed plans for picking up weapons prior to a meeting to be held in the home of Captain W. F. Craven. 18 Potest, confused and startled by the discussion, hastily walked to Main Street and then overheard a conversation between two white men from North Carolina: "There are going to be hell to pay here directly." 19 Feeling insecure, Potest crossed

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p. 558.
18 Ibid., p. 490.
19 Ibid.
the street, stopped a Captain Hall, the chief of police, and told him of his experience. However, when Hall asked the Negro to identify the men, Tobeat replied, "I won't tell you who I heard say it, because I don't know who my friends is... You're being the chief cannot rule Danville," and the matter was dropped shortly before the riot.

As had occurred days before, rumors of a riot in Danville spread throughout several distant Virginia cities prior to the actual occurrence. Thomas J. Lessiter, a conductor on Mahone's Norfolk and Western Railroad, stated that on October 28, when his train was stopped in Farmville, he was questioned by several people "about the riot in Danville the day before." A Readjuster from Fairfax County, Eppa Buckley, reported that on Friday, November 2, rumors were spreading through Clifton Station on the Midland Railroad of a riot in Danville. Buckley stated that "white hands working on the train" had brought the rumor, but none could give any details.

John Clubb, another Fairfax County man, was in an Alexandria market place Saturday morning and overheard white and colored persons talking of a Danville riot. "It was all through the market," commented Clubb. J. C. Richards, a historian living in Bath County in Southwest Virginia at the time of the riot, also received a premature report.

20 Ibid., p. 491.
21 Ibid., p. 796.
22 Ibid., pp. 781-82.
23 Ibid., p. 777.
I picked up a little circular in the Hillborough Depot. . . .
I heard of the Danville riot sometime Saturday between seven o'clock in the morning and noon. . . . It was reported to be the account of the riot, and it was without date or place of residence. I looked at it, and it said that "A black wave had finally struck Danville . . . and there had been four colored men and one white man, a leading citizen of Danville, a young man, killed."24

No two accounts of the riot are alike; thus, it is not known exactly who or what was to blame for starting the incident. One thing is known. Negroes were expected to step aside when they encountered white people on the sidewalks. "They had adopted the practice, however, of jostling white people instead whenever there were strong feelings on controversial issues, as was always the case during political campaigns."25

At two-thirty in the afternoon, Frank Corbett walked into Brown's bar where he again met Davis Jewellyn and Horace Lawson. His friends were drinking heavily, and Corbett "didn't care to be with them at the time."26 Corbett then walked into the rear room and was followed by Lawson who attempted to fight for no apparent reason with a customer who was seated there. Corbett pushed the two men apart, took Lawson outside, and instructed him to calm himself. Lawson replied, "They are expecting a fuss, and he had many a friend backing him. . . ."27

With that, Lawson and Jewellyn walked on Main Street to the front of H. D. Guerrant's store where they met a young white man, Charles D.

24Ibid., pp. 771-72.
25Lyman, op. cit., p. 31.
27Ibid.
Noel, who was proceeding in the opposite direction. Noel, a twenty-five-year-old bookkeeper for a tobacco auctioneer, tells of the incident:

I was passing down Main Street very rapidly, and I passed two darkies; didn't know who they were, and after I had passed, I came very close to being tripped by one of the darkies when I had passed by kicking my left foot; he came very near to knocking my left foot from under me and I thought I was at least far enough from him not to trod on by them, and I turned and asked, "What did you do that for!" ... and he said, "I was only getting out of the way of a lady, a white lady at that," in very insulting tones.

Noel states that he reluctantly accepted Lawson's explanation, although no women were in sight, and started to continue his walk when Lawson's companion, Lewellyn, remarked, "It didn't make a damn bit of difference whether it was all right or not; that I couldn't do anything about it."29 This statement and the tone in which it was delivered angered Noel and prompted an exchange of comments.

Raged, Noel struck Lewellyn "and when I struck him, they both struck me back and pushed me from the sidewalk, pushing me into the gutter."30 Having maintained his balance and his footing, Noel sprang back onto the sidewalk and renewed the fighting. Lawson and Lewellyn then "made motions as to draw pistols"31 and a number of Negroes crowded around to watch the fight.32 Noel, who was not armed at that time, hesitated in his pursuit.

28 Ibid., p. 107.
29 Ibid., p. 108.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., p. 109.
Both Lawson and Lewellyn agreed in part with Noel in recalling their encounter, but with acute differences in detail. Lawson, a twenty-nine year old Negro, tells of the incident:

I was coming downtown and met him. I stepped one side to get out of the way of some ladies, and him and me ran together, and I said, "Excuse me," and he said, "What in the hell did you say?" I said, "Excuse me," and he said, "You damn nigger, what do you mean running up against me?" and at that time Lewellyn said to me, "Go on," and he hit Davis, and Davis knocked him in the gutter twice. Lewellyn and me went on downtown.

Lewellyn recalled the same incident:

Well, we were walking down the street up by the corner where Greenwald's clothing store used to be, walking very slowly, Noel coming up the street, and this young man, Lawson, getting out of the way of a lady and happened to strike against Mr. Noel's foot, happened to strike against his heel, and he says, "What the hell do you mean," and Lawson says, "I am getting out of the way of that lady" excuse me," and I say, "Go ahead, Hense, and don't ask any pardon," when he struck me, and I knocked him out in the gutter twice. Then he turns and goes down the street.

Noel, who had purchased a pistol only the day before, states what occurred next:

I went to a dry goods store, on Main Street, and purchased a buggy robe, as I expected to go to the country that afternoon. I went home first to eat my dinner, came down the street and got my pistol to go to the country, and was in my buggy going up the street. I stopped at the opera house. At first, I went into the lower room, it was on the level of the stage where the meeting was being held, the Democratic meeting. When I got there,

33Lawson later testified that three white ladies were emerging from Guerrant's store as he passed it. Ibid., p. 113.
34Ibid., pp. 113-114.
35Lewellyn testified that the ladies did exist and were either coming from Guerrant's store or from an alley beside the store. Ibid., p. 155.
36Ibid.
I noticed that my friends Mr. Lea and Mr. Taylor were in the gallery; there were very few people in the gallery; as I went around up there, Mr. Lea perhaps beckoned to me. He said, "What about the difficulty you had before dinner?" I said, "It was a triving affair. It don't make any difference now. I am going to the country, and am anxious to go, and wouldn't have any difficulty on this day, of course, as there are a great many darkies on the street, and it is best that we don't do anything about it."37

After bidding farewell to Lea and Taylor, Noel left the opera house, boarded his buggy, and proceeded to pull away from the hitching post.38

As I got in front of the Arlington Hotel—I was passing in a rapid trot—and hear someone hail me, saying, "By God, here I am," in a loud voice. At first I could not see anybody; they hailed me again, didn't call me by name or anything, but I turned around and recognized that Negro that I had had difficulty with that morning.39

Lawson describes his meeting with Noel.

I saw him going down the street in a buggy . . . and he kept looking back, and I told Lewellyn to watch out, "That man is coming back to tackle you." He got out at the opera house and I told Lewellyn to look out. He went in front of the opera house where the speaking was.40

Lawson then observed Noel's return to the street from the opera house within three minutes.

I had my face turned toward Lewellyn and he just run up to me and hit me with a pair of knucks twice. He didn't say a word, just hauled off and struck me. I was standing on the street, three of us together, David Lewellyn and James Love41 were the two men with

37 Ibid., p. 109.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., p. 111.
41 James Love was a young Negro factory worker who viewed the earlier incident from a distance and joined his two friends shortly thereafter. Ibid., p. 156; p. 111.
me. There were several gentlemen with him.\textsuperscript{42}

Lewellyn supports his friend with the following statement:

He continued to walk down the street, and got near to Lawson's room, and I left him and went across to my dinner. I caught up with them (Lawson and Love) going back up Main Street toward the corner. We were going back up home to put on some clothes to come back to town to go with some girls. After we went up, we concluded to walk down the street slowly smoking. We walked very slow. . . .

Well, we walked down, I suppose, until we got to the front of Woolfork and Blair's insurance office. . . . Noel came down in a buggy, and Hense said, "Davis, there is the man you had the little row with this morning; watch him, I expect he will pick a fight with you." I say, "Oh, go away."\textsuperscript{43}

Lewellyn then stated that neither he nor any of his friends made any remark to Noel as he passed by, and that he no longer noticed the white man's activity until he attacked Lawson.\textsuperscript{44}

Noel contradicts the two Negroes as he relates the following passage.

I made no stop, but turned short round in the street, and as I passed down the street, I glanced back and saw he was gathering up a crowd and coming on down Main Street on the sidewalk after me. I drove rapidly down to the opera house, got out and gave the horse to a Negro boy. I went up in the opera house and told George Lea that that rascal had insulted me again and I wanted him to see that I had fair play, when he and Bob Taylor immediately got up and followed me. When we got in front of Averett and White's store, I noticed that this Negro, with fifteen or twenty others, were standing in front of Ruffin, Woolfork, and Blair's office; they did not stop until they saw us coming. When we got there, I remarked to the Negro, "What did you mean by calling me on the street?" and he stammered out something as if to retract, but I collared him and struck him, and at the same time he struck me. He did not hurt me

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., p. 119.
\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., p. 157.
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid.
as he struck me mainly about the arms. A dozen Negroes, I suppose, said, "It was a fair fight and Mr. Noel whipped him; now you all go off." While I was upstairs in Mr. Hamlin's office washing, the firing commenced.\(^5\)

George A. Lea retraces Noel's actions.

I was requested by Mr. Taylor to assist him as doorkeeper in the gallery of the opera house on that day. \(^6\)

Mr. Noel, in a few minutes after I took my seat in the gallery, came to receive a message that I had told him I wanted delivered in the country to a relative of mine that he was going to visit, and I remarked to him, I says, "Charlie, how about your difficulty," having heard of it. He says, "Well, I concluded to postpone it, as there is very heated excitement in town," he says, "and if we were to resent that injury, I am fearful it will bring on a riot, and I will wait until after the election to request to resent the injury." I says, "It is very hard to take such an insult", thereupon he left me; his horse was standing at the opera house door, and was being held by a boy; he got in his buggy. \(^7\)

Noel returned to the gallery after about five minutes and told Lea that "This scoundrel has insulted me a second time, and it is more than I can stand. . . ." \(^8\) Lea then followed his friend out to the street.

He encountered his (Lawson's) crowd four doors above the opera house. . . . After he had insulted Noel, he had collected his crowd, twenty in number, and had come down as far as Hufifin and Woolfork's office from the Arlington Hotel to meet Mr. Noel. . . . Noel remarked to me, "He has got his crowd and I don't intend using any weapons at all. I intend to give him a good, sound fisticuff, and you and Taylor must keep the others off of me." \(^9\)

\(^{5}\)ibid., p. 110.
\(^{6}\)ibid., p. 85.
\(^{7}\)ibid.
\(^{8}\)ibid., p. 86.
\(^{9}\)ibid.
Lea indicates that both he and Taylor, who accompanied them, were armed with .36-caliber Smith and Wesson five barrel revolvers, but intended to use them only to protect Noel from the crowd.

Mr. Noel met this darky and asked, "Why did you holler at me a second time in the insulting manner you did?" He stammered and tried to deny it, whereupon Noel collared him. They both made at each other simultaneously and Mr. Noel . . . being the best fighter, got in the best lick, and the first lick. The Negro got a genteel licking. I saw Lawson attempt fifteen or twenty blows, but he did not reach Noel. . . . ⁵⁰

Lea then states that he noticed that several of the Negroes in the crowd appeared to be moving toward Noel and Lawson whereupon, drawing his revolver, he demanded that they remain still and allow the fight to proceed. ⁵¹ "Lawson put up the best fight he could. The Negroes crowded in. Not only did they not seem very excited, but seemed to have very much ego in them. They seemed to be mad." ⁵²

Lea then reports that upon seeing a Negro policeman moving into the crowd, he called to him and instructed him as to how to separate the combatants and to disperse the crowd. "I was afraid that Noel might kill him with his fists. . . ." ⁵³

Lawson states that he was struck twice on the head by the metal knuckles on the hand of Noel before he could regain his position, and as he moved toward Noel, "Lea cocked the pistol . . . and said, 'Stand back; ⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 86-87.
⁵¹Ibid., p. 87.
⁵²Ibid.
⁵³Ibid.
I will shoot the last one of you niggers' heads off." The Negro was then struck three times before he was able to grab Noel's body. As he did, he noticed a number of "whites run up with pistols in their hands..."55

Then Lea ran up with his revolver cocked in my face and several men came out of the insurance office of Woolfork and Blair, I think. I don't know exactly who it was; they were handing out guns right there from the insurance company. I was separated, and those white gentlemen came up the street, and I went to Paxton's jewelry store, between Miller's and Brown's, and I struck where hardly anybody went, and I struck Union Street and went on down. Lawson made his way to a friend's home where he cared for his wounds and remained for the remainder of the day.57

As if the fight between Noel and Lawson was not sufficient to create great discontentment between the blacks and the whites that afternoon, a second scuffle—between Lea and a Negro factory worker, George Adams—certainly was. The whites who witnessed the encounter contend that the incident occurred after the separation of the fighters and the partial dispersion of the crowd.58

Mr. Noel went across the street to wash his hands. In the meantime, Mr. Lea had his pistol up, and this other man, a Negro that ran across... slipped up behind Mr. Lea and grabbed him in the pistol... and they both fell to the ground... Nobody else could see it, but the Negroes in front. They did not say anything.

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54 Ibid., p. 145.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., p. 962.
they wanted to get the pistol, and, of course, and they were not afraid to go on him after they got the pistol away from him. Mr. Lea did not know that Adams was within a mile of him. . . .

B. F. Williamson, a clerk at B. W. Graves' store, indicates that when Lea was knocked to the ground, his revolver accidentally discharged, and the single round did not hit anyone. With that, several policemen and citizens separated Lea and Adams and began again to disperse the crowd. According to Williamson, Adams then ran to the colored people as if to secure their support, and shouted that Lea was trying to shoot him, and that "If I had got it, I would have killed him." Williamson further stated that Adams was then given a pistol by a member of the crowd, and, while waving it in the air, continued to excite the Negroes. The culmination of his effort came rapidly. The sound of pistol fire filled the air. Williamson remarked, "I think that all the parties did the firing on both sides. I saw several (Negroes) with pistols." A group of about fifteen white men and about two hundred Negroes were involved in the outbreak.

George Adams' statement on the same incident reveals huge contradictions in the details, as both parties attempted to cast the blame onto the other. The Negro states that he was paying a small bill in the rear of Graves' store, when he was startled by a pistol shot. He raced through the front door of the store to observe the situation. Spotting

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59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., p. 963.

61 Ibid.
Lea with his pistol and a large crowd, Adams slipped from the sidewalk and into the crowd.\textsuperscript{62}

When I got over there, there was five men had pistols cocked. Lawyer Barksdale, one, Lawyer Oliver was another, John Lea was one, and George Lea, and a man by the name of Bob Miller . . . had their pistols cocked, and a Mr. Noel was beating Sense over the head with a slat or a stick, and had a bowie knife in his hand, and was beating him over the head with something, and I went up and said, "Are you going to stand and let that man kill that man?"\textsuperscript{63}

At that point Adams was approached by a Negro policeman, Freedman, who admitted his inability to end the brawl. Adams then decided to take the matter into his own hands.

I started around there, and when I started around, Mr. Lea cocked his pistol in my face and I grabbed it and he tried to snatch it out of my hand; when he tried to snatch it, I fell across him, and when I fell, Taylor hit me two or three licks over the head. With a stick or a whip staff or something of that sort. I don't know what it was, but it didn't hurt much, and when I fell, I turned a somersault, and Lea shot at me twice . . . And I ran about a hundred yards and they shot at me again, and another fellow was running right at my side . . . named Jerry Smith, and he had run with me about a hundred rods, and they missed me and hit Jerry and Jerry fell right across the wall of a hardware store, and I turned right across and went across the alley to White's livery stable, and Mr. Peter Booth shot at me, and Mr. Hatcher says, "There's that damn George Adams. I tried my best to kill him,"\textsuperscript{64}

Adams then stated that he slipped out of view, and as he returned to his wagon to see about the safety of his son and his mules, a large crowd of armed white men approached him. Being unarmed, he jumped aboard his wagon and drove away through the crowd that was firing "like

\textsuperscript{62}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 221-25.

\textsuperscript{63}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 225.

\textsuperscript{64}\textit{Ibid.}
W. R. Taylor, who fired five shots at the Negroes during the riot, stated that the Negroes confronting him and his companions were armed and anxious to fight. Only moments after Lea's pistol was discharged, Taylor was accused by Davis Lewellyn of firing the shot. Taylor denied the charge but assured the Negro that he was armed and willing to give him the "contents" of his pistol. Lewellyn then drew a white-handled revolver and waved it defiantly in Taylor's face, and an unidentified Negro in the crowd cried out that "they could shoot just as good as the white people could, and if they shot to kill the ones that started first; and a few seconds after that the firing commenced."66

Before Taylor was able to find cover, he "heard some three or four bullets pass very near. . . ."67 At the same time he was shocked as a young white companion, Walter H. Holland, standing beside him, cried out in pain and crumpled to the sidewalk. "He was shot right in the curve of his head; he also had a ball in his overcoat."68 As Taylor fired his pistol and ran to find protection, he saw J. E. Seward, a white butcher, grab his side as he was struck by a bullet.

J. E. Oliver, Captain of the Danville Grays, believed that Holland was accidently struck by bullets intended for George Lea.

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65Ibid.
66Ibid., p. 32.
67Ibid.
68Ibid.
I saw young Holland approach the pavement almost in a line with Geo. Lea, and a Negro shot in his direction. I saw that Holland was hit. He wheeled and fell on the pavement some 10 or 15 feet from where I was standing. I believe that the shot was intended for Geo. Lea, as he had been invited out and it was made in a line with him, I believe.

Granderon Potteat was in the street when the firing commenced and tells of the situation.

I ran to the corner of Union Street, crossing Main Street, right at Wiseman's Drug store, and as I turned the corner one man fell in front of me and another behind me, and I being standing between the telegraph posts, I suppose, prevented them from shooting me, I whirled back and goes into Wiseman's Drug store, and as I started into the store his clerk remarked to me, "Don't come in here, we will kill you," and Mr. Wiseman came running and says, "Open the door and let everyone come in that can get in, and you all put those pistols down for I have nothing in the world to do with it," and then I went out the back of Mr. Wiseman's Drug store.

As clerk of the Danville Democratic Committee, Henry E. Barksdale was in the opera house when the outbreak occurred. Being one of the five men accused by George Adams of leading the attack on the colored people, Barksdale states that Adams was mistaken. "The firing was all over before I got on the street. George Adams knows me perfectly well; I have been his counsel several times, and I know him well."

A Readjuster judge of the Corporation Court, John D. Blackwell, saw the riot from his office window. He states that he saw four or five white men "conversing in an excited and angry manner with the Negroes in

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69 Committee of Forty, op. cit., p. 13.
71 Ibid., p. 973.
the street, but could not hear their conversation. As he watched, he was amazed by the situation that developed.

By the time the difficulty, such as it was, which I supposed was a street fight between a white man and a Negro, which frequently occurred in our streets, and suddenly, to my surprise, I saw a line of whites, fifteen, possibly twenty . . . station themselves, a great majority upon the sidewalk, and several of them, from three to six, perhaps, out of the upper end of the street, out in the street, and they presented pistols.

They suddenly presented the pistols, and I heard the click; I was very much surprised; it was done so quick. The Negroes there, seeing the pistols and hearing them click . . . immediately turned and ran as quickly as they could. By the time their backs were fairly turned . . . the firing commenced. The discharge was a volley that was delivered as if it had been by disciplined soldiers. I never on a battlefield heard a volley delivered as well together as that was. After that it was continuous firing, as if soldiers were firing at will, each man apparently firing as quickly as he could, and to my amazement I saw no effect to the bullets; no one seemed to be hurt at all. There were some shouts, some screams, from the Negroes as they ran, but that was apparently from fright. They ran, nearly all of them, down the street in the direction of my right and below me . . . toward South Market Street . . . .

Judge Blackwell conceded that of the fifteen or twenty men which he had described previously as firing pistols in the presence of the crowd of Negroes, he could name only one—George Lee. As the Negroes fled from Blackwell's sight, he was able to see only one white man continue firing his pistol.

I saw Captain Graves near the junction of Main and North Union . . . and saw him aiming a pistol, and he instantly fired it. Apparently in the direction of Nicholas and Nesbitt's saloon. He then fired a second shot down North Market; I did not see at what object he aimed or fired at with either of those shots. . . . He then presently,
after a brief pause, turned around or partly around, and fired, shooting, apparently, down South Market Street. I never heard him fire out three times.74

The judge then witnessed a humorous display amidst the scene of open violence in the streets.

I hear a very loud yell . . . and looking out the window I saw Mr. Blunt coming at what you might call a double whip, in the direction of Joplin’s hardware store. He had his black silk hat in his hand and had a revolver in his right. He got out about the middle of Main Street and he turned around, certainly once or twice, or probably three times, repeatedly on his heel, spinning like a boy’s top, giving a tremendous yell, flourishing his hat as he did so, and after running around fired his pistol in the air . . . . I suppose he fired three times. He presented to me the appearance of a man in excitement, and had no idea what he was doing. That was the last time I saw and the last report of firearms I heard.75

A Negro who witnessed the beginning of the shooting felt that the discharges were organized and deliberate, rather than sporadic in nature. He states that a white man holding a pistol in his hand challenged the whites in the stores by demanding, "If you are not all cowards, you will come out." About twelve men accepted the call and formed a line along Main Street. As two drew pistols, a command of "Ready" and "Fire" was given commencing the firing.76

Fear and confusion existed throughout the town after the guns had quieted. Four negroes were dead, three to six, according to the account, were wounded, and four white men were wounded, one critically.77 Both

74 Ibid., pp. 346-47.
75 Ibid., p. 347.
76 Ibid., p. 251.
77 Wynees, op. cit., p. 31; Committee of Forty, op. cit., p. 5.
the whites and Negroes anticipated reprisals. Many white men took their families from the city and relocated them safely in the country. Jim Covington said, "I don't want my wife and children to be there on the day of the election."78 Rumors spread through Danville that Lea and other white principals in the riot had also found safety for their families outside of town.79

Mayor Johnston, after personally investigating the conditions on the streets about thirty minutes after the riot, decided to call out the Douglas Guards, a local Negro militia, but was promptly advised that this would only worsen the matter. Instead, the mayor ordered out the Danville Grays, an all-white unit, and placed the militia in charge of maintaining order. He then met with Colonel George C. Cabell, the leading member of the Democratic party in Danville, and Chief of Police Wall.80

Cabell appeared quite upset about the incident and placed the responsibility for its occurrence on the inability of the police force to prevent such things. Cabell spoke to Hall, saying, "Young man, make yourself small. Now, I have kept the crowd from mobbing you just now."81

No further accounts of physical violence were reported that day. The Danville Riot had run its course.

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79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
CHAPTER V

ELECTION DAY

By sundown of the day of the riot, armed horsemen in groups of ten to fifteen patrolled the streets. As Mayor Johnston walked through the streets of his town, he felt that these men were totally unauthorized and acting under the false pretenses of guarding the stores from a Negro uprising. He called on Colonel Cabell and asked the Democratic leader to aid him in clearing the streets. Cabell declared that he was powerless to intervene. Thus Johnston, realizing that the mounted patrols would probably remain on the streets until the day of the election, began a series of correspondence with the Governor of Virginia requesting aid.¹

During the difficult days that followed, Johnston's pleas were confused by the telegrams sent by the confident city sergeant, James Wood, who felt that the town was in order and a free election was assured.

At six o'clock James Wood received a telegram from the governor requesting information concerning the situation of the town. Wood

replied that the town was quiet and that "the people are generally aiding me and the law officers in preserving the peace. I think that there will be no further trouble."2 A telegram of confirmation was requested by the governor, and Wood again assured Cameron that he was in full command of the activity within the city and conditions were peaceful.3

Mayor Johnston, less confident of the situation within the town, had wired at the same time that he feared "another outbreak before the election is over." In requesting troops he commented, "Our people are so excited that I do not think that we can be safely depended on to preserve order. . . ."4 At noon of the following day Johnston repeated his request.

I need additional troops to keep the peace and conduct a fair election. Citizens here are terrorizing the election under the pretense of patrolling the streets and the roads running beyond corporate limits. I have not a force of sufficient strength to repress this disorder. The same spirit that caused the riot of yesterday prevails in unabated force, and in case of another outbreak I think that the majority of the troops here will fraternize with the riot. The election on Tuesday will be a mere farce unless the electors be assured of protection at the polls by foreign troops.5

In answer to Johnston's urgent plea, Cameron wired that he was "adverse to the use of outside military, except upon actual necessity. What new exigency calls for additional help?"6 After a brief discussion

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2 Ibid., p. 709.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. xxxix.
5 Ibid., p. xx1.
6 Ibid., p. 709.
Johnston and Wood composed a telegram stating that no new exigency existed, but that troops were required "to relieve our home military, who have been on duty, and for abundant caution."  

The governor's reply, addressed to Wood, advised the sergeant to form a "posse of citizens whose calmness and desire to preserve the peace would effect more good than the sending in of troops from elsewhere."  Fearing that this would be impossible at the time, the mayor immediately replied, "Out of abundant caution we advise that a military company from Lynchburg be sent here this evening. Lynchburg is our nearest point, and we want the company before the night."  

On Monday morning Wood felt confident that he and Johnston could fully control the town. The streets were now free of the mounted patrols and additional men had been deputized to supplement the militia. However, the policeman revealed his continuing concern as he stated, "I think this force is sufficient for the purpose, without further troops, but of course you could exercise your discretion."  At noon on November 5 Governor Cameron advised Wood that the Richmond Light Infantry blue and a detachment of the Richmond Howitzers would arrive on Tuesday.

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7 Ibid., p. 710.  
8 Ibid., p. 709.  
9 Ibid., p. 710.  
10 Ibid.  
11 Ibid.
The troops sent by Governor Cameron did little to remove the fears of the Negroes. Upon their arrival by train, the troops were met enthusiastically and hailed as guests of the Danville Grays. B. H. Fennill, the secretary of the readjuster party of Pittsylvania County, considered the presence of the troops sent to supplement the local force as a farce and commented that "soldiers of no sort were necessary except regulars under the command of a determined officer like Sheridan clothed with the full power to declare martial law—try the ruffians and their instigators by a drumhead court martial and hang them immediately in a gallows extending the full length of Main Street—anything less than that would only aggravate the trouble and not remove it." 12

The situation in Danville during this period was extremely tense, with armed men patrolling the streets and frightened Negroes huddled around the depot afraid to move through the town. W. H. Robinson was a witness to the conditions that prevailed during the evening following the riot. He had been in Sycamore Station some fifty miles from Danville that day. Having heard an account of the riot during a brief stop at Pittsylvania Court House, he arrived in Danville at eight o'clock and proceeded to the barber shop to become better acquainted with the events of the day. Then during a brisk walk toward the depot, the location of his rental properties, he observed the militia and numbers of armed civilians. This observation caused curiosity in his mind as to the

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state of affairs among the Negroes. One glance at the Negroes around
the depot satisfied his curiosity.

It occurred to me that it was the most foolish thing I ever seen
in my whole life—the crowd to patrol that town when I was satis-
fied that those Negroes were the worst broken up, they were the
worst demoralized, broken up, completely crushed, that they had
no idea of raising arms or anything else against the white people.13

As the frightened Negroes huddled in the safety of their homes,
the men that many people of Danville blamed for the riot made his way
back to the city. After fulfilling his speaking engagement that after-
noon, Sims and Verser began the twelve mile ride back to Danville where
the candidate intended to distribute his party's tickets. About three
miles from the city one William Brown, during a chance meeting, informed
the travelers of the "frightful row" and that many citizens had been
killed or injured. Brown further informed Sims that armed patrols were
on the roads awaiting his return, and that he "would certainly be put
to death that night if he went to Danville."14

Verser advised Sims to go to his home in Chatham, but the can-
didate feared that his supporters would not vote without a show of strength
from him during this critical period.15 Sims and Verser continued on to
Danville.

As the two men entered North Danville, they were stopped by a man
named Lewis who placed the blame for the riot on Sims. In the background,

13U. S. Congress, Senate Report, op. cit., p. 103.
14Ibid., pp. 704-05.
15Ibid., p. 705.
Verder was later informed by George Lea, four or five men, believing that Sims was hiding in the shadows of the buggy, readied themselves to fire their guns into the buggy. Only the fear of hitting Verder prevented the incident. As they continued, Verder was forced by armed men to halt his buggy several times but Sims, hiding in the shadows, avoided detection.

After finding Colonel Raulston's house deserted, Sims continued with Verder to the latter's room. It was apparent that groups of men were hastily searching the town. Because of his deafness Sims was not conscious of the danger surrounding him. With the aid of two Democratic friends who furnished him with a disguise and Verder who fully recognized the prevailing danger, Sims slipped from the buggy and into the building in which Verder lived. He was observed and immediately several hundred men surrounded the building. Verder continued on to the livery stable, passing some two hundred and fifty men gathered in front of the Arlington Hotel. Several members of the crowd rushed to the buggy but retreated when they realized that Verder was alone. Verder then left his horse and buggy in the stable and walked back to his room where he informed Sims that a mob was searching for him.

16. Ibid., p. 605.
17. Ibid., p. 705.
18. B. W. Pennill to William Mahone, Mahone Letters, op. cit.
After sleeping Sims arose and sent a message to Mayor Johnston asking what he intended to do to calm the townspeople sufficiently to "bring out the vote on election day." In reply Johnston sent a messenger who advised Sims to leave town because the mayor "had no control over the town; that he had turned the town over to Col. Cabell, who had put the instigators of the mob in possession." Johnston's messenger further advised that "it was impossible to hold any election there, and I had better abandon the idea." Sims then decided to go to Richmond and ask Governor Cameron to send troops to Danville to supervise the election. He boarded the train undetected shortly after sunrise on Sunday.

After eating his Sunday breakfast at the Arlington Hotel, Verser was approached by Smith Holland, a relative of the youth shot in the riot. Holland commented to Verser that there were rumors of another Negro uprising. He then warned his friend, "If this thing breaks out again, niggers won't be the only ones killed this time; white men will be killed along with them. . . ." Upon Sims' arrival in Richmond he wired Cameron of the urgent situation in Danville.

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20 Ibid., p. 705.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., p. 606.
I have just arrived from Danville. The condition there surpasses any reports that may have reached you. An armed mob still controls the town—negroes are driven out—not allowed to come on the streets. I have no idea a colored voter can vote tomorrow. The Funder mob were parading the streets at eleven last night, with shotguns, rifles, &c., and firing could be heard in every part of town.

Nothing but United States troops can restore quiet or give our voters courage to come to the polls.25

Sims' telegram caused the governor to hastily dress and rush to his office, arriving moments before Sims' arrival. During their conversation the governor was told that neither state troops, who might be sympathetic to the Democratic cause, nor Negro federal troops, who might incite a race war, would be suitable to maintain order in Danville. Cameron replied that he would send soldiers to the city.26

Sims left Richmond that day and reached his home in Chatham early on Tuesday, the day of the election. In surveying the situation he found that many of the Readjuster ballots which he had entrusted to friends had not been distributed as he had instructed. Blaming this on the confusion throughout the country as a result of the riot and bribery on the part of the Democrats, he set out to the polls to issue his tickets and to seize suspected counterfeit ballots.27

At the polls he found two of his party members, who he believed had accepted bribes, handing out bogus Readjuster ballots with the

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25Ibid., p. 711.
26Ibid., p. 706.
27Ibid.
Democratic candidates' names printed on them. During his interrogation of the two men Sims learned that the opposition had spread a rumor accusing him of fleeing the county and abandoning his supporters. He then busied himself attempting to bring voters to the polls, staying late into the night to assure his party of a fair count.

Other than an occasional distant report of a firearm, only one act of violence occurred following the riot. On Saturday night H. A. Hubbard and three other special policemen were patrolling the outskirts of the city near Dry Bridge when they were fired upon by an assailant hiding in the yard of a colored man. Hubbard suffered a leg wound. His horse was felled by a bullet in the side. Members of the patrol returned the fire, providing sufficient time for the removal of Hubbard from the scene.

Hoping to discourage further incidents, the mayor's office issued a proclamation signed by Johnston designed to calm the people and to plead for a peaceful election. The proclamation, dated November 5, announced the appointment of eleven special constables in each of the three wards under the direction of supervisors called ward chiefs, Captain Harry Wooten, J. H. Covington, and P. H. Loiseau, and the activation of the Danville Greys, an all-white home guard unit, to serve as "a military adjutant of this special constabulary." Assuring the people that peace and order would prevail, the proclamation called upon

28 Ibid.
"all good citizens to resume their usual avocations; to cease appearing upon the streets armed with shotguns or other weapons. . . ."30

The Democrats of the state were quick to make use of the terrible occurrence in Danville. Democratic papers printed numerous charges of crime in the name of Mahomies and Negro rule.

In a circular written in the opera house at the time of the riot and issued the following day in the Southwestern part of Virginia, the Democrats stated that the Danville circular contained "a substantially true statement of the condition of things in town for the last eighteen months." Denouncing Sims' speech as "the most incendiary and inflammatory harangue ever delivered in a civilized community," the circular charged that the speech was designed to incite a riot in the city.31

Endorsing heartily the white stand in Danville, the Democrats of Richmond assembled in a mass meeting on Sunday evening, November 4, and issued a series of five resolutions. The statements, introduced by W. O. Chestermann, offered sympathy to the whites of Danville, declared in "fullest confidence" that the charges listed in the famous circular were truthful, and that when such an occurrence takes place all white men should rise up and "take the part of their own race."32 The fourth resolution commented that the history of Virginia clearly showed that the whites had never "raised the race issue, but in every case it has

31Pollock, op. cit., p. 92.
been forced upon the white men against their protest. . . ." Finally, the circular charged that the present race issue had been forced upon the whites through the efforts of Mahone and his "conspirators" and that "upon their heads must rest all the responsibility for blood that may be shed or spilled. . . ."31

In Lynchburg many of the Democrats felt that the riot had secured the state for their party.35 The party met on Monday and adopted two resolutions introduced by ex-Confederate General Jubal A. Early. The first of the resolutions expressed sympathy to the citizens of Danville "in their struggle against the domination of the negro race under the lead of renegade white men, whose hearts are blacker than the skins of their unfortunate dupes . . ." and assured Danvillians of "material and physical support whenever that becomes necessary."36 The second of the resolutions dealt with the philosophy of the group as they declared that "Virginia is . . . a white man's country . . . and we are determined that our mother state shall not be ruled by thieves, and liars, and cowards with white faces by the aid of their allies, the colored people."37

The presses of the Lynchburg Virginian were in operation all day Sunday producing a large quantity of the circulars which were loaded onto the

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33 Ibid., p. xxxviii.
34 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p. xxxvi.
37 Ibid., pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.
afternoon train destined for the cities of Roanoke and Bristol.\textsuperscript{38}

On Monday, November 5, the circular entitled "Riot in Danville" had been distributed to the voters of Southwest Virginia. An appeal, the circular placed the responsibility for the bloodshed on Mahoneism and the "diabolical speeches . . . by the Mahone nihilists," and commented about the negroes, "Let the incendiary devils be crushed beyond the hope of resurrection."\textsuperscript{39}

On the morning of the fifth of November F. W. Robertson, a Danville Democrat, wired his friend in Wytheville, Virginia, T. M. Perkins, a Readjuster, of the outrageous conditions in Danville as a result of "negro rule." "If you only knew our suffering here on account of negro rule you would vote different. We are standing in our doors with guns protecting our families. Rest this at your court house door."\textsuperscript{40}

A special telegram dated Sunday, November 1, was sent by the Danville Register, a Democratic newspaper, to be printed on the following day in the Staunton Vindicator. An account of the riot, the telegram charged that while the Democrats were meeting to endorse the Danville circular and to denounce Mayor Johnston's opposition to the circular, a crowd of negroes gathered to ridicule Democrats as they arrived at the opera house. This jeering led to "a difficulty" between a young white

\textsuperscript{38} J. H. McLaughlin to William Mahone, Lynchburg, Virginia, November 4, 1863, Mahone Letters.

\textsuperscript{39} U. S. Congress, Senate Report, \textit{op. cit.}, p. xxxviii.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
man and a Negro, the latter being "severely punished." It was at this point that "several Negroes . . . drew pistols, and dared the white men, who had also gathered around the scene, to come on."¹¹

One of the Negroes fired a pistol into a group of five white men and therewith a fusillade of firearms ensued, in which about 100 shots were fired. The Negroes scattered in every direction and the white men held their ground.

Three Negroes were killed and two were wounded, one of whom will probably die.²²

The telegram further presented a report of the condition of Walter H. Holland and J. B. Seward, the white men wounded in the firing, and expressed the belief that both would "probably die."³³

General Mahone, keeping a close watch on the state-wide developments, hastened to levy countercharges at the Democrats stating that "the diabolical murders of colored men . . . and threat of violence" had intimidated the laboring classes and threatened the "free exercise of manhood suffrage."⁴⁴ On November 5, the Staunton Valley Virginian, in an attempt to make the best of a bad situation, issued an extra edition. In the editorial the newspaper advised its readers that the Democrats' plan to intimidate the voters had backfired. "The Funders lay a mine, but it explodes too quick and buries them."⁵⁵

¹¹Ibid., p. xlvi.
²²Ibid.
³³Ibid.
⁴⁴William Mahone to John Hastings, Petersburg, Virginia, November 5, 1863, Mahone Letters.
⁵⁵Valley Virginian, Staunton, Virginia, November 5, 1863, Mahone Scrapbook, 1863, 27.
In an attempt to arouse the Negroes against the whites in Hanover County, a few miles east of Richmond, the Readjusters issued the following circular:

**SIX COLORED MEN MURDERED BY BOURBON HOLS**

Colored men, avenge by your ballot, on Tuesday, the 6th, November, the murder of five colored men at Danville, Saturday night, and the murder of Robert Robertson in Hanover, by a Bourbon-Funder Mob.

Go to the polls and avenge, by a solid vote, the murder of those men.  

Mahone now realized that a strong turnout at the polls would be essential if his party was to continue its domination of the state. He urged his district chiefs to advise the Negroes to go to the polls early on election day and in mass. Mahone felt this would insure a successful return.  

The Readjuster lieutenants in the Eastern counties and districts remained confident that the election would go in their party's favor. C. A. Grooms of Warwick advised Mahone that he was "not at all uneasy" as to the outcome in his county. J. A. Harrold of Newport News wrote to Mahone that the people of his district "promised me that they will vote the Readjuster ticket, and I will appoint myself as a committee of one and see that they do it. I have, to the best of my ability, told and

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18. C. A. Grooms to William Mahone, Warwick County, Virginia, November 5, 1883, Mahone Letters.
showed them what you . . . had done for the cause of popular education in the state of Va., which, of itself, entitled you to their support.49

In Leesburg in the northern part of the state, Minor F. Chamberlain in a letter to Mahone analyzed the activities of the third, fourth, and fifth of November. Chamberlain wrote, "now think the object is to make the race issue or to draw the color line."50

Election day was Tuesday, November 6. In Danville, Pittsylvania County, and the state the rain-filled skies provided an appropriate setting for a day that was to be filled with unusual and undesirable situations. Citizens who went to the polls that day would witness happenings that they could not have predicted. As a result, members of both factions charged the opposition with unethical and criminal conduct.

Readjuster Nelson Scott, a twenty-nine year old former slave and messenger in Raulston's revenue office, arrived in Ringgold, Virginia, seven miles north of Danville at six o'clock and spent most of the day electioneering there. At four o'clock in the afternoon he witnessed the arrival in buggies of five or six Danville Democrats. These white men, with firearms visibly protruding from their pockets, proceeded to the depot where they met a train made up of an engine and one box car loaded with citizens from Danville. Although he realized that some eighty Negroes had not cast their votes, Scott, fearing the political

50 Minor F. Chamberlain to William Mahone, Leesburg, Virginia, November 5, 1883, Mahone Letters.
adversities converging on the polls and believing that most of the votes that would be cast had been by this late hour, did not wait for the six o'clock train but slipped out of Kinggold and walked to Danville under the cover of darkness. 51

Prominent Democrat E. T. Graves, who had fired on the Negroes during the riot and later had been deputized as a special policeman, had voted at the third ward in Danville shortly after his breakfast. At this predominately white ward he observed nothing unusual, as a small Negro turnout had been expected. 52

After speaking to a number of friends, Graves and Dr. Temple rode to New Design and saw that the Negroes gathered there were not enthusiastically taking part in the voting. Instead, they congregated a few yards away in several stores watching the proceedings. 53

After electioneering for one half hour in New Design, Graves left his friend, Dr. Temple, and rode to the small Miskesher's precinct. There twelve white men were gathered about the polls. Again a small group of Negroes congregated nearby but did not approach the voting place. 54

While visiting the three wards Graves saw no exposed weapons, with the exception of two Negroes standing in a crowd of twelve on the

52 Ibid., p. 218.
53 Ibid., pp. 219-20.
54 Ibid., p. 221.
New Design road. He saw only one Danville electioneer in New Design andbisbeshers precincts.\textsuperscript{55} Graves later stated that he was positive that the Negroes would have been safe at the polls and could have voted without any difficulties.\textsuperscript{56}

A physician in Orange County witnessed intimidation of colored voters by fifty Negroes organized into a company with a captain dressed in a uniform and bearing a saber. During a house visit to a Negro, Dobney, who was known as a Democrat, Dr. William T. Woolsfolk asked the Negro if he intended to vote the Democratic ticket in the coming election. Dobney replied that the company had taken his name and told him that if he voted the Democratic ticket, he would violate a law of the county.\textsuperscript{57}

On the day of the election the company marched to the ward and surrounded the ballot office. A sentinel was placed on both sides of the office window, and they examined each ballot in the hand of a Negro. If the ballot did not satisfy Robert Towns, a sentinel, it was ripped to pieces and replaced by another ballot. Those Negroes who wished to vote freely had to place their vote at the rear of the office.\textsuperscript{58}

One courageous Negro, Mr. Brooks, marched to the window and refused to surrender his ballot to Towns. He was seized by the other

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., pp. 221-23.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 219.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., pp. 1222-23.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p. 1222.
sentinel. Brooks cried out, "I am a free man, and I shall vote as I please!" Stewart Williams, the captain of the company, stepped forward saying, "No, sir; you can't vote the Democratic ticket, you go back. No man shall vote that ticket whose name is on our list." At that moment Williams was informed that Brooks' name was not on the list and the old man was released. 59

The chairman of the Readjuster County Committee of Washington County in Southwest Virginia, L. G. Fowler, charged that an incendiary extra printed by the Wytheville Enterprise was distributed by the Democrats at the polls at Goodson, Virginia. Designed to inflame feeling against the Negroes, the circular asked, "Are you a Negro or are you a white man?" Fowler observed the angry white men and feared for his own safety. 60

Designated to challenge voters at the polls at New Town Hall, he found both sides of the window occupied by Democrats and was forced to take a position behind the Democrats. He challenged five or six voters and was harassed in "very insulting language." 61

At about 11 or 12 o'clock . . . there came in regular procession with a wagon at its head, the wagon loaded with men and followed by mounted men . . . between 50 and 75 in a solid body, marching in procession, yelling, screaming, shouting, with the white flag emblazoned "Kelley and Trigg, the white men's candidates," which was spread out and carried in front of the heads of everybody.

59 ibid.
60 ibid., pp. 675-78.
61 ibid., p. 678.
They were yelling and hollering all they could, and the excitement was tremendous.62

Then Judge William Francis Rhea climbed onto a rock and read a telegram from Mahone which he claimed had been intercepted. He quoted Mahone as calling on the Negroes "to dissent the killing of their fellows at Danville . . . by banding themselves together solidly against the whites."63 He then denounced the Readjuster leaders, including Fowler, as being "meaner" than the Negroes they represented and climbed down to wild applause. He returned to the position in a few moments and declared that Mahone supporters had seized the ballot box at Gash Hills because that precinct had voted Democrat and challenged Fowler to refute his charges.64

Fowler was bumped and shoved as he ascended the rock. He announced that he wanted the attention of every Readjuster and warned them to vote peaceably and to return quietly to their homes. After his brief talk Fowler was assaulted twice and was protected from injury by a Readjuster constable and two Democratic deputies. As a result, only a few Negroes did not vote.65

Major Henry C. Carter, commanding officer of the Richmond Light Infantry Blues militia unit, sent to Danville by Cameron to supervise the election, was a constant witness to the activity on election day.

62Ibid., pp. 678-79.
63Ibid., p. 679.
64Ibid.
65Ibid., pp. 677-80.
On the subject of the light Negro turnout at the polls, the major later wrote, "There was not the slightest disposition manifested by any one to commit any breach of law or order; but, on the other hand, it was apparent that all were resolved to avoid any violence of act or word."66 Carter further wrote that he went from precinct to precinct insuring all voters that their rights would be protected and, although crowds of both races gathered around the precincts, he could detect no threats or pressures.67

Although he heard the promises of protection for all voters, Charles Wooding did not vote. Wooding, a Negro, did go to his ward but, after seeing the large number of white men lingering at the polls, he decided to return to his home without casting his ballot. He later admitted that he was afraid to approach the ballot window.68

As the sun set and the election officials tabulated the ballots, it became evident that the Democrats had scored decisive victories in many precincts. In Danville the official results of the state senatorial election showed that the Democratic candidate, John L. Hurt, received 903 votes while Sims of the Coalitionists received only 26. The total votes cast were 929, far below the 1504 case in the 1882 senatorial election. In North Danville the Democrats crushed the Coalitionists as they received all 200 votes cast. Only thirty-one Negroes voted in Danville

66Committee of Forty, op. cit., p. 16.
67Ibid., pp. 46-47.
and three in North Danville. 69 Hurt received 4,804 votes while Sims could poll only 3,522 in Pittsylvania County. 70

Of the cities in the vicinity of Danville only South Boston gave the majority of its votes to the Readjusters. The total was 4,666 for the Readjusters and 4,149 for the Democrats. 71

On the state front the Democrats with several sound victories in the South and Southwest portions of Virginia received 124,935 votes, while the Readjusters gained 126,951. 72 Twenty-three Democrats were elected to the Senate and fifty-nine to the House of Delegates, while Coalitionist candidates could win only thirteen Senate seats and thirty-one House seats. 73

The city of Danville returned to its placid existence. Raulston, the Revenue official, Jones, the Justice of the Peace, and the Negro policeman resigned leaving an all-white government. Sims was defeated. At the next election the Democrats filled each of the offices with their candidates. The Negro was shown the city's feelings toward them and were "ready to resume, contently, their own legitimate position in the

69 Ibid., pp. 1173-74.
71 H. B. Jeffrey to William Mahone, South Boston, Virginia, November 6, 1883, Mahone Letters.
73 Richmond Daily Dispatch, LXIV, November 8, 1883, p. 1.
social scale." Under these conditions harmony was restored between the races.

As the results were declared official in the districts, Mahone's supporters, many of whom were astonished and angry, reported to the General in Petersburg. F. H. McCall of Salem wrote, "The Danville Riot and Funder lies defeated us. They are welcome to victories obtained that way." J. B. Raulston wrote from Danville that the situation there was so complicated that "there is altogether too much of it to communicate by letter. As soon as matters become quiet I will run down to see you." From Clarksville George W. Young wrote, "I fear the result in Charlotte and Halifax, as the Funders even here were heavily armed for the purpose of intimidating the colored votes, and I presume a more definite attempt was made in those counties where the vote was more close." N. B. G. Shumate of Fauquier County informed Mahone that the whites were afraid to turn out to the polls because of the Danville riot. He further stated that "I have never experienced such an election in my life." From Salem W. C. Wesson confirmed the results of the

74Hollack, op. cit., p. 99.
75F. H. McCall to William Mahone, Salem, Virginia, November 8, 1883, Mahone Letters.
76J. B. Raulston to William Mahone, Danville, Virginia, November 7, 1883, Mahone Letters.
77George W. Young to William Mahone, Clarksville, Virginia, November 7, 1883, Mahone Letters.
78N. B. G. Shumate to William Mahone, Fauquier County, Virginia, November 15, 1883, Mahone Letters.
election and stated:

The Danville Affair was gotten up in circulars containing the most brazen and outrageous lies by the tens of thousands, they ran their printing presses here all day last Sunday and at least a dozen horsemen starting to every neighborhood in this and Craig counties and by Monday night the people in remote settlements, especially the ignorant classes, was worked up to believe that the whole state was to be overridden if the Readjuster was successful. And I have no doubt this scheme was carried out all through the Southwest. . . .

R. H. Fife, chairman of the Readjuster Committee of Charlottesville, indicated just how much the Danville circular and riot had affected the election returns as he wrote, "The returns have just been canvassed—the Sunder ticket . . . carried the county by 795 majority. We polled a very heavy vote and ten days ago would have carried the county but the Danville Massacre and Sunder lies and money did the work."80

From the western Piedmont came an explanation of the cause of a Democratic victory in Rockingham County from the Readjuster judge there. Judge Paul stated that the circular and riot frightened the Dunkers and the Menonites, pacifist religious groups, and caused a light turnout at the polls.81

In a letter designed to console General Mahone, Thomas H. Conrad,

79. O. Wesson to William Mahone, Salem, Virginia, November 9, 1883, Mahone Letters.

80. R. H. Fife to William Mahone, Charlottesville, Virginia, November 6, 1883, Mahone Letters.

President of Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College, wrote, "All is not lost that is in danger. No human foresight or skill could have averted the effect of the Danville Massacre. An address from you to your followers, the Headjusters, would not only be timely, but would steady the column & hold the braves." 82

As the news of the situation in Virginia spread throughout the eastern part of the United States, several Republican newspapers came to the defense of the Headjusters and attacked the Democrats vigorously. The Lancaster Examiner and Express issued a circular entitled "Disgraced Virginia" charging:

The conduct of the Bourbon-Democrats in Virginia during the last two months has settled it, that man, no white man can live in that state and maintain his self respect... The Virginia "gentleman" has written himself down during the past two months a liar and swindler. 83

In an attempt to aid Mahone in keeping the party together after defeat, editor W. E. Elam, the Secretary of the State of Virginia, wrote an eight-page letter in which he suggested the need for modifications in the party structure.

It is enough for us to know that as a negro & Republican party, we have a weak side which needs only to be attacked vigorously to bring defeat upon us. Hence we must hold to our independent position and name as the Headjuster Party, or the Liberal Party, or the Liberal-Headjuster Party. We cannot become Republicans in fact & name now, or under existing circumstances, without at once

82 Thomas W. Conrad to William Mahone, Blacksburg, Virginia, November 12, 1863, Mahone Letters.

driving from us a large proportion of the white Conservative strength we have left.84

Although letters and telegrams expressing sympathy arrived at Mahone's headquarters daily, there also were those that gloated over the loss of General Mahone's party. One such telegram was sent by a group of Virginia students attending the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey.

Silly Mahone
Mahone, your wild oats were sown
The harvest you've lost
Virginia won't be bossed.85

Mahone personally acknowledged the letters. In a letter to Basset S. French he announced, "We are badly beaten, but not dismayed."86

In a letter to F. H. McCaul, Mahone placed the blame for the Headjuster defeat and attempted to analyze the effect on the future.

It was the Danville affair--circular and the implication of these that disabused the whites and gave the Bourbons the victory--but these excuses give the Republican Party of the country the victory next year.

We must close up--reform our lines and face the enemy--give him battle at every front.87

Having had ample time to reflect, Mahone had difficulty understanding

84 S. E. Elam to William Mahone, Richmond, Virginia, November 16, 1863, Mahone Letters.
85 Virginians at Stevens Institute of Technology to William Mahone, Hoboken, New Jersey, November 8, 1863, Mahone Letters.
86 William Mahone to Basset S. French, Petersburg, Virginia, November 8, 1863, Mahone Letters.
87 William Mahone to F. H. McCaul, Petersburg, Virginia, November 11, 1863, Mahone Letters.
the outcome. Writing to W. P. Dryden he expressed his confusion saying, "I cannot believe the mass of people realize the mischief they have done in the hour of excitement. They have condemned their own party without provocation." On the twelfth of November Mahone again expressed his belief that his party could and would rise up to regain political prominence stating, "Again says not vanquished by diabolical methods and murders of Bourbons--gives Presidency next year--'84--to the Republicans." **88**

Little William Mahone was courageous and dedicated to his party and its cause. His followers were extremely loyal. But the election of 1883 marked the beginning of Democratic control over Virginia politics.

**88** William Mahone to W. P. Dryden, Petersburg, Virginia, November 11, 1883, Mahone Letters.

**89** William Mahone to the Hon. H. H. dangerfield, Judge, Petersburg, Virginia, November 12, 1883, Mahone Letters.
CHAPTER VI
THE AFTERMATH

I. OPINIONS EXPRESSED

To the Negroes the riot and the ensuing election caused apprehension, fear, confusion, and uncertainty as to their position in the community. As a result they pitifully searched for advice and leadership.

In an attempt to offer guidance, leading Negroes and Readjusters of Staunton invited Rev. J. Hudson Riddick to that valley city to preach a special sermon on November 19, 1863. Rev. Riddick, an eloquent and distinguished Negro minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, spoke to a capacity crowd including many of the leading white citizens in the Augusta Street Church.

Insisting that he was speaking not as a racist, a politician, or a Methodist, but as a minister of the Lord, Riddick spoke of "death and its long and black list of attendant woes to the human family..."¹

Asserting that death is unnatural and foreign to the human, he warned that "human life is too precious to be sacrificed by acts and violence, or at the biddings of passions and prejudice from any quarter."\(^2\)

Riddick continued by offering the following statement:

We have a large number of ignorant voters in the South, black and white. What we need is a baptism of education, not of blood and just so long as the people of the South continue to spell Negro with a small n, two g's and an i, just so long will the South remain in the rear, and her sable sons and daughters remain unprotected. To neglect education is to convert the Commonwealth into a volcano, more to be dreaded than fires of Vesuvius. Ignorance is a danger-signal, education a safety valve to the State and Nation. . . .\(^3\)

The preacher then attacked the Danville "circular" blaming its existence on a "lawless few who assembled in a star-chamber, worse than any of those of Henry VIII. . . ." There was no riot in Danville; all accounts agree that the blacks were unarmed, and that they made no opposition, but were running away from the scene of disturbance. These six men were thus murdered. . . .\(^4\)

Riddick could not place the blame for the incident but charged that the "circular" was guilty of creating the riot and that those who signed it were enemies of the Commonwealth.

Regarding those who shot Negroes as murderers and the city their den, the preacher said, "These murderers must take their places in history with Cain and Judas, Booth and Guiteau, and Danville in the future

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 5.

\(^3\)Ibid.

\(^4\)Ibid.
must be classed with Hamburg, Fort Pillow, and the bloody soil of Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. 5

Assuring the congregation that "these murderers" had surely violated the law of God and man, Hiddick said that history would some day judge Danville in the severest manner. In closing he pledged to the Negroes of Virginia:

Let us not cultivate a spirit of ceremony, revenge or bitterness, but a spirit of unity and forbearance. Let us trust in God for protection and deliverance. He will avenge the blood of these men in due time. Be true to God, true to yourselves, and true to your country, for "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Take God as your captain and God's truth as your banner. 6

As a result of this fiery sermon Negroes of Staunton adopted a resolution to hold a memorial service for the victims on the first Sunday in December. Furthermore, they urged the people to remain dignified and peaceful and allow the affair of the riot to be left to God's judgement and to the conscience of the people. 7

On November 10, one week after the riot, the Democratic leaders of Danville called their following to the opera house to discuss the rising concern over the adverse publicity that Danville and its citizens were receiving from the Southern and Northern presses. Under the leadership of Chairman R. H. Cole, the gathering unanimously adopted a resolution designed to gracefully alleviate the pressures on the city. 8

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5 Ibid., p. 6.
6 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
7 Washoe Scrapbook, XXXIII, 30.
8 Pollock, op. cit., p. 93.
That in the view of the gross misstatements concerning that riot which are being circulated through a portion of the press of the country, misleading the public mind as to the facts of the same, this meeting does hereby appoint, through its Chairman, a committee of forty, who shall be charged with the duty of thoroughly enquiring into all the facts and preparing for publication a true and full statement of the causes and circumstances which led to it, and also a statement of the conduct of our people during the period from the occurrence of the riot to the closing of the polls on the 6th day of November.9

Dr. Cole then appointed Major W. T. Sutherlin as chairman and thirty-nine committeemen to carry on the investigation as prescribed by the resolution.10

By Monday, November 12, Major Sutherlin, the former Confederate quartermaster of Danville and host to Jefferson Davis and his cabinet during their brief stay in Danville at the end of the Civil War, had organized his committee and divided it into the appropriate sub-committees. He then requested, through the Daily Register, all persons with information concerning the riot to appear before the committee at the office of F. F. Bowen, a notary public.11

During the period of November 13 through November 21, the committee listened to thirty-seven sworn witnesses, including two policemen, one colored and one white, who were present during the riot.12

As a result of their findings the Committee of Forty issued a statement declaring that the Negroes, because of the political success

9Committee of Forty, op. cit., p. 9.
10Pollock, op. cit., p. 94.
11Committee of Forty, op. cit., p. 3.
12Ibid.
of their candidates in the May election of 1862, had become "rude, insol­
lent, and intolerant" causing bad relations between the races. Having
Colonel Sine as an agitator, the committee stated that in the heat of
the election campaigning two negroes insulted a white man and lured him
into a fight. This encounter excited the negroes to such a degree that
they, "with loud exclamations and great violence of manner," forced
upon the whites the fight publicized as the Janville Riot.13

The report asserted that within thirty minutes after the begin­
ing of the riot the City Sergeant and his staff had complete control
of the city and the occupants. Furthermore, the election on the follow­
ing Tuesday was "without any disturbance or difficulty . . . free and
fair in all respects."14 "That the negroes as a body refrained from
voting . . . "15 was a result of the advice given by their party leaders.
Finally, the committee swore to the validity of the report and pleaded
that it be accepted as "a full and complete vindication of our Town and
people from the gross misstatements which have been circulated. . . ."16

As the committee distanced, well satisfied that they had preserved
the honor of the town and the people, the Richmond Whig dampened the
enthusiasm by stating that the group's findings were a "white-washing
of the bleeding stain."17 In regard to the procedure of the committee

13 Ibid., p. 105.
14 Ibid., p. 6.
15 Ibid.
16 Follock, op. cit., p. 96.
17 The Richmond Whig, November 23, 1863.
the Whig remarked, "The wolves testify and the verdict is that the sheep were guilty, although killed and devoured." 18

When the Hasting Court began its next term, Judge Blackwell held a grand jury to investigate the circumstances connected with the riot. Koel, Taylor, George Lea, Lawson, and others were questioned by the court. 19 After two sessions Judge Blackwell announced that there would be no indictments 20 and the jury, with George C. Ayers, a Democrat, as chairman, concluded that the Negroes gathered on the street were responsible for the outburst and that the whites acted only to defend themselves. 21

Because of the persistence of General Mahone, his colleagues in the United States Senate instructed a subcommittee of the Committee of Privileges and Elections to inquire into the events connected with the Danville election. By February 21, 1864, the subcommittee had summoned "sundry witnesses," and sixteen of these had traveled to Washington. The investigators were then informed by the Secretary of the Senate "that the contingent fund from which the legal per diem and traveling expenses can be paid was exhausted," and the appropriation bill that had been approved by the Senate had not been acted upon by the House of Representatives. Thus, "in consequence of the want of an appropriation

18 ibid.
19 U. S. Congress, Senate Report, op. cit., p. 32.
20 ibid.
21 Pollock, op. cit., p. 98.
to pay expenses," the Secretary instructed that the inquiry be suspended
until such an appropriation could be made.22

The House acted promptly and the subcommittee compiled twelve
hundred pages of testimony taken from 160 witnesses. The conclusion
arrived at by the subcommittee stated the following:

That in the counties of the Southwest and the Valley "a great
change in the vote was caused by the appeal to the race prejudice and
reports of violence on the parts of the negroes in Danville."

That if the Negro had been left alone, ninety-nine per cent would
have cast their tickets with the Headjusters. (Senator Zebulon B. Vance
of North Carolina and the committee stated that the increase in the num-
ber of Democratic voters indicated that the riot had no effect on the
election.)

That the Democrats needed to create alarm within the state to
intimidate the Negro voters in the localities where they were in the
majority and to produce a feeling of frenzy that would induce the white
electors to join with their race in an attempt to avoid the reproach to
which they would be subjected for fraternizing politically with "niggers."

That no indictment was issued against Noel, Taylor, or Lea, all
of whom admitted their part in the incident.

That "no punishment will probably ever be inflicted upon the
perpetrators of this foul wrong in Danville."

22 United States Congress, Senate, Committee on Privileges and
Elections, Alleged Outrages in Virginia, Hearings before Subcommittee,
38th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 2, No. 211, 1863-1865 (Washington,
1884).
The subcommittee then recommended that,

There should be found some remedy for such a state of affairs as the investigation disclosed. ... while these reports of terrorism and violence are kept up from year to year, the party in the control instead of providing laws to prevent these recurrences of punishing the offenders enacts measures designed to throw obstacles in the way of a free ballot and enjoy the benefits politically which are the necessary consequences. 23

Because the Democrats were not represented in the Senate (Mahone and Middleberger were headjusters), Senator Vance became the defender and champion of the Democrats of Virginia. At the conclusion of the investigation he submitted the minority report of the committee in which he expressed the following beliefs:

1. That the Danville Riot was a local or state affair outside the jurisdiction of the federal government.

2. That it was a street fight between races and was intended to have no political significance.

3. That the riot was partly a result of the heated passions that had developed during the election campaign.

4. That the Senate investigation had not uncovered evidence that the riot was deliberately planned to intimidate the Negro voters.

5. That the investigation was prompted by the desire of Republican Senators to create a powerful campaign document to be used during the approaching presidential election.

6. That after large sums of money had been spent and valuable time consumed, the investigation was a complete failure. 24

During the Democratic National Convention of 1884 the Virginia delegation called on mass on Senator Vance to express their appreciation for his service during the investigation.  

With Virginia again a serene state with its population going about their activities in a peaceful and normal way, the General Assembly, with Democrats holding two-thirds of the seats in both houses, convened on December 5, 1883. Dedicated to firmly controlling state politics, the Democrats introduced a resolution in the Senate requesting the resignation of General Hanover, charging that the Senator had been absent from Washington for five months while the legislature was in session to direct his party's campaign; that he had attempted to deliver the state into the hands of the Republicans through federal patronage; that he had attempted to turn class against class and race against race for his own end. The resolution was approved by the Assembly and a copy was sent to the United States Senate.  

Promptly, readjustor legislation was ratified to gain the support of the people. The Hildrethger debt settlement and acts for more liberal suffrage, larger appropriations for schools and charities, lower taxes, and the abolition of the whipping post were accepted. 

Then came measures to destroy "patronism." Patronage was to be distributed by means of a caucus. Public offices were declared vacant


27 Ibid., p. 228.
and appointments favorable to the Democrats were made. Election laws
were altered and Congressional districts were rearranged to assure more
solid Democratic support.28

However, Mahone did not roll over. He was cheered by his follow-
ers as the "champion of freedom," the "friend of the black man," and the
"working man's friend."

The General remained on the political scene in
Virginia until the day of his death, October 8, 1895, "although long
before that date he had become a mere myth, a boogey, a fear to be con-
jured with at every election, but a threat no less."

Although he was unsuccessful in his attempt to become governor in 1899,31 Mahone had
shown that the solid conservative South could be shattered, if only tem-
porarily.32

II. THE LOCAL FRONT

To offer conclusive proof as to the identity of the culprit
responsible for the Danville riot and the end of the two-party system
would be as impossible as answering the questions of "Who fired the
first shot at Fort Sumter?" or "Who sank the Maine?" It is conceivable
that both factions—the Radicals and the Democrats—stood to gain

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., pp. 228-29.
30 Ynnes, op. cit., p. 31.
31 Blake, op. cit., p. 213.
32 Ibid.
from the outburst from its conception. However, the Democrats gained enormously and the Headjusters fell from the political picture of the state. It is, therefore, simple for the reader to assume that they, the Democrats, concocted a tragic plan to regain a powerful political position held for so many years. The possibility then arises that the Headjusters, who professed wholeheartedly to be the friends of the Negroes, devised the scheme to prove that point to the colored people. The final possibility is that in the heat of an election, in a city already tense as the result of murder and mistreatment, a situation arose that was dealt with in the primitive behavior of the confused and angry man.

An analysis of the charges from both camps does little to clarify the situation. The Democrats claimed that the Negroes had used threats of force to prevent any of their race from casting a Democratic ticket on election day, that Jim's speech contributed as much to the cause of the riot as did any other single situation, that their activities during the riot were strictly out of self-preservation, and that the absence of Negro voters from the polls hurt the Democratic vote. On the other hand, the Headjusters charged that the Democratic Party created the disturbance in an attempt to offset Jim's presence, that they encouraged a reaction to the speech, that the Democrats discharged their firearms without provocation to injure the Negroes physically and mentally, and that by this action attempted to reaffirm the white man's supremacy over the colored man.

The Negro, once a basic part of the plans of the Headjusters and a target of numerous Democratic enticements, was offered no direct
guidance from the leaders of either party after the riot and election. Only one man, Rev. Hildick, a Negro of dubious political ties, stepped forward to offer the leadership so desperately needed. But even his powerful and courageous oratory could not completely remove the fear, confusion, and loneliness felt by the Negro.

In reflection several months after the riot Colonel Sims stated, "I feel guilty today of having unintentionally and unwillingly . . . given them (the colored people) advice which was seized on . . . by their political enemies to slaughter them. . . ." 33 Sims' companion on the night of the speech, J. E. Robinson, sounded remorseful as he later commented about the situation, "I never had an idea that it would ever get to that pitch. That was the worst I ever saw in any civilized country." 34 The leading Danville Democrat, Colonel Catell, expressed similar concern and regret but observed that the outburst resulted from the excitement of the pre-election campaigning and might have occurred in any city faced with similar pressures. 35

Certainly the riot was an outbreak of passion. Race opposed race, political faction opposed political faction. The result was an end of the two-party system in Virginia. The Negro returned to his place of powerless existence. The carpenters found that there was no longer a haven in Virginia. Virginia was again a conservative Democratic state.

33 U. S. Congress, Senate Report, op. cit., p. 703.
34 Ibid., p. 403.
35 Hollock, op. cit., p. 99.
ready to join the Solid South.

III. THE EFFECTS ON THE NATIONAL FRONT

In the dull political era that began in 1877, a strong and united America was needed to meet the economic, agrarian, and political crises that existed. Instead, there arose a period of national disunity stemming from disunity within the Republican ranks and the attempt by the Democrats to seize political control.

Viewing Hayes' deal with the South in 1877 as a betrayal to the Republican Party, high-ranking members of the Stalwarts and the Half-Breeds resented the withdrawal of troops, the abandonment of the carpetbaggers, and the appeasement of conservatism. To them the South had been returned to the enemies that had been so severely subdued years before.

Thus the carpetbagger, so prominent in the South before 1877, made up only two per cent of the voting population by 1880. The lower class white farmer was extremely discontented with the lack of Republican support and began to search for a more sympathetic party. Thus the Negro emerged as the decisive factor in Republican control of the Southern electors. Once clearly outside of the political entity in the ante-bellum period, the Negro represented the only mass support in the Southern states for the Republican Party.

The control of the supporters by a national party was a relatively simple thing. The election to a federal office meant that an officer would be responsible for the distribution of the spoils provided by his
office. Thus the officer could buy favors and support for positions in post offices and revenue offices. These pay-offs were not curbed until the 1883 passage of the Civil Service Reform Act. Hoping to protect Republican officeholders in the event of Democratic success in the elections of 1884, the act substituted merit for political influence in federal appointments.

Generally the control of the politics of the country was in the hands of the professional men of power. The man of moderate means soon found himself a spectator instead of a political participant. This new breed of politician was concerned with the conditions of the powerful industrialist or banker and the maintaining of a solid dollar. His concern, therefore, was greatly limited in regard to the struggling Negro of the South, the farmer in the South and the West, and the despaired of the Reconstructed South.

The Negro became the most misused victim of the era. He was easily bribed to gain better positions for others, and after the desired position was reached, he was often returned to the streets of the cities where he had started his life of freedom. The farmer of the South who was unable to secure mortgages for his farms lost the land for the price of taxes or debts. He therefore turned to life as a tenant and joined alliances and cooperatives to combat low market prices for his products and high railroad and storage rates. Many farmers endorsed the weak third party, the Greenbacks, who under the leadership of General James B. Meaver tried to gain "cheap money" and land for the farmers.

The former aristocrat of the South was replaced by the merchants,
bankers, lawyers, and the railroad promoters such as Cabell and Barbour as the political strong men. These new politicians who claimed the title of Conservatives were joined by former soldiers and former land owners in viewing the carpetbagger with mistrust. Furthermore, they feared the possibility of the complete removal of the Republican carpetbaggers and the installation of Negro rule. Thus the Conservatives united with the old Whigs and Bourbons to avoid any such domination.

Not at all satisfied with Hayes' concessions to the South, their representatives made numerous attempts to relieve the South of the Reconstruction laws providing federal protection of elections. Having a majority in the House, the democrats tacked riders to favorable legislation in hopes of forcing Hayes to accept the repeals. However, the President, asserting his belief in the equality and independence of the executive branch, vetoed seven such bills.

The Southerner viewed Hayes' stand with distaste. Prior to the Civil war, the South had the enviable claim of furnishing nine Presidents, three Chief Justices, twenty of the thirty-five associate Justices, and more than half of the cabinet members, ambassadors to major powers, and Speakers of the House. Now the section was removed from national political prominence and its people had lost confidence and interest in Southern politics.

To the Southerner it was time for a drastic change. It was already apparent that the Republicans, the party of emancipation and large Negro support, could provide only a hint of a major party in the South. Therefore, the Democrats could demand extreme reforms. They were often
met by factions within their own party who were more closely aligned
with the policy of the national Republican Party and encouraged by that
party with patronage.

In Virginia such a struggle for power was under way. As General
William Mahone, the Readjuster and railroad tycoon, took his seat in a
Senate already composed of thirty-seven Democrats and thirty-seven Re-
publicans, it was obvious that he was in an unusual position. Both
parties needed his vote to have a majority. The Democrats, led by Ben-
jamin H. Hill of Georgia, attempted to appeal to the general's love for
the South. But the Republicans could offer something to Mahone and Vir-
ginia that had a material value--patronage. To the disgust of the
Conservatives, the general cast his vote and often the vote of the Sen-
ate with the party in power--the Republicans.

Within the state the Readjuster Democrats, having seized state
control in 1877, distributed the patronage vigorously to poor whites and
Negroes. This maneuver, although expected, infuriated both the Con-
servatives and the Straight-out Republicans. Coalitions were estab-
lished on the state and local front to combat Mahone's strategy. Middle
to lower middle class citizens, fearing that they would lose their social
position to the ascending members of the masses, hastened to ally them-
selves with the Conservative factions.

After pleas for the more traditional approach fell on deaf read-
juster ears and attempts to woo the Negro into the Conservative fold
failed disastrously, the Democrats had but one alternative remaining--
to draw color lines and to weaken the Negro's position through
intimidation and confusion. The result, whether planned or not, was the bloodshed in the streets of Danville.

With the results of the ensuing election returning the control of state politics to the Ender-Democrats, the Headjuster-Democrats became disorganized and faded from the political picture. Mahone in the Senate had lost the favor of the majority of the people of Virginia and was in the voting minority from 1884 until the end of his term in 1885. Virginia had been one of a number of states that from 1882 until 1885 had turned from the Republican Party to support the Democrats. Even President Arthur's home state of New York cast their ballot with the Democrats.

Racial conflicts and clashes would bring to the Negro absolute segregation, something he had never experienced even in slavery. He would be confronted with Jim Crow laws that would segregate him from the whites in public buildings, on common carriers, and in recreation areas. Certainly, the words "white supremacy" had taken a stronger and more definite meaning.

Throughout the South the Negroes began to fade from the skilled jobs that they had traditionally held. As the Industrial age spread to the South, most new businesses avoided hiring Negroes. Certainly, outbursts such as the Danville Riot influenced the employers of industry and consumers of craft products in their decision to avoid Negroes. The Negroes now had to make a decision. Their decision was to migrate to the North and begin a life that they hoped would consist of a job and peace of mind.

In summary, the Danville Riot along with other intimidations in
the South indicated to the country that a way of life could not be
abruptly altered by laws, that the acceptance of the Negroes as equal
citizens could not be forced, and that the South would remain a con-
servative solid unity until the people called for the change.
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VITA

William Carrington Tate, Jr., was born and raised in Danville, Virginia, received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Richmond College of the University of Richmond, and is presently teaching American History at Lee-Davis High School at Mechanicsville, Virginia.