

BONDED BY DEBT: INTERRACIAL POLITICS, RAILROADS, AND CAPITALISM IN
THE GILDED AGE SOUTH

by

BRYANT K. BARNES

(Under the Direction of Scott Reynolds Nelson)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation challenges the way historians think about interracial political movements in the post-Reconstruction South. It argues that, rather than the presumably inevitable “failure” of interracialism, these popular, working-class movements were overwhelmed by the power of concentrated capital.

Focusing on Virginia’s Readjuster Party, the most successful interracial third party in the postbellum South, this dissertation draws attention to the economic powers threatened by Readjuster reforms. Against the recalcitrant opposition of bondholders, the Readjusters downwardly readjusted – hence their name – the state debt that had so long burdened Virginians. They next turned their attention to curbing the powers and abuses of railroad corporations. In both cases, the Readjusters insisted that Virginians would reign supreme, not bondholders and corporations. To overcome the increasingly successful revolution of the people, bondholders and railroads launched a counterrevolution of property to take back the state.

This new attention to the political economic opponents of the Readjusters overturns conclusions that the Readjusters “failed” because of an internal split along lines of race. In fact, they remained stronger than historians have allowed. And it was this very strength that struck

such fear into their opponents that, before they overthrew the Readjusters, newly reorganized railroad corporations seeking legislative favor *aided* the Readjusters. It was only after the Readjusters imposed strict terms on these corporations that they turned against them and manufactured a small internal rebellion, the significance of which historians have entirely misunderstood. Instead of a white supremacist reaction against interracialism and the rising power of Black Virginians, Virginia's Democratic *and* Republican Parties – respectively headed by a railroad president and vice president – joined forces to smother the interracial democracy that had proven overwhelmingly successful.

INDEX WORDS: Readjuster Party, Virginia, Public Debt, Bonds, Corporations, Race, Racism, White Supremacy, Reconstruction, Civil War, William Mahone, Democratic Party, Republican Party, Conservative Party, Disfranchisement, Jim Crow, William P. Clyde, Collis P. Huntington, Corporation of Foreign Bondholders, Receivership, Labor, Working Class, Counterrevolution of Property

BONDED BY DEBT: INTERRACIAL POLITICS, RAILROADS, AND CAPITALISM IN
THE GILDED AGE SOUTH

by

BRYANT K. BARNES

B.S., The Georgia Institute of Technology, 2014

M.A., The University of Georgia, 2017

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2025

© 2025

Bryant K. Barnes

All Rights Reserved

BONDED BY DEBT: INTERRACIAL POLITICS, RAILROADS, AND CAPITALISM IN
THE GILDED AGE SOUTH

by

BRYANT K. BARNES

Major Professor:	Scott Reynolds Nelson
Committee:	Cindy Hahamovitch
	Stephen Mihm
	Adrienne Monteith Petty

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2025

To my dad, a former railroader and current trucker. Without you and those like you, the world
wouldn't run.

To my mom and Nannie and Papa. Though gone, your voices still remind me, "you can do
anything you set your mind to."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have long debated referring to my gratitude for all the support and encouragement I have received as “a debt.” It would seem appropriate considering the centrality of debt in this dissertation. But I won’t, not simply because it’s become an acknowledgements cliché, but because it’s not what I have accumulated over these last several years. Instead, I have received an invaluable gift. The friendships, discussions, mentorship, excitement, and support – all often shared over drinks – have never been transactional, mere investments in search of a return. It is a beautiful example of what academia is, or at least what it should be. Curiosity for curiosity’s sake. Whether in the form of a question, a reading recommendation, a “how’s it going,” long chats about anything but our dissertations, or funding for research trips and conferences, people have fostered and fueled my curiosity. Even before I had any idea what I was looking for, people have seen that I was looking. Figuratively speaking, they’ve said “Here’s a shovel, kid. Get to digging and let us know what you find.” Not so figuratively speaking, they’ve helped keep my belly full of food and beer – plenty of beer – so that I could keep on digging.

Although the list of grad school friends to thank is too long, special thanks go to Terrell Orr, Matt O’Neal, Shaw Bridges, Tracy Barnett, and David Parker. Among my numerous United Campus Workers comrades who have helped sustain me in the fight for worker power, I want to particularly thank Savannah Downing and Mikaela Warner. Providing financial support for my research were Greg and Amanda Gregory, the UGA History Department, UGA’s Willson Center for Humanities and Arts, the UGA Graduate School, and the Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era.

I cannot forget Peggy Galis, whose historical knowledge is boundless and whose fundraising abilities are jaw-dropping. Peggy's true power, though, is in her preferred greeting: "hey, sugar." The words warm your soul and *always* precede her rapt and fascinated attention to any updates on your life and research journeys. Peggy has also provided me with a gift I will cherish forever. As a born and bred southerner who had, for years, consciously and unconsciously attempted to rid myself of my southernness, particularly my accent, Peggy completely altered my perspective. Once at a dinner party, I mentioned that "my accent used to be worse," completely oblivious to my implicit self-denigration. Without hesitation, Peggy responded with a loving smile, "You mean better." Stunned by the unabashed praise for something that I had been embarrassed about and even ashamed of, it took a second for the words to truly sink in. Peggy continued smiling, and, in that moment, a switch flipped. By that point, I was deep in the study of southern history and knew that the South and southerners were so much more than the stereotypes. But until that moment, that knowledge had not truly overcome what I had so deeply and unknowingly internalized. My research helped me fall back in love with the place I had known all my life; Peggy helped me fall in love with the person and the life that place had created. Peggy's simple yet monumental influence, I believe, shines brightly all throughout this dissertation.

Of course, I thank my committee. I always say that Scott Nelson and Cindy Hahamovitch are a package deal. Their interests and approaches are often very different, but that's what makes them compliment each other so well. With Scott, I could geek out about high-level capital flows, railroad politics, and in-the-weeds details that very few sane people would ever enjoy. Our interests, our shared love for diving deeply into research rabbit holes, and our similar desire to constantly connect the personal with the systemic, meant that we meshed well. Scott always

seemed to have faith that, with a simple suggestion, I would come back to him with something good. I'm not sure if he remembers it, but when I first started studying the Readjusters, he encouraged me to "take a look at the railroads." Neither of us had any idea of the story I would end up finding. Meanwhile, Cindy was always my "popular reader" and, to her chagrin, a copy editor. I *always* had Cindy in mind when it came time to translating the stuff that Scott and I could be nerds about into words on the page. In addition to her keen eye for finding awkward sentences, grammatical errors, and clumsy mixed metaphors, Cindy reminds me that my "common sense" is not everyone else's. Regarding insufficiently defined terms and ideas that seem clear in my mind, Cindy would often comment, "I know what this means because of who I'm married to, but others won't." Again, they're a package deal. But more than helping me become a stronger historian and writer, Scott and Cindy supported me constantly and showed me what good mentors are. I consider them family, and I hope to emulate the roles they have modeled so well.

Adrienne Monteith Petty and Stephen Mihm, my other two committee members, have made their own marks. I first met Adrienne back in 2018 when she came to give a talk at UGA. We had just read her book, *Standing Their Ground*, in Cindy's class, and I was blown away. She showed me that it was possible to write a story about working-class southerners without presumptuously judging them for their real and imagined flaws but rather exposing the systems and the powers against which they defiantly stood their ground. To me, she was a rock star. Somehow (I'm still not sure how), I made an impression, and she saw something in me. Over these last several years, she has cheered me on, supported me, and has just been one of the most wonderful human beings I have ever met. Like Adrienne, Stephen possesses an indescribable "cool factor" – at least the ability to make very nerdy things like standards seem cool. I first

started thinking deeply about race and capitalism in a paper I wrote in one of Stephen's classes. Our conversations during comps later helped me make sense of the business side of this dissertation as well as the diversity of antimonopoly sentiment. Additionally, his work on counterfeiting helped me realize the "alchemical" role of confidence in the real-world functioning of capitalism. My ultimate hope is that they can all see their influence in this dissertation. Any pride they may feel pales in comparison to my gratitude.

Lastly, I thank my family. My dad and brother are still with me and continue to tolerate all of my ramblings about politics past and present. Through my late Nannie and Papa, Dot and Harry Roney, I fell in love with history. All the hours watching documentaries together, all the stories they told me while riding around town, sitting in rocking chairs at Grandma's, and sweating while doing yardwork, planted the seed. Although they didn't get to experience the fruit, I know they proudly watched as it took root and grew. This also would not have happened without my mom. Our relationship had been troubled and complicated for years by the time she was killed by a drunk driver. The rift that had grown between us was hard for me, and I know it was incredibly hard for her. I don't know how things would have ultimately ended up, but we were managing as best we could. I was doing research for this dissertation when she died; we were messaging about Papa buying a new truck the day before – "You know Papa," she responded when I jokingly asked why he needed a new one. I've still haven't made it back to Charlottesville to finish that research, but a lot of things about us became so much clearer on that long drive back to Athens to pick up Taylor before heading on down to Blackshear. I suddenly understood where all of our hurt came from; all of my doubts, uncertainties, and resentments were now overshadowed by the love that had never really gone away. I miss her, and I'm grateful that she was *my* mom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER	
INTRODUCTION	1
1 BLOATED BONDHOLDERS, FOREIGN CORPORATIONS, AND CRUMBLING COALITIONS.....	21
2 READJUSTERS IN BLACK AND WHITE	63
3 RAILROAD FRIENDSHIPS AND “MAHONEISM UNVEILED”	93
4 RAILROADS, READJUSTERS, AND THE COUNTERREVOLUTION OF PROPERTY	135
CONCLUSION.....	184
REFERENCES	206

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Map 1.....	182
Figure 2: Map 2.....	183

INTRODUCTION

After nine days of back-and-forth debate in February 1886, Virginia's House of Delegates was finally set to vote on a bill creating a new railroad commission. Many Democrats, thinking they had put the threat of interracial democracy behind them, believed they could now rein in the abuses of powerful railroad corporations. Popular calls for vesting more power in the commission had recurred in the Old Dominion's legislative sessions for years. And it was the actual power – the power to set and enforce freight and passenger rates, punish rate discrimination, and end equally discriminatory secret rebates – that made these bills so controversial. Farmers, merchants, and others begged for relief. But railroad corporations and their political allies insisted they were completely destitute, warning against endowing a commission with too much power. Democrat R.H. Cardwell of Hanover County, for instance, predicted that regulation would prove devastating. Of course, he would support a commission with “proper powers,” but the one under consideration “promised nothing but mischief.”¹ Fearing that railroads might back the Republicans if the commission bill passed, some Democrats quietly expressed doubts about how secure their party's hold on power really was.²

And Republicans reveled in fueling their anxiety. Following the conclusion of Cardwell's speech, A.W. Harris, the Republican delegate from Dinwiddie County, did what he did best. A

¹ “Railroad Commission,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 3, 1886; “The Railroad Bill,” *Richmond Dispatch*, 1886; “Railroad Talk,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 5, 1886; “The Debate Goes On,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 6, 1886; “Running on Roads,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 7, 1886; “The Sixth Day,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 9, 1886; “The End Nearing,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1886 (Cardwell quotes); “Yesterday's Work,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 11, 1886; “Much Amended,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 12, 1886; “Rapid Law-Making,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 13, 1886.

² “Letter From Richmond,” *Alexandria Gazette*, February 9, 1886.

graduate of Howard Law School, Harris was notoriously bold and “almost brutal in debate.”³ Harris mocked the long-winded Democrats, singling out Cardwell for taking multiple days to finish his speech. Eliciting laughter, Harris wondered if the blathering could only be stopped by the divine hand of God himself. He had set his trap. Taking the bait, Cardwell boastfully snapped that the Lord had already dismissed both Harris and his party from power. When Democrats finished taking their turn in laughter, Harris pounced. Perhaps Cardwell’s dilatory blustering came from the fact that he recognized “that his party is treading on the same dangerous grounds which, it is said, drove us from place and power.” Continuing, Harris proclaimed that his party’s exile from power was only temporary. On that “bright November morning” soon to come, when his party once again resumed its supremacy, they would tell the member from Hanover: “We have come again to stay.”⁴

As if by prophesy, the Republicans trounced the Democrats in that fall’s Congressional elections. Previously holding only two of Virginia’s ten seats, Republicans now held six. A Knights of Labor candidate took yet another seat from the Democracy. Stunned, the Democrats’ defeat was made all the more humiliating by the fact that they had implemented measures to make any defeat, much less a complete rout, virtually impossible.⁵ Railroad politics made the impossible possible.

Although the Republican ascendancy was short-lived, the railroad commission debate and allusions to the Republicans’ own commission bill of four years earlier is telling. Then, the Republicans were actually the Readjusters, the most successful interracial third party in the post-

³ George F. Bragg, Jr. to Carter G. Woodson, August 26, 1926, *The Journal of Negro History* 11, no. 4 (October 1926): 679.

⁴ “The End Nearing,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1886.

⁵ Charles E. Wynes, *Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1961), 39-40.

Reconstruction South. A coalition of poor and middling white and Black Virginians struggling under the suffocating weight of a massive public debt, the Readjuster Party formed to downwardly readjust Virginia's debt to a level more bearable, a level that might just allow them to send their children to school, lift themselves out of poverty, and reap the benefits of a rapidly changing economy. With jaw-dropping rapidity, the Readjusters won complete control of the government and enacted their reforms with unrelenting force. They readjusted the debt, saved and expanded the fund-starved public school system, lowered taxes, abolished the iniquitous whipping post, repealed the disfranchising poll tax, and more. All the while, they turned a perennial deficit into a substantial surplus. Their most significant – and allegedly fatal – readjustment, though, was to the Old Dominion's racial status quo. By elevating Black Virginians to power and office, so the standard narrative goes, the Readjusters elicited a backlash among white Virginians, who tossed the “radical negro party” from power and forever barred its return.⁶ Yet according to Harris, one of the most prominent Black Readjusters, it was not white backlash that “drove us from place and power,” but his party's treading the “dangerous grounds” of railroad regulation. More than a collapse of interracial solidarity, the Readjusters succumbed to a railroad reaction.

Indeed, the apparent “failure” of Virginia's experiment with interracialism is more a figment of what W.E.B. Du Bois called the “propaganda of history” than a fact of reality.⁷ The Readjusters-turned-Republicans had succeeded, were far from dead, and the debt controversy that fostered their initial rise to power remained unsettled. In the midst of the railroad commission debate, some were calling for the return of the party that had settled the debt to once

⁶ “Coalition Rule in Danville,” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, accessed September 21, 2017, <https://encyclopedia.virginia.org/entries/coalition-rule-in-danville-october-1883/>.

⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1998 [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935]), 711-729.

again fix what the Democrats had so badly botched.⁸ This possibility was the real “mischief” to which R.H. Cardwell anxiously alluded at the conclusion of his speech opposing the railroad commission. The only way the state could relieve itself of its debt burdens, Cardwell contended, was through the railroads and the capital they attracted. Railroads needed incentives and enticements, not regulation.⁹ Filled with the fear of losing the power they had only recently regained at the hands of railroad corporations now threatening to abandon them, leading Democrats desperately played the role of suppliant servants to a power much stronger than them. Virginia had incurred its debt to build a system of state-controlled railroads before the Civil War, but shortly after the war, northern capitalists had “bought the roads cheap.” True, the Democratic press conceded, those northern capitalists might now be extorting Virginians with high freight rates, but had they not “taken hold of the roads,” Virginians would be even worse off.¹⁰ The fight over Virginia’s debt had always been inextricably linked with the question of who was to control Virginia’s railways. It was the interracial Readjuster coalition that insisted again and again that Virginians, not “foreign” capitalists, should possess that control. In response, those capitalists and their political allies met the well-organized popular insurgency with violence, fraud, and corruption, all the while crafting a narrative to conceal and justify their antidemocratic coup.

Scholars, even those critical of history’s propaganda, have left unquestioned its central premise: that white and Black southerners could never act together in pursuit of their shared interests. Historians have consequently blinded themselves to the revolution the Readjusters had brought, and the “counterrevolution of property” that followed.¹¹ Surprisingly, considering the

⁸ *Page Courier*, February 11, 1886.

⁹ “The End Nearing,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1886.

¹⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 30, 1886.

¹¹ I have been heavily influenced by Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction*, *Darkwater*, *Dusk of Dawn*, and his fictional *Black Flame Trilogy*. Although *Black Reconstruction* is well-known to historians of the 19th-century United States, far too many have virtually ignored the central position Du Bois ascribed to capitalism and the counterrevolution of property. Focusing primarily on a single phrase (“public and psychological wage”) removed from this foundational

Readjuster Movement was centered around the effective repudiation of state debt, capitalists have figured very little in histories of the movement. While historians frequently refer to the holders of Virginia's state bonds, they treat them as largely abstract foils to those calling for readjustment, a nebulous group whose interests need little explanation or study because their motives are presumably self-evident. Upon the formation of the Readjuster Party in 1879 and their subsequent rise to power, Virginia's bondholders become even more abstract in this telling, practically vanishing from the narrative altogether. Having served their scene-setting purpose, they quietly exit the stage so that the well-worn tragedy of interracialism can play out.

Railroads take on an even smaller role in the Readjuster story. Like the bondholders, railroads merely set the scene by serving as the source of the state debt in addition to providing the movement with its pivotal leader, William Mahone. One of Virginia's wealthiest and most powerful railroad presidents, Mahone lost control of his road following the Panic of 1873, after which he jumped into the debt controversy by repurposing his political acumen and organizational prowess to turn a scattered and impotent movement into a viable political machine. Although some historians allude to railroad corporations providing aid to overthrow the Readjusters, they treat this aid as by and large superfluous. According to the standard narrative,

context and conflating it with another quote written more than thirty years earlier ("The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line"), scholars have effectively credited Du Bois with making an argument exactly opposite to the one he made: "that the overthrow of Reconstruction was in essence a revolution inspired by property, and not a race war." Du Bois was frustrated by and rightly critical of the racism of most white workers. But he never contended that this racism was an essential part of their "identity." Rather, his emphasis was on the *coercive power* of capital, which implemented "the theory of race...by a carefully planned and slowly evolved method." The South's "laboring class is cut in two and the white laborers must be ranged upon the side of their own exploiters by *persistent propaganda and police force*. Labor can gain in the South no class-consciousness. Strikes cannot be effective because the white striker can be threatened with the colored 'scab' and the colored striker can be clapped in jail." In *Darkwater*, Du Bois insisted that white workers did not simply claim their "wages of whiteness," capitalists "bribed" them with "the spoils of rape." In the global system of capital, white workers found this bribe so enticing because "It has its literature, it has its secret propaganda and above all – it pays! There's the rub, - it pays." See *Black Reconstruction*, 580-636, 670-710; *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Verso, 2016 [New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1920]), 17-29; *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007 [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940]).

the downfall of the Readjusters required little outside force; the coalition's collapse came entirely from within.

By refusing to challenge this premise, historians have reproduced history's propaganda with surprisingly little variation. The earliest histories of the Readjuster revolt were written by their enemies or those who abandoned the coalition. According to these men who "redeemed" the state from "the Negro's Vicious Influence in Politics," their cause was righteous; it was popular, a heroic uprising of "the real people" against Boss Mahone and his servile gang of ignorant and corruptible white and Black "slaves."¹² The first academic treatment, a product of the Dunning school, was more sympathetic to the democratic tendencies of the Readjuster *movement* but maintained the righteousness of the Readjuster *Party's* defeat.¹³ Later social and cultural historians challenged the overtly white supremacist framing of these earlier narratives, viewing the Readjusters in a far more favorable light. Rather than heroic, these scholars view the Readjusters' downfall as the unfortunate breakdown of a promising "might-have-been." They

¹² William L. Royall, *History of the Virginia Debt Controversy: The Negro's Vicious Influence in Politics* (Richmond: Geo. M. West, Publisher, 1897); Elizabeth H. Hancock, ed., *Autobiography of John E. Massey* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1909); Charles T. O'Ferrall, *Forty Years of Active Service* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1904), 208-227; Robert E. Withers, *Autobiography of an Octogenarian* (Roanoke: Stone Printing & MFG. Co. Press, 1907), 377-389; Beverly B. Munford, *Random Recollections* (n.p., 1905), 125-168; Robert C. Glass and Carter Glass, Jr. *Virginia Democracy: A History of the Achievements of the Party and Its Leaders in the Mother of Commonwealths, the Old Dominion*, Volume 1 (Democratic Historical Association, 1937), 213-241.

¹³ Charles Chilton Pearson, *Readjuster Movement in Virginia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917); see also Richard L. Morton, "The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1865-1902," PhD Dissertation, (University of Virginia, 1918). An early Black scholar and critic of the Dunning School, Alrutheus Ambush Taylor, briefly mentions the Readjuster Party as one that "enacted measures which pleased the Negroes," but in which Black Virginians were not active participants, making "no substantial gains in political recognition under these friends rebaptized as Readjusters." However, James Hugo Johnston, another Black historian, and George F. Bragg, by then a rector in the AME church, both of whom were Readjusters, quickly challenged Taylor's narrative. Johnston wrote to the *Journal of Negro History* that "Mr. Taylor may have unwittingly given a mistaken portrait of the dominant spirit of the Readjuster Movement." Concluding, he said "Such white authors as Royall, Morton, and Pearson, have attempted to show that William Mahone played to role of a cheap political demagogue. The opinion of these men is in large measure due to his political association with the Negro people of Virginia. It would seem regrettable that a Negro historian should join in the detraction of this man." Bragg wrote of several examples indicating that Black Readjusters "were not ornaments. They were in action." See Taylor, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (Washington, DC, The Association of the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926), 279-286; "Communications," *Journal of Negro History* 11, no. 4 (October, 1926): 669-682.

were not corrupt, office-hungry traitors to all that was good and holy. Tragically, nevertheless, the Readjusters were *too* successful and moved *too* quickly. White Readjusters simply could not overcome their inherent racist tendencies. Their anxieties, exacerbated by the increasing prominence and militance of Black men within the coalition, led them to flock back to the Democracy and reclaim “the customary privileges of whiteness.” Whether heroic or tragic, propaganda or revisionist, all agree that, in the words of Steven Hahn, “as a ‘movement’ – a biracial movement – the Readjusters had plainly reached the end of their tether.”¹⁴ And the tether of interracialism, history’s propaganda insists, was finite, short, and forever unbreakable.

To be sure, the Readjusters most certainly struggled with “the prejudices of race and color.”¹⁵ It was a constant threat to their coalition, one which white and Black coalitionists just as

¹⁴ James Tice Moore, *Two Paths to the New South: The Virginia Debt Controversy, 1870-1883* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974) and “Black Militancy in Readjuster Virginia, 1879-1883,” *Journal of Southern History* 41 (1975): 167-186; Carl N. Degler, *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century* (1974; reis., Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 269-285, 293-315; Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), “The Limits of Liberalism in the New South: The Politics of Race, Sex, and Patronage in Virginia, 1879-1883,” in *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics From Civil War to Civil Rights*, eds. Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 88-114, and “Deference and Violence in the Postbellum Urban South: Manners and Massacres in Danville, Virginia,” *Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 3 (August, 1997): 553-590; Raymond H. Pulley, *Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1968), 24-47; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003), 375-384, 400-411 Brent Tarter, *A Saga of the New South: Race, Law, and Public Debt in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016). Allan W. Moger came the closest to revealing the central role of railroads in the Readjuster story in *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), “The Origin of the Democratic Machine in Virginia,” *Journal of Southern History* 8, no. 2 (May, 1942): 183-209, and “Railroad Practices and Policies in Virginia After the Civil War,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 59, no. 4 (Oct., 1951): 423-457. I would also like to say that while Brent Tarter’s chapter on the Readjusters in his highly valuable study of the legal battles around Virginia’s state debt tends to stick to the standard narrative, he insightfully told me during my first visit to the State Library of Virginia in the fall of 2017 that people did not realize how many white Virginians became Republicans as a result of the Readjuster movement. At the time, not appreciating his truly immeasurable knowledge of Virginia history, I mentally dismissed his suggestion to look further into it. Still, I never forgot the conversation, though he may have, and I regret my naïve arrogance, thankful for the seed he planted that, maybe, interracialism, while flawed, was not an unquestionable failure.

¹⁵ Following a strike of tobacco factory workers and employers’ efforts to bring in white strikebreakers, the leading Readjuster organ, the *Richmond Whig*, drew a clear line between racism and the “dangerous despotism of capital and monopoly. It only helps this despotism (as that of Bourbonism) if it can inflame in its behalf the prejudices of race and color; for thus capital seeks to divide and conquer labor, as Bourbonism seeks to divide and conquer the people.” “The Lynchburg ‘Strike,’” *Richmond Whig*, April 4, 1883.

constantly aimed to overcome. Yet historians' presumption that these prejudices and antipathies were insurmountable – that the time “before Jim Crow” tended inevitably towards Jim Crow – rests on a hindsight possessed by neither the Readjusters nor their anxious opponents. By working backwards from the so-called “failure” of interracialism, historians search for and inevitably find its “cause” in the divisions of white supremacy and racism. The romantically mesmerizing tragedy of interracialism is a tautology. As Barbara J. Fields writes critically, labor may be hopelessly divided, but “on the far side of the color line, it seems, universal brotherhood and equality prevail.”¹⁶ Scholars of the Readjusters have thus implied an unchanging solidity of race that simply did not exist. Assuming the ultimate effectiveness of calls for white solidarity, they have mistakenly concluded that “white supremacy” had a solitary meaning around which white men inescapably rallied: opposition to Black civil and political participation.¹⁷ At best, the assumption renders the hopes, aspirations, and actions of Black men and women essentially moot – powerless against a presupposed white hostility – or at worst, to blame.¹⁸ Completely ignored is the fact that calls for white solidarity were loudest precisely when whites were ignoring those calls – when interracialism was waxing, not waning. As a consequence, scholars have presumed

¹⁶ Barbara J. Fields, “Whiteness, Racism, and Identity,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (Fall, 2001): 53.

¹⁷ According to C. Vann Woodward, Southerners of both races understood that white supremacy was never really in doubt. “The real question was *which whites* should be supreme.” Woodward, *Origins*, 328. Following their defeat in the election of 1883, the Readjusters made the same argument. “In no way were they afraid of the negro. Never! Not even as a Readjuster were they afraid of *him*. It was and is the white Readjusters whom these Bourbon-Funders fear and hate. It is the rule of these that they fight against” in “Whom They Fear,” *Richmond Whig*, November 20, 1883. See also, Barbara J. Fields, “*Origins of the New South* and the Negro Question,” *Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 4 (Nov. 2001): 811-826.

¹⁸ One particularly egregious example, from a sympathetic author, is in James Tice Moore’s conclusion that “Indeed, in the final analysis [Black Virginians] had probably been too successful for their own good...[they] attempted to move too far and too fast in their drive for equality...Black votes had made the Readjuster regime possible; black militancy, in turn, had made the Readjuster collapse inevitable.” See “Black Militancy,” 186.

a finality that has almost entirely precluded study beyond the alleged point of “failure” in November 1883.¹⁹

On the other hand, the post-“failure” optimism expressed later that month in the Black-owned *People’s Advocate* that the Readjusters had “fully established” that “the Bourbon Democrats can be vanquished;” or by Black militia captain R.A. Paul in 1885 about the “bright and glorious” prospects demonstrated by the Readjusters who “defeated the most tyrannical political party that ever governed a free people;” or by A.W. Harris during debate over a railroad commission bill in 1886 that his party had “only gone out of power for a short while,” suggests a different perspective.²⁰ The tragic endings historians see so clearly were heavily shrouded in glorious possibility to the “failures.” And this same possibility kept their opponents awake at night, fearful that the “might-have-beens” may once again come to be.

What Cardwell and his fellow Democrats knew all too well, and like Du Bois concluded in *Black Reconstruction*, was that they owed their power not to a race war, but to a revolution inspired by property... divided property. Du Bois demonstrated that Reconstruction had been overthrown by a counterrevolution of property, but he also showed how it was northern industry’s temporary alliance with the “abolition-democracy” against the defeated and recalcitrant planter aristocracy that made “radical” Reconstruction possible in the first place.²¹

The reason Virginia Democrats in 1886 believed railroads might turn on them in favor of the

¹⁹ There has effectively been no study of the Readjuster/Republican coalition beyond 1883. Some studies allude to the continued threat posed by the Readjuster-turned-Republican Party. But they nevertheless treat this threat as essentially impotent and thus unworthy of anything beyond superficial analysis, such analysis itself being a continuation of the never-ending internal collapse and resistance to “Boss Mahone.” Other studies simply skip the mid-to-late 1880s altogether, jumping straight to the Populist revolt of the 1890s. Regardless, most studies imply that all substantive political struggles after 1883 more or less occurred solely within the Democratic Party.

²⁰ “The Elections,” *The People’s Advocate*, November 10, 1883; R.A. Paul speech to the Acme Literary Association in Richmond, reproduced in D.B. Williams, *A Sketch of the Life and Times of Capt. R.A. Paul*, (Richmond: Johns & Goolsby, Book and Job Printers, 1885), 64, 68; “The End Nearing,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1886.

²¹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, particularly 182-380, 580-636.

Republicans was because they had done it before, when the Republicans went by a different name and before they trod the “dangerous grounds” of railroad regulation.

It is only by looking forward, with the presumption that interracialism was *not* doomed to failure, that we can see this story long concealed by the propaganda of history. “Bonded by Debt” is the story of *how* the Readjusters, against the odds of a political economic system stacked decisively against them, became the most successful interracial coalition in the post-Reconstruction South. Acknowledging the deep-seated anxieties possessed by working-class southerners, both Black and white, “Bonded by Debt” contends that these anxieties were neither inherent nor singularly conducive to resistant reaction. It shows that interest is not something to be acted in or against but rather a labor-intensive process of coalition building in which the only requirement was that *different* interests be *close enough*. And owing especially to the efforts of Black Virginians, the Readjusters managed to assuage their anxieties quite well. So well did they demonstrate the viability of their coalition, in fact, that they caught the attention of several railroad corporations, who, vying for access to the agricultural and mineral bounty of the South and West, concluded that maybe they had more in common with a party denounced as “repudiators” than a party calling itself “conservative.”

Instead of the oft-told story of capitalists and race-baiters exploiting and manipulating hopelessly anxious and divided labor, the untold story of railroads and Readjusters is the opposite. The Readjusters rose to power and nearly remade the Old Dominion because they took advantage of divisions between capitalists, leveraging their surprising solidity against rivalrous corporations with anxieties of their own – they too were bonded by debt. It was ultimately these anxieties that led to the downfall of the Readjusters. Having befriended an increasingly popular “dictatorship of the proletariat” in the hopes of securing favor over their rivals and ending the

capital-freezing debt controversy, several railroad corporations willingly left Virginia's "foreign" bondholders to fend for themselves. When the Readjusters turned their gaze to the railroads, however, and demanded *their* submission to the will of the people, the railroads bucked, tossing their would-be rider from the saddle. Yet the tendency of politics to make strange bedfellows, combined with continued corporate competition, left the door open, even if only partially, to the interracial coalition that remained far from dead.

"Bonded by Debt," then, is not an attempt to create a narrative-form tally sheet intended to measure the (in)sincerity of interracialism; it is rather an exploration of how racial capitalism functions in seemingly contradictory ways. It does not expect white southerners to transform into antiracists or Black southerners to easily abandon well-founded resentments, only to fault them both for not realizing their "shared class interest." As Cedric Robinson argued, capitalism's universalizing power is a myth, and its essential tendency is "not to homogenize but to differentiate."²² Most white Readjusters were racist and did not claim to be otherwise. And Black Readjusters likewise knew with whom they were dealing. In 1882, for instance, the *Petersburg Lancet* wrote that Black Virginians had spent years vainly searching for a political friend. It concluded that "at last in the shape of the readjuster party it came, *the devil brought that friend*, but we thank God for him and embrace the good works all the same."²³ By repudiating the presumption of a sequential transition from the "primitive" to the "modern," racial capitalism reveals that the "rationality" of interracialism could and did exist simultaneously with the "irrationality" of racism. According to historians Destin Jenkins and Justin Leroy, past experiences, present circumstances, and future possibilities coalesced in a dynamic, messy, and

²² Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000 [London: Zed Press, 1983]), Chapter 1.

²³ "The Second District," *Petersburg Lancet*, August 26, 1882 [emphasis added]."

ongoing process.²⁴ Sociologist Craig Calhoun likewise calls attention to the interconnectedness of past, present, and future, contending that “Visions of an alternative future may be drawn from myths or memories of a different past.” Conservatism and a *seeming* reluctance to change can, in the right context, become radical, even revolutionary.²⁵ This ongoing process of interest formation is crucial to understanding not only how Black and white Virginians built their coalition in unexpected and contradictory ways, but also how railroad corporations, particularly one fast becoming the most powerful corporation in the South, became crucial partners in the Readjuster coalition.

Although it has become an aphorism that the Solid South was not in fact solid, scholars of popular movements, as mentioned above, have rarely applied this truth to capitalists. Partly to blame is the rhetoric of the popular movements themselves, which presented their struggles as one of “the people” against *the* corporations or *the* bondholders. Capitalists of all kinds likewise referred to grassroots movements in terms similarly antagonistic and singularizing – agrarians, socialists, communists, etc. A rhetorical tactic has consequently transformed into a false

²⁴ Destin Jenkins and Justin Leroy, *Histories of Racial Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 10-15. Among others who write about the overwhelming compatibility of the “primitive” and the “modern,” the “irrational” and the “rational,” see John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Khalil Gibran Muhammed, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (New York: Verso, 1996); Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016). It is worth noting, however, that many of these studies still tend to reify the teleological “rationality” of capitalism. Racism, rather than hindering “modernity,” was foundational to its construction. In effect, though, this merely transforms an “irrationality” into another means of achieving the ultimate “rationality” of profit-maximizing labor control for the purpose of industrial development. The “ongoingness” of racial capitalism requires that we not simply acknowledge the compatibility of “irrationality” and “rationality,” but abandon the categories altogether, for they imply a confident intentionality that does not exist. People rarely believe they are acting irrationally; they almost always have a *reason* whether it makes sense to others or not. For the most part, people and institutions act improvisationally in a constantly changing environment with constantly changing and always incomplete information about what was, what is, and what will be. The “rationality” of these improvisations is generally an after-the-fact ascription contingent on whether “it worked,” regardless of whether the results that came about did so as hoped or expected.

²⁵ Craig Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism: Tradition, the Public Sphere, and Early Nineteenth-Century Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

dichotomy scholars treat as real. Also at play is the tendency to view competition between capitalists, unlike the enforced competition between workers, as inherently rational, a mere consequence of the good old-fashioned profit motive. Accordingly, just as labor is allegedly doomed to false consciousness, capital can, implicitly, never act against its own interest.

Perhaps most responsible for the imagined solidity of capital, though, is our conception of capitalism's most prominent institution, the corporation. Legally, corporations possess a virtually undying personhood. A corporation is nominally the same entity across time. Yet this creates a false and misleading impression. Corporations, particularly nineteenth-century railroad corporations, were nothing more than constantly changing coalitions comprised of people with different yet close-enough interests. They were just as much political institutions as financial. And, frequently, the politics uniting these incorporated coalitions broke down. Whether from all-too-common financial panics, bad crop years, or even growth, one class of bondholders might find themselves at odds with another class of bondholders; both of these groups might take issue with the stockholders setting policies impacting the ability to pay interest on bonds; and stockholders might disagree over questions of issuing dividends, investing in new equipment, or whether and where to expand. Indeed, this balancing act became all the more precarious as rail systems grew. Corporations and holding companies acquired control of other corporations, which often maintained their own corporate structures containing their own delicate coalitions. Ostensibly operating as single systems to increase efficiency and decrease destructive competition, they became coalitions of coalitions. Every attempt to impose order seemingly tended to create more chaos that regularly ended in receivership and reorganization, with all fighting over whose claims to equity were superior, whose were subordinate, and whose were now worthless. Again, capitalism's essential tendency is not to homogenize but to differentiate.

While more often than not bearing the same name, the corporation-coalitions coming out of these reorganizations were not the same corporation-coalitions as before. The struggle for coalition, and power within that coalition, started anew.

At the same time, in a place like Virginia, where corporate powers remained largely at the will of legislative authority, inter- and intra-corporate power struggles created an opportunity for new political friendships. Importantly, every major turning point in the history of Virginia's state debt, along with opportunities for interracial democracy, revolved around these periods of contentious corporate reorganization.²⁶ In both railroading and politics, coalition building took place in the context of constant and unpredictable change. The winners and losers coming out of this process were just as much the products of chance as they were results of skill, reason, or "consciousness." Contradiction was the norm rather than the exception ending inevitably in "failure" and disintegration. By abandoning the framework of the tragedy of interracialism, our attention is instead drawn to questions of power and organization.

²⁶ The works of Alfred Chandler, John Stover, and Maury Klein are invaluable to understanding of the complex and chaotic nature of nineteenth century railroad corporations, particularly in the South. Nevertheless, as mentioned previously regarding other works on different subjects, I disagree with their implicit and explicit assertions of a largely rational and intentional trend from chaos to order. I instead agree more with the conclusions of Richard White that "the corporation was often at war with itself" and that these corporations "not only failed to institute the order they desired; they also just plain failed and repeatedly needed rescuing by the state and the courts." Managers may have provided the "visible hands" that guided system building, but their hands were more often than not bound by the diverse financial interests comprising corporations in the form of men of varying competence, goals, and childishly petty jealousies. White's deep focus on the contradictory political machinations of corporations has also greatly influenced my understanding that corporations "made politics a realm of private competition." Again, by treating business history and political history as not simply related but the same, we are better able to see that "rationality" is a myth that obscures more than it reveals. And to borrow a phrase from Scott Nelson, railroad corporations and politicians often found themselves forming seemingly "ironic confederacies" with monumental effects on interracial political possibility. See Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977); John F. Stover, *The Railroads of the South: A Study in Finance and Control* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1955); Maury Klein, "The Strategy of Southern Railroads," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 73, No. 4 (April 1968) and *The Great Richmond Terminal: A Study in Businessmen and Business Strategy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970); Richard White, *Railroaded: Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011); Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Mark W. Summers, *Railroads, Reconstruction, and the Gospel of Prosperity: Aid under the Radical Republicans, 1865-1877* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Chapter 1 discusses the origins of the Readjuster movement within the context of railroad construction and development in the decades surrounding the Civil War. In the antebellum period, Virginia engaged in a system of mixed enterprise by selling state bonds in Europe and using the proceeds to invest in a quickly growing network of railroads. Although the Old Dominion's public debt ballooned during these years, the state acquired majority control in the companies it aided. The Civil War, however, took a toll on Virginia's railroads and unpaid interest during the war had only increased the state debt. Virginia did not have the means to rebuild on its own. Military authorities tasked with overseeing Congressional Reconstruction thus used their power over the state's controlling interest in these roads to encourage a program of railroad consolidation that would allow separate companies to merge and pool their resources while incentivizing new capitalist investment from abroad. Yet competing companies and interests made consolidation a contentious struggle that became deeply intertwined with Reconstruction's political contests. Virginia's fight for "Home Rule" also applied to its railroads, and the rights and power of newly enfranchised Black Virginians served as a proxy in a war between rival corporations. Upon Virginia's restoration, the struggle for control of Virginia's railways shifted decidedly toward "foreign" corporations as the state voted to sell its railroad interests for pennies on the dollar. Meanwhile, at the same time Virginia divested itself its railroad assets at fire sale prices, it voted to honor the state debt in full! Over the next decade, the Conservative Party that had "redeemed" Virginia ignored all popular pleas for relief, weakened democracy, and robbed the popular public school system of funds, all for the benefit foreign bondholders. Popular resentment consequently swelled to a fever pitch, and Virginians found themselves powerless to force the change they desired. But William Mahone, who had earlier stood as the defender of "Virginia railroads" against the invasion of "foreign corporations," lost

his road to foreign bondholders who were in many cases the same foreign bondholders draining the life out of the Old Dominion. Mahone's fight to maintain control of his railroad became inextricable from the growing demand for readjustment, and he became the leader of a new Readjuster Party that won control of the state legislature in its debut election in 1879.

Chapter 2 focuses on how Mahone's fight to save his railroad from foreclosure related to building confidence in the tenuous interracial coalition leading up to the Readjusters' stunning victory in the 1881 state elections. Although most Black Virginians supported debt readjustment, there were practicalities that led them to approach coalition with a healthy dose of skepticism. For starters, most white Readjusters were erstwhile political enemies who had committed a laundry list of sins against Black Virginians. But there were also ideological concerns behind the hesitation. Most Black Virginians maintained loyalty to the Republican Party, and the Republican Party – the party of Union, abolition, and enfranchisement – was the party of “honest debts.” Readjustment went against GOP dogma. Nevertheless, Black Virginians saw an opportunity in the split the debt controversy had riven in the Conservative Party. Black political leaders organized their followers and built a political strength with which to fully exploit their new position at the fulcrum of Virginia's political scales. Importantly, in the process of easing their own anxieties regarding the untested coalition and repeatedly asserting their independence from Virginia's Republican Party bosses, they eased the anxieties of white Readjusters as well. A telling fruit of Black Virginians' labors to build confidence in the Readjuster coalition was when William Mahone, recently elected to the US Senate, caucused with the Republicans. This choice was significant on its own because Mahone knew he could not lead Virginians, particularly white Virginians, where they were unwilling to go. More importantly, though, the growing strength of the interracial coalition had convinced the Republican Party – the party of “honest debts” – to

throw its support to the party it had recently denounced as repudiators and toss Virginia's GOP bosses, known as Straightouts, to the curb! Even more, the Readjusters had convinced several key railroad corporations of their political viability. Mahone's road was not the only one that suffered from default and foreclosure. At the same time Virginia's political coalitions were shifting, railroad corporations were reorganizing. Hoping to expand their systems further south and west, these corporations needed Virginia's sanction to issue the new stocks and bonds necessary to finance their expansionist dreams. In Mahone's efforts to save his own road, he developed friendly relations with capitalists in charge of these reorganized corporations, who in turn placed their bets on the Readjuster Party.

This unlikely friendship between railroads and Readjusters is the subject of Chapter 3, which rewrites a core component in the standard narrative of the Readjusters' inevitable disintegration. The rebellion of several "original readjusters" in early 1882 against measures that would "Republicanize" and "Africanize" Virginia has long served as exemplifying a broader opposition among white Readjusters to interracial coalition. Yet scholars, uncritically accepting the propaganda of history the renegades helped to craft, have surprisingly spent little time studying the so-called caucus measures that were so allegedly unpopular. Additionally, they have all but ignored how Readjusters responded to the rebellion as well as how overwhelmingly solid they remained. In short, historians have taken the unwillingness of a few men to adapt to the changing nature and goals of the coalition as evidence that the coalition itself was incapable of changing, of moving beyond the limit of interracialism's allegedly finite and unbreakable tether. While this small minority contended that the Readjusters had accomplished their sole mission by enacting a new debt law, the rest of the party was only getting started. The so-called caucus measures were unabashedly partisan and were intended to strengthen the Readjusters' political

machine. But what the renegades and their new Conservative allies called “bossism” and “Mahoneism” takes on a new meaning in the completely unexamined context of railroad politics. Seeing the strength of the coalition in the face of the rebellion, Virginia’s largest railroad corporations seeking legislative favor helped to break the initial deadlock caused by the renegades. For their part, Readjusters were happy to grant favors to these corporations, but only on one condition: railroads were to serve Virginia and Virginians, not the other way around. Some companies found these terms too imposing and saw new value in the rebellion they had previously helped overcome. As far as these companies saw it, the true danger of the caucus measures lay in the way they were intended to weaken the political influence of corporations in the press, in the courts, and the patronage power over railroad employees – in effect, to create a dictatorship of the proletariat. Indeed, opposition to the Readjuster caucus measures was literally engineered by the recalcitrant railroads. Not all railroads bucked against Readjuster authority, though. The Richmond & Danville system, fast becoming the most powerful corporation in the South, not only benefited from its friendship with the Readjusters but used its newly granted powers to go after the very roads now opposing the Readjusters! Corporate competition and political competition were one in the same. To meet this threat, the recalcitrant railroads joined forces to create a new coalition that could effectively counter the rapidly progressing Readjuster revolution.

Building on this, Chapter 4 provides the most significant revision to the standard narrative of interracialism’s failure. The period leading up to the 1883 elections was notorious for its racist vitriol as warnings against “mixed schools and mixed marriages,” denunciations of “Negro Rule” in the southside city of Danville, and the murder in that city of Black men just days before the elections culminated in Readjuster defeat at the polls. Yet this apparent white

supremacist backlash has concealed both the continued viability of the Readjusters' interracial coalition as well as the overt counterrevolution of property launched by a bipartisan coalition of anti-Readjuster railroads and bondholders. During the campaign historians have seen as a war of races, the Readjusters waged an all-out war on the recalcitrant railroad corporations challenging Virginia's financial authority. In response to several railroads flaunting the new Readjuster debt law, the Readjusters confiscated railroad property and ordered it to be sold at auction, only to be stopped by a bondholder-funded lawsuit. Readjusters took to the stump and aggressively threatened these corporations with retaliation, particularly the road ran by the new chairman of the Democratic Party. Given the centrality of the color line in the standard narrative, historians have never been able to explain why the reorganized Democrats deliberately chose *not* to include a white supremacy plank in their platform. In large part, this was because many Democrats, seeing how successful the Readjusters had been, believed that the old shibboleth of white solidarity had lost its power. More importantly, it was because the Democrats had joined forces with the greatly diminished yet still-organized Straightout Republicans whose leader also ran a railroad slighted by the Readjusters. Together, the railroad-controlled Democratic-Straightout coalition, in what the Readjusters called an "organized system of duplicity," attempted to play both sides of the color line.²⁷ The goal was never to solidly array white Virginians against Black rights but rather to break the surprising solidarity of the Readjusters' interracial working-class base by chipping away at its margins. Supplementing the anti-Readjusters' duplicitous deployment of the color line was their control of the job lash. As Du Bois wrote about Reconstruction, it was "a fight of rivals to control property and through that to control the labor vote."²⁸ Having defeated the caucus measures intended to liberate labor and thus the state from

²⁷ "Gen Mahone Rises," *Richmond Whig*, November 20, 1883.

²⁸ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 626.

corporate control, anti-Readjuster railroads wielded that control to its fullest extent. Ironically, though, the Danville Massacre undermined the anti-Readjuster strategy and left the Readjusters alive enough to fight another day. The Readjusters lost, but interracialism remained far from dead, and the counterrevolution of property remained incomplete and, above all, insecure.

“Bonded by Debt” concludes by following the Readjuster story beyond the alleged point of failure. It shows how the anti-Readjuster coalition attempted to make its counterrevolution complete by expelling ten percent of the state legislature to secure a veto-proof supermajority – a fact that only a few studies mention in passing.²⁹ Supermajority thus secured, the anti-Readjusters gerrymandered the state and gave themselves complete control of the election machinery. Yet despite these blatant antidemocratic measures and the constraints they imposed, interracialism remained unquestionably viable. Indeed, the coalitional nature of politics fostered surprising contradictions as Democrats and Readjusters-turned-Republicans competed for the votes of Virginia’s interracial working class. And as the nine-day debate over a railroad commission in 1886 demonstrated, railroad politics remained a defining feature of the ongoing struggles. Competing corporations made the anti-Readjuster coalition and its grasp on power just as tenuous as it had earlier done for the Readjusters. Ultimately a story of unexpected coalitions and unintended consequences, corporate competition opened the door for the Readjuster Party to become the most successful interracial coalition in the post-Reconstruction South.

²⁹ Ironically, while recent studies state that the two-thirds majority was secured by the election, it is the older studies – those most susceptible to the original propaganda of history – that allude to the “prompt and vigorous efforts” to expel Readjuster legislators. Still, references to the expulsions are vague and occupy only a sentence or less. See Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 166; Blake, *William Mahone*, 228 Wynes, *Race Relations*, 39.

CHAPTER 1

BLOATED BONDHOLDERS, FOREIGN CORPORATIONS, AND CRUMBLING COALITIONS

The Conservative Party convention meeting at Richmond in August 1871 was supposed to be a meeting of unity and harmony. It was not. All that held together this “great aggregation of men with discordant views on all points”¹ was an opposition to the “black wave of Radicalism.” Even this shared commitment, however, was in doubt. After admitting five Black delegates to their seats, the convention president encouraged the acceptance of the new, post-Reconstruction order of things and the abandonment of dead and settled issues.² Jubal Early, former Confederate general and now delegate, looked around at the gathering and asked to be excused. It was obvious, he said, that he was “behind the times” and out of place.³ The Republican *State Journal* mocked the “hermaphrodite convention” of old-line Whigs, Democrats, and “Conservative niggers.” It jeered that Early took the admission of Black delegates particularly hard, for he simply could not understand how it would strengthen opposition to “Radicalism.”⁴ Just two years after the Conservative coalition had successfully “redeemed” the Old Dominion from military rule, it was on the verge of splitting at the seams.

¹ John S. Wise, *The Lion's Skin: A Historical Novel and a Novel History* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1905), 265.

² “Sate Conservative Convention,” *Richmond Dispatch*, August 31, 1871.

³ “Letter from Richmond,” *Alexandria Gazette*, August 31, 1871.

⁴ “Democratic State Convention!,” *Richmond State Journal*, August 31, 1871; “Political Notes,” *Richmond State Journal*, September 6, 1871.

Topping the list of divisions, however, was the question of Virginia's public debt. While vague allusions to white supremacy and rule by "respectable gentlemen" papered over some disagreements, the debt controversy was the definitive point of contention in the life of the Conservative Party. It pitted debt-payers against readjusters against outright repudiators and rotted the Conservative coalition from within. When one delegate opposed inviting the governor due to his debt-paying views, he was met with "mingled hisses and cheers," which, according to the *New York Times*, "revealed how perilous was the topic he had dared to hint at, in even that vague way."⁵ The split was on full display as Conservatives took to the stumps and courthouse steps against each other, for or against the debt law known as the Funding Act.⁶ In the words of one opponent, the law was "a folly if it was not a crime."⁷

Underlying this scene of crumbling coalition and fiduciary folly was also a story of railroad politics. Virginia contracted its debt before the Civil War to build a system of railroads that would stitch together disparate sections into a commonwealth of prosperity. Secession and war destroyed the railroads and split the state in two. After the war, capitalists hoping to profit from the South's economic reconstruction exerted their influence to convince the state to divest itself of its interest in Virginia's vital transportation lines. Yet, thanks to some of these very same capitalists who helped push through the Funding Act, the public debt remained. Railroad control and the debt controversy were one and the same, deeply intertwined with Reconstruction politics.

Particularly influential was the behind-the-scenes politicking and palm-greasing of former Confederate General William Mahone. With dreams of running a railroad connecting the

⁵ "Virginia," *New York Times*, September 5, 1871. See also "Democratic State Convention!," *Richmond State Journal*

⁶ Charles T. O'Ferrall, *Forty Years of Active Service*, 194.

⁷ Wise, *Lion's Skin*, 286.

Atlantic to the Mississippi, Mahone brokered a compromise around political moderation in which Conservatives and moderate Republicans joined forces against so-called radical rule. Begrudgingly accepting the enfranchisement of Black men, government was to be in the hands of practical “business men” interested in restoring the economy and divorced from “old prejudices.” But the “new movement,” as it was called, was founded on a lie, and “the humbug was successful.” Corporations got their railroads, and Virginians held the bag.⁸

Nevertheless, the man most responsible for forming the Conservative coalition would also bring about its collapse. The panic of 1873 dashed William Mahone’s steam-powered dreams, and he lost his road in the ensuing depression. His efforts to save it from the clutches of unscrupulous bondholders eventually led him into the fight to save Virginia from its own unscrupulous bondholders. With his beloved railroad and equally beloved home state under the control of “foreign interests,” Mahone embraced the cause of readjustment. Again, railroad control and the debt controversy were one and the same. As the leader of a new Readjuster coalition, Mahone would help to overthrow and destroy the very political order he had helped bring about. Stemming the tide of “radicalism” in one decade, Mahone and the Readjusters came to unleash it in the next.

Before it became a controversy, Virginia’s public debt was an optimistic investment on the heels of success. The United States claimed victory in the War of 1812, and a new spirit captured the hearts and minds of the people. Having overcome the challenge to their sovereignty,

⁸ Wise, *Lion’s Skin*, 263-269; Allen W. Moger, *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), 1-20; Hamilton James Eckenrode, *The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1904), 104-128; Charles Chilton Pearson, *The Readjuster Movement in Virginia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917), 1-34.

Americans looked for ways to solidify its foundations. Internal improvements like roads, canals, and eventually railroads, could boost economic growth and cement America's economic independence from its colonial ties to English creditors, merchants, and banks. More importantly, these improvements would tie together people from different sections and communities into one unified nation. That was the theory, at least. In reality, hopes for a nationally unified system of internal improvements were stillborn, killed by "republican" fears of corruption, antimonopoly sentiments, and the very sectional jealousies it was supposed to alleviate. Consequently, there was to be no uniform system, and the matter was left to states, localities, and private enterprise to figure it out independently. Nevertheless, while Americans were unable and unwilling to agree on a shared notion of a singularly American public good, their desire for internal improvements remained as strong as ever. The only question was how best to make it happen, and America became a chaotic lab of experiments in infrastructure building.⁹

Virginians determined on a plan of mixed enterprise, combining aspects of public and private ownership. Eastern planters were skeptical of the governmental power – and taxes – that a fully public system would entail. Yet since internal improvements served a clearly public need, total control by private interests was an open invitation to extortion. The solution, then, was to blend the purported cost efficiencies of private enterprise with the ostensibly virtuous stewardship of the public weal by republican government. Known as the "Virginia system," the state would offer limited aid as well as technical expertise to induce private investment. Initially, the mixed enterprise plan skewed towards private interests, which were required by law to

⁹ John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

subscribe three-fifths of companies' capital stock before the state would subscribe for the remaining two-fifths. A Board of Public Works (BPW) was established to manage the state's investments and represent its interests on the chartered companies' boards. To further entice private capital, the state elected to exclude itself from receiving dividend payments until private shareholders had earned a healthy return on their investments. Quickly, however, Virginians found that these inducements were grossly inadequate, and the system needed revision.

By the time Virginia began chartering its first railroads in the 1830s, the ratio of private-to-public stock subscription had reversed. Privately raised capital, it turned out, was hard to come by. Undeveloped western areas were paradoxically impoverished by the absence of the improvements they sought to alleviate their poverty. Capital-rich planters in the east preferred investing in land and enslaving Black people. Similarly, cities and the capitalists associated with them were wary to invest in any ventures that might provide aid to rival cities at their expense. In short, many of the same rivalries, jealousies, and anxieties that hampered development of a national system also plagued the Virginia system. That these disputes inevitably became entangled in debates over slavery and democracy only exacerbated the parochial tight-fistedness. As railroads increasingly captured the minds of improvers, demand for development quickly outpaced local capital availability. The state, in turn, embraced a more active role as the primary investor in its internal improvements.

Debt financing offered the solution to the Virginia system's funding woes. Beginning in the 1830s, Virginia granted the BPW authority to borrow on the credit of the state. In a process known as hypothecation, the BPW marketed state bonds in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and, more frequently, London, using the proceeds to purchase stocks in railroad companies. English investors with burning pockets remained skeptical of American railroads that could fail

at any time, but they viewed state bonds as a safe and profitable prospect. Railroads got the necessary capital for construction, bondholders gained a fixed return backed by the sovereign power of taxation, and Virginia took ownership of its rails. Importantly, though, the state bore most of the risk. Nevertheless, the commercial prospects of a rail network stretching across the state seemed worth it. Virginia took on increasing amounts of debt, only slowing down in the depression years of the late thirties and early forties before relaunching with increased vigor.¹⁰ During the 1850s, Virginia built more railroads than any other state, more than tripling its mileage.¹¹ With a book value of about \$43 million dollars in 1860, the state's railway investments more than offset the massive public debt of \$33 million.¹² Barring catastrophe, Virginia's gamble on its future appeared to be a safe one.

Only catastrophe struck. The Civil War took a tremendous toll on Virginia's balance sheet. In a war fought over railway junctions at Manassas, Alexandria, Petersburg, and Richmond, many of Virginia's railroads lay in shambles at war's end. In an 1877 report estimating the war's cost to the state, the General Assembly placed the loss associated with its internal improvements at \$26 million.¹³ The war also effected two significant changes that only exacerbated the losses due to physical destruction. A third of Virginia's territory containing vast amounts of yet-to-be tapped mineral wealth now comprised the new state of West Virginia,

¹⁰ See Carter Goodrich, "The Virginia System of Mixed Enterprise," *Political Science Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (September 1949): 355-387; Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), Chapter 1; Larson, *Internal Improvements*, 91-97, 222-224, 235, 238.

¹¹ John F. Stover, *The Railroads of the South, 1865-1900: A Study in Finance and Control* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 9.

¹² U.S. Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Statistics, *Report on the Internal Commerce of the United States*, by Wm. F. Switzler, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1886. Report on Virginia prepared by J.D. Imboden [hereinafter *Imboden Report*], 20; B.U. Ratchford, *American State Debts* (Durham: Duke University Press), 197; Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 6.

¹³ Stover, *Railroads of the South*, 15-22; Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 7 n. 25.

which had seceded from the Old Dominion in 1863. Moreover, Black Virginians, whose enslavement embodied much of antebellum Virginia's capital and taxable wealth, now claimed their freedom. Meanwhile, interest that had gone unpaid during the war added another \$5 million to Virginia's total indebtedness.¹⁴ So while the public debt had grown, the state's assets and ability to raise revenue spiraled downward.

In the war's wake, Unionist Governor Francis H. Pierpont fought against a recalcitrant and reactionary legislature in pursuit of political moderation and economic rebuilding. Prominent in his plans was the consolidation of Virginia railroads into geographically and economically coherent trunklines. In particular, Pierpont strongly supported the consolidation efforts of former Confederate General William Mahone, now the president of two railroads running from Norfolk to Lynchburg in Virginia's Southside. Public debates and newspaper reports about railroad consolidation rivaled heated Reconstruction politics, which took a decided turn after Virginia and other former Confederate states rejected the Fourteenth Amendment and the Republican-dominated Congress reinstituted military rule over the unreconstructed South.¹⁵

Nevertheless, Radical Reconstruction as it became known by its opponents was a heavily compromised radicalism in Virginia. White conservatives derided and mocked the proceedings of the "Black and Tan" convention tasked with drafting a new state constitution. But John S. Wise, the son of antebellum governor and arch secessionist Henry A. Wise and later leader of the Readjuster Party, wrote that the mixing of carpetbaggers, scalawags, and Black delegates produced "a violent but harmless effervescence" that quickly subsided, its importance "much

¹⁴ The total indebtedness was about \$41 million dollars, but roughly \$3 million worth of state bonds were held by its literary and sinking funds, making the debt owed to non-fiduciary bondholders about \$38 million. See Ratchford, *State Debts*, 197-198; Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 8.

¹⁵ Jack P. Maddex, *The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879: A Study in Reconstruction Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), Chapter 4; Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 8-16.

exaggerated.” In fact, the commanders presiding over Military District No. 1 exerted their power to hinder radical sentiments and factions while aiding those they believed to be more moderate.¹⁶ Although Virginia would be among the last states readmitted to the US, it was the only one in which so-called radical Republicans never controlled the government upon restoration.¹⁷ Perhaps nowhere other than Virginia, then, was what W.E.B. Du Bois referred to as the “counterrevolution of property” so effective that it precluded the very revolution it meant to counter.¹⁸ Between 1867 and 1869, railroads, Reconstruction, and “redemption” became more entangled than Sherman’s neckties.

At the same time Congress was taking control of Reconstruction, railroad interests were making moves to capitalize on Virginia’s desperate fiscal condition and the enthusiasm for consolidation. Rival corporations competed publicly to assuage fears that they were rapacious monopolies while encouraging those fears when it came to their competitors. In boardrooms, shareholders battled over who would have the upper hand in consolidated companies.

The most important efforts took place in the lobbies of the General Assembly. Still in the hands of “respectable gentlemen” before Congress intervened, the legislature discussed a general sale of the state’s shares in internal improvements to help reduce the public debt but ultimately voted against it.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the legislature passed bills granting several railroad companies the right to consolidate. Consisting of terms intended to protect and benefit Virginia’s interests, the most crucial feature of these bills allowed the newly consolidated companies to purchase

¹⁶ Wise, *Lion’s Skin*, 188, 195.

¹⁷ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988; reprinted 2014), 413.

¹⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935; New York: The Free Press, 1998), Chapter 14.

¹⁹ *Journal of the House of Delegates of the State of Virginia, 1866-1867, extra session* (Richmond: Enquirer, Print, 1866), 63-64.

state-owned stocks in the original companies with state bonds.²⁰ In theory, the state could reduce its indebtedness by reversing the process it had used to finance the railroads' construction in the first place.

One crucial wrinkle with far-reaching implications was the price. Virginia's state bonds were practically worthless on the open market. By purchasing state bonds well below par, capitalists could gain the control of these roads – control currently held by the state – for mere pennies on the dollar. Railroad lobbyists uncorked whiskey bottles and opened deep pockets to ease the concerns of skeptical legislators, knowing that legislative friendship could be purchased for the right price. Governor Pierpont, for instance, urged William Mahone to “spend ten thousand dollars” if necessary to assure passage of his consolidation bill.²¹ In short, railroads and legislators required lubrication if things were to run smoothly. It was the cost of doing business that would pay in spades if pulled off successfully.

Yet these consolidation bills simply opened a door; they did not bring about consolidation on their own. Shareholders in the original companies still needed to approve consolidation. And, for now, the state was still the majority shareholder. Having acquired the right to consolidate from the unreconstructed legislature, railroads had to continue their intrigues under the new rule of military authorities.

Fortunately, military rule proved to be a boon to railroad consolidation. Competition between rival companies for special favor continued, but their battles moved from the halls of the General Assembly to offices of the commanding general and his appointees. Virginia's first

²⁰ See *Acts of the General Assembly of the state of Virginia, Passed in 1866-1867* (Richmond, James E. Goode, Printer, 1867), 705-708, 816-820.

²¹ Quoted in Nelson Morehouse Blake, *William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent* (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, Publishers, 1935), 83. See also, Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 12-16.

commander, General John M. Schofield, was no proponent of “radicalism.” Opposing Black suffrage, he only reluctantly supported the Fourteenth Amendment as a lesser evil. Further indicative of Schofield’s anti-radical bent, the unreconstructed legislature actually petitioned for Schofield’s appointment due to his “great impartiality.” As a moderate intent on “good government” and the protection of private property, Schofield appointed his friend and fellow Union officer Henry H. Wells as governor to undermine the growing influence of more radical Republicans courting the support of newly enfranchised Black Virginians. Through Wells and other appointed officers on the Board of Public Works, Schofield helped put control of Virginia’s railroads where he thought it belonged: in private, conservative hands.²² William Mahone of Petersburg found the opportunity he had been looking for.

Born in Southampton County to a storekeeper in 1826, Mahone’s upbringing played a formative role in his later life. A child of middling means, he relied on his smarts and a penchant for math to set himself apart. Additionally, he was crude of manner, becoming well known at an early age for his prolific gambling, smoking, and cussing. Despite Mahone’s rough edges – literally made sharper by chronic dyspepsia that left him gaunt his entire life – he secured a State Cadet position at the recently founded Virginia Military Institute in Lexington. This state scholarship as well as the requirement that he repay it by teaching for two years after graduation doubtless informed his later support of public schooling during the debt controversy. In the meantime, Mahone’s young adulthood coincided perfectly with Virginia’s railroad craze. He became a civil engineer, and his prowess in both building and influential-friend-making elevated

²² Richard G. Lowe, “Virginia’s Reconstruction Convention: General Schofield Rates the Delegates,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 80, no. 3 (July, 1972): 341-360; Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, 60; Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Steel Drivin’ Man: John Henry, The Untold Story of an American Legend* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 63-64, 69-71.

him to chief engineer of the Norfolk & Petersburg (N&P) Railroad at only twenty-six. By 1860, at the age of thirty-three, Mahone was president. The Civil War briefly interrupted his railroading, but Mahone proved himself an invaluable asset to the Confederate cause, capturing the crucial Navy Yard at Norfolk early in the war – using the bells and whistles of an N&P engine to deceive US troops into abandoning the yard – and defending Petersburg at the end. At Appomattox, Mahone's was the most intact division in Robert E. Lee's defeated and devastated army. Weary of war's death and destruction, Mahone returned to his first love of railroading. The board of the dilapidated N&P reelected him as its president and was joined shortly afterwards when the Southside Railroad, connecting Petersburg to Lynchburg, did the same.²³ Mahone then turned his consolidationist gaze to the Virginia & Tennessee (VA&TN) Railroad, running from Lynchburg to the Tennessee border at Bristol, as the next leg in a single line from the Atlantic to the Mississippi.

Yet several interests, both within Virginia and without, were less than enthusiastic about Mahone's consolidation schemes. At issue was access to the valuable trade from southwest Virginia and beyond. Trade from further south steamed into Virginia at Bristol before moving along the VA&TN toward Lynchburg, where it could travel northeast to Baltimore via Alexandria, east to Richmond, or southeast to Norfolk. Mahone's Southside consolidation could favor Norfolk at the expense of these other cities and the rival roads that served them, particularly those associated with the Baltimore & Ohio, whose primary Virginia agent was the patrician John S. Barbour, Jr. Through means both fair and foul, the old VA&TN board had resisted efforts to elect Mahone as president, but Governor Pierpont's influence over the state-

²³ Blake, *William Mahone*, 5-73; *Mahone and Virginia! An Open Letter to Hon. John Paul from W.C. Elam* (n.p., 1889), 3-8, Library of Virginia Special Collections.

owned shares made their resistance futile. At the end of 1867, Mahone became president of the VA&TN. With Mahone now presiding over three separate railroads running from Norfolk to Bristol, the Atlantic, Mississippi, & Ohio (AM&O) railroad, as the consolidated line became known, was a practical reality.²⁴

When Henry Wells replaced Pierpont as governor, Mahone breathed a sigh of relief. One useful friend in the governor's mansion gave way to another. Wells had allegedly pledged his support to Mahone's AM&O consolidation, which Wells confirmed by allowing Mahone to select the state proxies, who voted the state's stocks on the boards of his railroads. But Mahone was not the only one Wells sought to aid. The B&O, seeking its own gateway to southern trade and consequently opposed to Mahone, still had designs for the VA&TN. Since Mahone controlled the state's vote, thanks to Governor Wells, the B&O maneuvered to subvert him by getting the state's stocks outright. In October 1868, the B&O sent an agent to convince Governor Wells to sell them the state's VA&TN stock. Wells pushed the state treasurer, who also served on the BPW, to agree to the sale. Instead, the treasurer exposed the proposal in the press. Virginians were outraged by what one historian called an "attempt to make Virginia a commercial tributary of Baltimore."²⁵ Although this effort failed, it convinced Mahone of two things: consolidation was anything but secure, and Wells could not be relied on. In the upcoming elections, rival corporations would carry their contest for control of Virginia's railways into the arena of Reconstruction politics.

²⁴ Robert Enoch Withers, *Autobiography of an Octogenarian* (Roanoke, VA: Stone Printing & MFG. Co. Press, 1907), 242-244; "Scene At a Railroad Meeting," *Alexandria Gazette*, October 12, 1867; *Richmond Dispatch*, November 14, 1867; Blake, *William Mahone*, 76-85.

²⁵ "Governor Wells's Proposal to Sell Out a Virginia Road to Baltimore," *Richmond Dispatch*, March 10, 1869; "Affairs in Virginia," *Richmond Dispatch*, March 17, 1869; Blake, *William Mahone*, 99-101.

As it turned out, Wells disappointed hopes that he would stem “radicalism” just as much as he did the proponents of Southside consolidation. The thinly veiled white supremacist “moderation” that won him the support of both conservative Republicans and the authorities of Military District No. 1 was actually a strategy of public noncommittal. Once his appointment as governor diminished the influence of his more radical opponent, Wells dropped the façade. Now, his political future depended not on his ability to appease Army brass but to woo voters. Wells moved to capture the support of Black Virginians to whom he had previously turned a cold shoulder. So when the constitutional convention put forward a document that disfranchised former Confederates and barred from office any man who could not take the “iron-clad oath,” Governor Wells vociferously endorsed it. Conservative white opposition to these clauses was understandably high. General Schofield, who selected Wells for his presumed moderation, now obstinately refused to appropriate funds to hold an election, postponing it for nearly a year.

While the Old Dominion sat in limbo, several groups of Virginians flocked to Washington to promote their respective causes. Wells and his allies insisted that the full constitution, as proposed, must be put to a vote. But several other groups of conservatives as well as moderate Republicans pleaded for the removal of the two “obnoxious clauses,” preaching “universal suffrage and universal amnesty.” Opposing both the Wells radicals and the mélange of middle-roaders were traditionalists who currently controlled the Conservative Party and were adamantly opposed the constitution with or without Confederate disfranchisement. Yet with Republicans firmly in control of the federal government, most white Virginians were convinced that compromise was unavoidable.²⁶

²⁶ For a detailed account of various factions’ attempts to capture and control the constitutional convention, its major provisions, and the efforts of these groups to win Congressional favor, see Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, 50-73. See also John S. Wise’s novelized recollections in Wise, *Lion’s Skin*, 200-201, 204-217, 236-250.

William Mahone saw Virginia's restoration to the Union and his consolidation plans as essentially the same. Wells had proven unfaithful to Southside consolidation, apparently willing to sell out the state's railroad interests to Baltimore capitalists. His endorsement of Confederate disfranchisement, in the eyes of many leading whites, made Wells equally unfaithful to "good government." On the flip side, the Conservatives had earlier nominated Robert E. Withers for governor on a platform of unequivocal opposition to the "Negro Constitution." This unreconstructed ticket, if elected, would certainly guarantee a continuance of military rule. Even more significantly, Withers, as editor of the *Lynchburg News*, openly opposed Mahone's consolidation plans.

With both Conservative and Republican nominees hostile to the AM&O, Mahone engineered a middle way. In comparison to the hopelessly reactionary Conservatives, the Republicans were not only the more popular option but also, in the minds of those desiring a speedy end to military rule, the most practical. For Mahone's plan to work, he had to push Republicans to "go as far to one extreme as the Bourbons had gone in the other." Only then could he suggest a compromise. Fortunately for Mahone, his railroading experience came in handy. Securing legislative approval for any railroad consolidation required a deft political hand. But Mahone's AM&O, which ran through the predominantly Black counties of the Southside as well as the overwhelmingly white counties of the Southwest meant that Mahone had cultivated a coterie of prominent political friends in both parties. So when the Republicans held their state convention in Mahone's hometown of Petersburg, his moderate Republican allies pushed their party to the extreme by securing the nomination of a Black man for the second spot on the Republican ticket. Even the allegedly radical Wells viewed this as a politically fatal blunder and damned Mahone and his insurgents for the maneuver. Having thus fabricated a contest of

political extremes, Mahone and his allies put forward their compromise. Gilbert C. Walker, a New York transplant to Norfolk and, crucially, a director of Mahone's N&P, headed a moderate "True Republican" ticket based on "universal suffrage and universal amnesty." President Ulysses Grant signaled his virtual approval of the "True Republican" ticket by asking Congress to allow separate votes on the state constitution and the Confederate disfranchisement clauses. The Conservative Party reconvened and withdrew its ticket, leaving only the moderate, pro-consolidation Walker against the "radical," anti-consolidation Wells. In the ensuing campaign, largely organized and funded by Mahone, Conservatives and moderate Republicans rallied around Mahone's man Walker, and Virginians ratified the new state constitution without Confederate disfranchisement.²⁷

It was not entirely apparent to average Virginians, but the restoration of "home rule" held multiple, overlapping meanings. On its most basic level, it meant the restoration of civil government. Conservative and moderate whites limited this to rule by "respectable gentlemen," although they largely disagreed as to which "gentlemen" were actually "respectable." Mahone and others insisted that "home rule" also meant control of Virginia's vital railroad lines. For many white Virginians, the issue was white rule or "Negro Rule."²⁸ But as Mahone insisted early in the campaign, the question was "between Baltimore on the one hand, Virginia on the other."²⁹ As the B&O actively aided Wells against Walker, the claim was valid.³⁰ Conservative

²⁷ Blake, *William Mahone*, 102-109; Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, 73-85; Withers, *Autobiography*, 247-249, 260, 275-277; *New Virginia* (Richmond: Whig, 1885), 24-29 in Library of Virginia Special Collections.

²⁸ "The Last Appeal," *Shenandoah Herald*, July 1, 1869.

²⁹ Quoted in Blake, *William Mahone*, 100.

³⁰ Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, 77, 79; Blake, *William Mahone*, 107-108. The primary agent of the B&O was John Strode Barbour, who was the president of the Orange & Alexandria Railroad, in which the B&O held a controlling interest. This would not be the last time the B&O and Barbour would play significant roles in opposing Mahone's railroad and political plans. See James T. Quinn, "John S. Barbour, Jr. and The Restoration of the Virginia Democracy, 1883-1892," MA Thesis (University of Virginia, 1966), 14, 16-18.

consolidation around Walker's nomination and the willingness to accept Black suffrage was widely understood as pure expedience, accepted halfheartedly at best or with crossed fingers at worst.³¹ Mahone and his allies, just as his rivals attempted to do, exploited the constantly-changing political situation to their own advantage as they saw it in the moment. When the political winds shifted – unexpectedly or according to plan – everyone adjusted their sails. They acted simultaneously and seemingly in unison but maintained their disparate courses. The multiple meanings of “home rule” converged, but it could not long withstand the forces pulling apart the bloated coalition it created. Days before the election, a prominent Richmond banker and several Black Richmonders on their way to a pro-Walker barbecue drowned in the James River when a bridge they were crossing collapsed. Just prior to the fatal accident, the banker insisted “There’s plenty of room!” at the party. According to John S. Wise, “it was an ill omen for the success of a movement founded on falsehood and abandonment of principle.”³²

The coalition's fragile balance of differing interests showed early signs of deterioration in its first years, which the dire economic straits only exacerbated. Folks were impoverished and indebted, begging for relief. Creditors, on the other hand, were unwilling to budge. Stay laws meant to protect property from creditor confiscation had been repealed and forbidden in the new state constitution. Various proposals for debtor relief were “nothing less than repudiation” according to opponents. They threatened the sanctity of contracts and allegedly discouraged much needed capitalist investment. In contrast, reformers pleaded not only for compassion, but

³¹ O’Ferrall, *Forty Years*, 196-197; Elizabeth H. Hancock, ed., *Autobiography of John E. Massey* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1909), 42; *Leesburg Washingtonian* quoted in *Richmond Dispatch*, January 18, 1869; “Our Politics, *Tenth Legion Banner*, March 21, 1870 and *Tenth Legion Banner*, December 1, 1870, Scrapbook 1B, 28, 52, William Mahone Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University (hereinafter cited as WMP).

³² “An Awful Calamity,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 3, 1869; Wise, *Lion’s Skin*, 244-245.

also common-sense consideration. Would it not be most beneficial to all involved, asked the *Tenth Legion Banner*, to protect debtors' property from forced sale at depreciated prices that only left creditors partially satisfied? Unreasoning greed and uncompromising self-interest, it insisted, only destroyed hope, further paralyzed industry, and weakened Virginians' already-limited ability to lift themselves from despondency. Moreover, policies like allowing a relatively high interest rate for loans, designed to encourage foreign investment, had backfired, depressing real estate values while doing little to bring capital into the state. There was no harm in trying these methods, but since they failed, it was time to stop "hunting up and adopting further plans to induce strangers to do the work for us." None were better suited to "relieving and restoring Virginia than Virginians."³³ Having restored "home rule," many wondered whether sovereignty meant anything if Virginians could not use it for their own benefit.

Yet while Virginians argued about private debts, they were blindsided by legislation dealing with the public debt. Political "redemption" had completely overshadowed the matter of debt redemption. In fact, the legislature elected in 1869 had virtually no instructions from voters regarding the state debt since it was not a topic in the campaign. The constitution required the state to adjust the debt with West Virginia, and most people assumed that negotiations would take at least long enough for it to be properly considered in future campaigns. And since any debt payments would be made with tax revenues, the state would presumably need to reassess property values for the first time since before the war.³⁴ Both of these assumptions proved incorrect.

³³ Several articles of the *Tenth Legion Banner*, edited by Harrison Holt Riddleberger (later a prominent Readjuster), discussing various aspects of debt relief, pro-creditor laws, and their effects can be found in Scrapbook 1B, 28-63, WMP. Quotes can be found on pages 32 and 54, respectively. See also Maddex *Virginia Conservatives*, 167-169; Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 24-26.

³⁴ Wise, *Lion's Skin*, 266.

In his first annual message to the legislature, Governor Walker recommended reorganizing the state debt. Virginia's credit, he said, was "in a condition of dishonor." Different bond issues spread out over several decades meant there was no singular Virginia state bond. There were instead many bonds bearing varying terms and rates of interest. Some were in good standing while others were past due. The debt, Walker declared, was "confused." More importantly, bonds of every variety were selling well below par on the open market. To restore confidence and induce orderly uniformity, Walker proposed consolidating the state debt. As with railroad consolidation, however, debt consolidation required that the holders of various Virginia bonds to buy into the scheme and willingly exchange (refund) their old bonds for new bonds. To encourage bondholders to refund, Walker suggested recapitalizing unpaid interest – increasing the principal balance and thus compounding investors' anticipated return. The new bonds would also have detachable interest coupons that could be turned into the state treasurer semiannually for payment.

The most significant, and politically fateful, aspect of Walker's plan to elicit the confidence of creditors and speed the refunding process was his recommendation that the interest coupons be receivable for taxes. In theory, bondholders would not have to worry whether the state could actually make interest payments. Tax-receivability essentially made interest payments self-executing. Regardless of the balance in the treasury or any changes in popular sentiment, bondholders would always be able to earn a return on their investment by simply paying their tax bills with coupons instead of cash.³⁵ Though legislators did not act immediately on Walker's

³⁵ "General Assembly of Virginia," *Richmond Dispatch*, March 9, 1870.

proposal, they later passed the Funding Act in March 1871, essentially in the form Walker had recommended.³⁶

Many Virginians immediately raised objections. The *Tenth Legion Banner*, for instance, warned readers to brace for higher tax burdens.³⁷ Others suspected speculation and political chicanery. Governor Walker and his brother had allegedly bought up large amounts of Virginia bonds at rock-bottom prices, expecting them to appreciate significantly in response to his proposal. Walker, his co-conspirators, and their lobbyists purportedly used “all the instrumentalities known to men” to push the Funding Act through the legislature. White opponents of the Funding Act later attempted to blame Black legislators for the corruption, but it passed both houses with the votes of both races and parties.³⁸ As expected, market values for Virginia bonds appreciated. Investors clearly endorsed the Funding Act.³⁹ Skeptical opponents nevertheless continued to condemn the Funding Act and declared that the next legislature would need to right the wrong lest the resulting extortionate taxes “rouse every demagogue [sic] in the land” and “thus fasten repudiation in its most disgraceful and degrading form upon us.”⁴⁰ In the fall 1871 elections, voters ousted most members of the legislature and elected a large majority of “anti-Funders” in their place.⁴¹

³⁶ Governor’s Message, December 7, 1870, *Journal of the House of Delegates of the State of Virginia*, 1870-1871, 4-10; Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 29-30.

³⁷ *Tenth Legion Banner*, March 28, 1871, Scrapbook 1B, 65, WMP.

³⁸ Hancock, *Autobiography*, 44-46; Wise, *Lion’s Skin*, 285-286; Quotation in “State Affairs – Mr. Stuart’s Address,” *The Valley Virginian*, June 28, 1877, Scrapbook 7, WMP; Frank G. Ruffin, *Facts, Thoughts and Conclusions in Regard to the Public Debt of Virginia* (Richmond: Johns & Goolsby, Book and Job Printers, 1885), 16-20; R.F. Walker to William Mahone, March 29, 1879, quoted in Blake, *William Mahone*, 136; Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, 98.

³⁹ “State and Railroad Bonds,” *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, April 1, 1871, 399.

⁴⁰ “Repudiation,” *Shenandoah Democrat*, May 4, 1871, Scrapbook 1B, 74-75, WMP.

⁴¹ O’Ferrall, *Forty Years*, 194. Only 26 of 132 legislators were returned to their seats. Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 41-42.

Yet while reaction against the Funding Act would be the central political issue for the remainder of the decade, it was actually a law passed two days prior that generated the most nail-biting excitement and bitter mud-slinging at the time. On March 28, 1871, the General Assembly directed the BPW to sell the state's remaining interests in internal improvements. The law and its consequences figured prominently in accusations of fraud and corruption surrounding the Funding Act's passage and thus leant credibility to those who called for its repeal. It also indicated the fragility of the Conservative coalition as different factions and corporate interests maneuvered for supremacy within the party. Lastly, it further solidified the rhetorical power of "home rule" against "foreign interests" that would figure prominently in the debt controversy as well as Mahone's role in it.

The "free railroad" policy, as it was called, was part and parcel of Governor Walker's economic reconstruction plan. In fact, much of the first half of his inaugural message in which he detailed his debt funding plan was about Virginia's railroads. Acknowledging the understandable and well-intentioned hopes behind the Virginia system of mixed enterprise, Walker deemed it a blunder and called for the state to clean its hands. Desperately needed repair and new construction required capital the state could not and should not provide, he insisted, so capitalists should take the reins. Walker further justified his plan by criticizing the type of interest the state had taken in railroad companies. Rather than bonds, secured by a claim on the company's property and franchise, the state primarily held stocks that offered no such security and currently paid little to no dividends. Moreover, while many of these companies' bonds performed better on the market than Virginia bonds, the companies' stocks did worse. According to Walker, the state's debt liability was balanced by inferior assets that simply did not pay. He recommended

that the state sell its stocks to railroad companies in exchange for state bonds as a means of reducing the public debt.⁴²

Ironically, the terms of the “free railroad” law were based in large part on the earlier consolidation efforts of Mahone, who adamantly opposed the new law. Governor Walker compared the two 1867 laws consolidating the Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Railroad as well as Mahone’s AM&O. Of the two, he said, the AM&O bill was preferable because it required the company to purchase the less valuable and non-paying stocks *before* it could buy any company bonds held by the state. Ultimately, the state would keep its most valuable assets (interest-bearing bonds) while offloading less remunerative stocks. Walker contended that, to the state’s detriment, the C&O, owned by transcontinental magnate C.P. Huntington, was not held to this “wise provision.” The 1871 “free railroad” law largely adhered to Walker’s suggestion.⁴³

What worried Mahone and others, however, was that Walker’s conception of value, while technically true, was only one of many. What mattered to Walker was income: bondholders not only had first dibs on railroads’ revenue but, barring default, interest payments were contractually guaranteed income on a regular basis. Stocks may generate dividends, but dividends were never guaranteed, and, in many instances never even declared. Tasked with overseeing the finances of a heavily indebted state comprised of citizens notoriously loath to pay taxes, Walker’s focus on income generation makes sense.

⁴² “General Assembly of Virginia,” *Richmond Dispatch*, March 9, 1870.

⁴³ “General Assembly of Virginia,” *Richmond Dispatch*, March 9, 1870; *Acts of the General Assembly of the state of Virginia, Passed in 1866-1867* (Richmond, James E. Goode, Printer, 1867), 705-708, 816-820; *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1870-71* (Richmond: C.A. Schaffter, 1871), 299-302. For more on how Huntington acquired the C&O, see Nelson, *Steel Drivin’ Man*, 70-71. The act was later amended to specifically mention bonds, loans, and claims in addition to stocks, but the amended section was then repealed a couple weeks later. Nevertheless, it was too late. See *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1871-72* (Richmond: R.W. Walker, 1872).

Mahone, on the other hand, was a railroader. Consistent income was great, but control was something far more valuable. And stocks meant control. Stockholders, through the directors and executives they selected, determined policy. Rates, connections, traffic agreements, suppliers, expansion, termini, and more fell under the purview of stockholders. Walker was thinking too small. Railroads were more than sources of income; they were the arteries through which the economic life of the state flowed. According to one newspaper, “the iron horse has to be fed and watered as he goes along, and very frequently at that.” Railroads bought wood from local farmers to fire their engines and fashion their ties. Laborers on the road or at the depots and shops received their pay from the railroad, while the Richmond and Lynchburg mills, with employees of their own, rolled and refurbished the road’s iron rails. The railroad “thus leaks at every pore, and becomes a stream of wealth rather, flowing through the State.”⁴⁴ More than mere interest payments, railroads could grow or destroy the communities through which they ran. And with the state as a majority stockholder in most of its roads, the state could make sure that the iron horse would serve Virginians. Although well intentioned, Governor Walker’s policy, Mahone feared, sacrificed this vital power for a quick buck. Selling off state-owned railroad stocks to the highest bidder would only tend to place that control in the hands of wealthier and better-connected capitalists in the North. The relative poverty and cash scarcity of the South made Walker’s plan “only a different mode of proposing to sell to foreign corporations – for they alone can buy.”⁴⁵ The policy, in short, fostered the very transfer of financial control of Virginia’s rails beyond its borders that Mahone had consistently resisted. Ultimately, the “free railroad” policy lived up to its name as several “foreign corporations” quickly scooped up the state’s

⁴⁴ [*Richmond Whig?*, June, 1870], Scrapbook 2, 36, WMP.

⁴⁵ “Selling Out!,” [*Richmond Whig?*, June, 1870], Scrapbook 2, 36, WMP.

stocks for pennies on the dollar.⁴⁶ In the meantime, Mahone and these “foreign corporations” engaged in “the most terrific legislative railroad fight ever known in the history of Virginia.”⁴⁷

At the same time Governor Walker called on the state to sell its interests in railroad companies, Mahone lobbied for a new AM&O charter. The 1867 charter allowing consolidation had actually become inoperative. Lending weight to fears that capital-flush northern investors were better situated than southerners, Mahone had failed to fulfill the stock purchase requirements – which Walker applauded as wise – within the allotted timeframe. But since Mahone still possessed managerial and stockholder control, consolidation was a practical, albeit tenuous, reality. And unlike before, Mahone and his allies had the data to prove the economic benefits of consolidation. Unchanged, however, was the opposition of the B&O and its Virginia allies. Proponents and opponents duked it out in the press while lobbyists plied legislators with money and booze. Mahone, as always, stood as the unrelenting defender of Virginia interests against the “rapacious monopoly” of the B&O. Renewing the AM&O charter would reinforce “the only bulwark of the commercial and political independence of the State.” The fight relitigated the “home rule” fight that fostered the political consolidation behind Walker a year earlier. Moreover, it was a call for Virginians to once again stand behind General Mahone against Yankee invasion. After all, Mahone was the “Hero of the Crater,” who had successfully repelled US troops after they set off 8,000 pounds of gunpowder beneath Confederate lines

⁴⁶ John D. Imboden, who during the Civil War led raids against the B&O railroad, wrote a report in which he detailed the minimum, superficial losses born by the state in its railroad policy. See *Imboden Report*, 75-77. Much of the state stock was purchased in exchange for grossly depreciated unfunded state bonds, ie. old bonds that had not been refunded into new bonds created by the 1871 Funding Act. Purchasers bought these bonds at their depreciated market value, but the state accepted them at their face value. The only floor for bidding was the current market value of the railroad stocks, which the governor himself deemed largely worthless. Essentially, the companies could bid the low going rate for the stocks, and pay with state bonds at face value despite purchasing them for much less.

⁴⁷ “Mahone No More,” *Richmond Dispatch*, October 9, 1895.

outside Petersburg. When the new AM&O charter passed in June 1870, commentators called it “another affair of the crater.” Citizens of Petersburg filled the streets in celebration, bearing banners that read “Virginia Railroads, Run by Virginians in the interest of Virginia.”⁴⁸ Mahone had once again assured “home rule.”

Walker’s “free railroad” policy undid this. It tore down the barricades Mahone and his allies had built up and put in their place a welcome sign to foreign control. The B&O used the opportunity to solidify its footing in Virginia by purchasing state-owned stocks in the Orange, Alexandria & Manassas railroad ran by John S. Barbour.⁴⁹ Even more problematic were the encroachments of Thomas A. Scott and his Pennsylvania Railroad. Scott dreamed of a trunk line connecting New York to Atlanta and had been buying up controlling interests in southern railroads through a holding company known as the Southern Railway Security Company. Mahone made it his mission to stop the foes he referred to as “Bucktails,” conjuring painful memories of the famous Pennsylvania regiment that fought throughout Virginia during the Civil War. Some argued that the “free railroad” law was a scheme concocted in Governor Walker’s office by agents of Scott to gain access to the valuable Richmond & Danville (R&D). Scott borrowed from Mahone’s own playbook of legislative corruption, and Mahone used his knowledge of such tactics to publish an exposé titled the *Bucktail Swindle*, even securing a legislative investigation that placed much of the blame on Black legislators. Nevertheless, the war became an increasingly bloody one. For every attack Mahone made, the Bucktails countered

⁴⁸ Much of the press in support of the AM&O can be found in Scrapbook 2, WMP. For a comparison to the Battle of the Crater, see the *Richmond Dispatch*, June 9, 1870. See also Blake, *William Mahone*, 111-120; Allen W. Moger, “Railroad Practices and Policies in Virginia After the Civil War,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 59, no. 4 (October, 1951): 431-434; Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, 150-153.

⁴⁹ Fairfax Harrison, *A History of the Legal Development of the Railroad System of the Southern Railway Company* (Washington, D.C., 1901), 475-477.

with superior power and resources. Indeed, Mahone even made a desperate temporary alliance with the hated B&O to counter the Bucktail invaders.⁵⁰ Regardless of the war's outcome, though, the "free railroad" law convinced Mahone that Walker was a traitor to himself as well as Virginia's material and political independence. Fortunately for Mahone, he was not alone.

When the new "anti-funder" legislature assembled at the end of 1871, it immediately attacked the Funding Act, which legislators denounced as corruptly and negligently conceived. Not only had Walker benefitted financially from the law, but his call for railroad divestment had allegedly been based on the Bucktails' pledge to support the Funding Act in a textbook *quid pro quo*. More embarrassingly, Walker's estimates about the state's financial health were criminally miscalculated since he used 1860 property valuations and did not account for the war's destruction or the emancipation of enslaved Virginians!⁵¹ When the General Assembly voted to repeal the Funding Act, Walker stamped his veto. The legislature, in response, suspended the tax-receivability of coupons. Only now, Virginia's supreme court ordered that the state must accept coupons as payment for taxes, but only for the bonds that had already been refunded.

In effect, the court undid the primary purpose of the Funding Act – consolidating Virginia's debt into a uniform instrument - and created two classes of bonds known as consols (short for "consolidated") and peelers (a corruption of "repealed"). Coupons attached to consols maintained their tax-receivability while peelers did not. Significantly, nearly 80% of consol holders were non-Virginians, which aggravated the feeling that Virginians would suffer

⁵⁰ For more on the Penn's railroad consolidation efforts in Virginia and throughout the South, see Nelson, *Iron Confederacies*, 71-94, 139-162, 168; Stover, *Railroads of the South*, 99-121. For the Virginia-specific story around the "free railroad" law's implementation and maneuverings, see Moger, "Railroad Practices;" Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, 150-161; Blake, *William Mahone*, 120, 123, 137-139. Mahone spent at least \$15,000 during March to fight the "free railroad" bill. See "Collinson's Falsehoods," *Richmond Whig*, April 4, 1879, Scrapbook 5, WMP.

⁵¹ Wise, *Lion's Skin*, 286-87; Hancock, *Autobiography*, 44.

increased taxes and gutted social programs to further fatten already-bloated “foreign” bondholders. Everyday Virginians who held peeler bonds (or most likely no bonds) were stuck paying their tax bills in cash. Meanwhile, railroad corporations and other cash-flush taxpayers could purchase coupons on the open market at subpar values. Within a year, coupons comprised nearly half of Virginia’s revenues. The burden of government expenditures increasingly crushed those least capable of bearing it while railroads, brokers, and bondholders with access to the bond market walked their money to the bank.⁵² Countless Virginians felt robbed by a combination of railroad capitalists, foreign bondholders, and Wall Street brokers. Their railroads were lost, their future was bonded, and it all happened on Walker’s watch.

Popular reactions to Walker’s allegedly treacherous “free railroad” and funding laws exposed the deep divisions in the Conservative coalition. Walker, his opponents later asserted, had been captured by the “bourbon element,” who led him to betray the more “liberal and progressive” factions of the party represented by Mahone. From that moment, the Bourbons dominated the Conservative coalition.⁵³ Although the moniker reminiscent of Virginias ancien regime was not entirely accurate, it served as a rhetorical shorthand for the increasing unresponsiveness of Conservative Party leadership to popular sentiment as the debt controversy

⁵² For more detailed accounts of the debt issue, see James Tice Moore, *Two Paths to the New South: The Virginia Debt Controversy, 1870-1883* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 12-68; Brent Tarter, *A Saga of the New South: Race, Law, and Public Debt in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 11-101; Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, 233-255.

⁵³ “Senator Mahone,” [*New York Tribune?*], Scrapbook 18, 6, WMP.

progressed.⁵⁴ Debt-payment at any cost became synonymous with Virginia's "honor." But as many Virginians insisted, "honor won't buy a breakfast."⁵⁵

To replace Walker, Mahone and the B&O joined forces to elect James L. Kemper, who supported "Virginia railroads" against the Bucktails. Kemper's opposition to the Funding Act also made him a generally popular candidate. Once in office, though, Kemper also "succumbed to the influences and blandishments of Bourbonism." Despite his criticism of the Funding Act, Kemper held that Virginia had entered into a contract from which it could not extract itself without bondholders' consent. In correspondence and conferences with bondholder representatives, he vainly sought a compromise that bondholders would never willingly accept. In order to satisfy the seemingly insatiable bondholders, Walker pushed for various cuts to government spending that were nothing less than an attack on democracy. Under his tenure, payment of the capitation tax became a prerequisite for voting, the number of legislators was cut by a quarter, and legislative sessions would occur only once every two years instead of annually.

Ultimately, the fire sale of Virginia's railroads did practically nothing to alleviate the debt burden. Virginians instead watched politicians elected to alleviate that burden refuse to do so while whittling away at the means of holding those same politicians accountable. The debt grew; taxes increased; schools shuttered; state hospitals and asylums turned patients over to jails; jails and the state penitentiary farmed out the incarcerated to planters or, in many cases, to build

⁵⁴ Historiographical debate on the utility and correctness of "Bourbon" is not new and was largely connected with questions of continuity and change in the postbellum South. I will use the term without scare quotes because, regardless of historians' disagreement, contemporaries used the term in a way that made sense to them. Most generally, it represented men who tended to be more politically and economically conservative and tended to resist or oppose democracy, reform, and social change, regardless of their antebellum social position. Among others, see C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951; reprint, 1971), 1-50; James C. Cobb, "Beyond Planters and Industrialists: A New Perspective on the New South," *Journal of Southern History* 54, no. 1 (Feb., 1988): 45-68. For this debate specifically in the context of Virginia, see Moore, *Two Paths*; Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*.

⁵⁵ *Shenandoah Herald*, June 23, 1880.

railroads the state no longer owned. According to the calculus of Kemper and the Conservatives, creditors took priority over constituents.⁵⁶ Black Virginians, whose rights had been earlier sacrificed in the name of “moderation,” suffered first and most from the policy of retrenchment. Increasingly, however, white Virginians, too, were awakening to what John S. Wise called “the humbug” upon which the Conservative coalition had been founded. As the prosperity that Conservatives promised never came, the cracks previously papered over by moderate white supremacy were becoming unmendable.⁵⁷

And then there was the panic of 1873. Any hope for successful repayment of the public debt seemed all the more quixotic, and the economic strains on normal Virginians only more unbearable. While many may have taken a bittersweet pleasure in the toll the panic took on railroad corporations, the collapse rang the death knell for Virginia-controlled railways. Hundreds of railroads throughout the country, especially in the South, defaulted on interest payments to creditors and fell into receivership followed by court-ordered sales that sped “foreign” acquisitions to full steam.⁵⁸ Mahone would lose his beloved AM&O in the same process. His struggle to salvage and redeem his road made him acutely aware of the unbending

⁵⁶ For contemporary judgements of Kemper, see *New Virginia*, 33; Wise, *Lion's Skin*, 300-303; Withers, *Autobiography*, 314-316. See also, Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 49-67; Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, 104-120, 222-223, 238-245; Pulley, *Old Virginia*, 12-13, 30-32; Moger, *Virginia*, 21-30. Kemper's executive papers provide significant insight into his views on the debt and his frequent exasperation with bondholders and their representatives, Executive letter books of Governor James L. Kemper, 1874-1877, Library of Virginia, (Microfilm) Misc. Reel 6193.

⁵⁷ Wise specifically discussed “the humbug” in relation to the state's railroad assets. Following the first elections after Virginia's restoration, Wise said, “Then the ‘business men’ went to work at the business they were elected to do.” His account also exemplifies how leading white Readjusters maintained strong white supremacist prejudices. Although he referred to the entire legislature as essentially corrupt, his examples were of unnamed Black legislators speaking in exaggerated dialect. It is worth noting, however, that Wise's account is a historical novel published in 1905, decades after the Readjuster revolt and his own removal to New York. There is no doubt that it was racist, but Wise likely played into the literary devices that were highly popular among white readers and authors, regardless of their support of or opposition to Black rights or even the author's race. Wise, *Lion's Skin*, 266-272. For more on the seemingly contradictory uses of dialect in fiction, see K. Stephen Prince, *Stories of the South: Race and the Reconstruction of Southern Identity, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 135

⁵⁸ Stover, *Railroads of the South*, 122-154.

recalcitrance of creditors, more specifically their agents, in the face of unanticipated economic hardship. It also pushed him to abandon his role as a behind-the-scenes kingmaker and step more openly into the political arena. With his railroad power waning in the face of increased pressure and influence of “foreign corporations,” Mahone changed tack. Conservative leaders had been largely successful at suppressing the smoldering popular unrest around the public debt. Mahone now hoped to unleash it. Ironically, the man perhaps most responsible for constructing the Conservative coalition and diminishing the power of Black Virginians would soon take charge of a movement that would eventually bring Black politics to the fore.

Prior to the crash, prospects for the AM&O were bright. The new charter allowed the issuance of \$15 million worth of new consolidated bonds to facilitate repairs, extension, and the retirement of the divisional companies’ debts. Mahone contracted with John C. Collinson of England to sell these new bonds in Europe.⁵⁹ Rival corporations attempted to weaken the marketability of AM&O bonds such as when “a mere figure head” of “competing Railroad Kings” filed a frivolous suit, which was ultimately thrown out.⁶⁰ Collinson wrote from London that foreign investors were also worried about a proposed rival line (which never existed apart from on paper) backed by Tom Scott and the Pennsylvania.⁶¹ Indeed, the railroad war being waged in the Virginia press crossed the Atlantic. “Tom Scott and Co.” did “their utmost to injure us here,” Collinson later wrote after finding the London market for AM&O bonds “in a most

⁵⁹ “Memorandum of an Agreement entered into between *John Collinson*, of London, England, party of the first part, and *the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad Company*, (hereinafter called the Company) *General William Mahone*, President thereof, party of the second part,” September 29, 1871, Box 201, WMP.

⁶⁰ “The Railroad Injunction Case,” *Valley Virginian*, November 23, 1871; Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, 152.

⁶¹ Blake, *William Mahone*, 122-123, 122n.71; See also, “The Last Phase of the Railroad War,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 24, 1871 and *Acts, 1870-1871*, 141-145. The rival road, the Norfolk & Great Western, never became an actual reality, as the Panic of 1873 prevented it from raising enough capital. See *Imboden Report*, 72.

deplorable condition.”⁶² Nevertheless, sales proceeded apace until a series of financial collapses spreading westward from Russia caused capital markets to seize in anticipation of a global depression.⁶³

Already feeling the effects of in the form of decreased receipts, the AM&O was only able to pay half of the interest due to the divisional and consolidated bondholders in early 1874.⁶⁴ These two classes of bondholders both had liens on the AM&O property and revenue, although the divisional bondholders’ claims were limited specifically to the portions associated with the original, unconsolidated companies (N&P, Southside, and VA&TN), for which separate books were kept. While the company was flush, this complex accounting was confusing but largely unproblematic. But default raised serious concerns among the different bondholders and stockholders. Nominally sharing the same interest – the company’s success – they now struggled to determine whether their interests really were identical and, if not, whose interests were superior.⁶⁵ Mahone did his best to assure all interests that their investments were secure. In language similar to many working-class Virginians struggling under their own burdensome debts, Mahone asked simply for forbearance while he paid what interest he could.⁶⁶ John Collinson similarly attempted to bolster the confidence of foreign consolidated bondholders until

⁶² Blake, *William Mahone*, 124, 124n.84.

⁶³ William Mahone, *A Reply to John Collinson’s Report to the Consolidated Bondholders of the Atlantic, Mississippi & Ohio Rail Road Co.* (np., 1877), 3-4, WMP. For a concise argument that links the 1873 Panic and ensuing depression to drastic changes in international commodity flows and financial innovations, see Scott Reynolds Nelson, “A Storm of Cheap Goods: New American Commodities and the Panic of 1873,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 10 no. 4 (October, 2011): 447-453. Nelson expands significantly on this argument in *A Nation of Deadbeats: An Uncommon History of America’s Financial Disasters* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 149-179 and *Oceans of Grain: How American Wheat Remade the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2022), 103-180.

⁶⁴ John Collinson Report to the Bondholders of the Consolidated Mortgage Loan of the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad Company, March 26, 1874, WMP

⁶⁵ Mahone, *A Reply*, Appendix, pgs VII-VIII, XXXVII-XXXIX, WMP.

⁶⁶ William Mahone to the Consolidated Bondholders of the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Ohio Railroad Company, December 15, 1875, WMP.

as late as February 1876.⁶⁷ Within a month and without warning, though, Collinson suddenly changed his tune. He resigned as agent of the AM&O and initiated legal proceedings against the company on behalf of the consolidated bondholders.⁶⁸ Shocked, Mahone wrote to a close friend, “The British went back on us.” He concluded his note by promising his “remaining energies...to resist their attempt at such wrong to our people, and our State.”⁶⁹

Again, the old drama of fearless Mahone standing against Virginia’s “alien adventurers” played out in the press. The treacherous Collinson had allegedly allied himself with Tom Scott and John Garrett of the B&O, who shared no goal apart from destroying the AM&O and siphoning Virginia’s agricultural and mineral bounty toward Philadelphia and Baltimore. Mahone and his allies made hay of the fact that Collinson and the consolidated bondholders (mostly British) had not consulted the divisional bondholders (mostly Virginians) before launching their suit against the company. The English bondholders would surely refuse to pay interest on divisional bonds, run the road ragged to pay their own claims, and leave the divisional bondholders with a valueless wreck. Similarly, the press and Mahone feared that the subordinate claims of stockholders (largely municipalities) as well as the State were unfairly dismissed from consideration. In the event of a sale, they predicted without exaggeration, these assets would likely be wiped out entirely. Collinson and the English bondholders attempted to assuage these fears to no avail. By the end of the year, Mahone composed a ninety-nine page response to the English bondholders in which he disputed the charges made by Collinson. He provided his new

⁶⁷ Mahone, *A Reply*, 6, Appendix pg. I-II, WMP.

⁶⁸ John Collinson Report to the Bondholders of the Consolidated Mortgage Loan of the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad Company, March 11, 1876, WMP

⁶⁹ William Mahone to H.H. Riddleberger, March 26, 1876, Box 1, Folder 1, Harrison Holt Riddleberger Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Marry (hereinafter cited as Riddleberger Papers).

foes with an ominous warning. Any sacrifice of the various parties interested in the AM&O would only generate bitter resentment, which would certainly be felt in higher taxes, unfavorable legislation, and adverse jury verdicts. Railroad corporations, rightly or wrongly, already bore the ire of most Virginians. Would not foreign owners, Mahone asked, with no loyalty to the road or the communities through which it ran worsen this popular prejudice? Such prejudice in the face of misfortune was all the more dangerous, he added. Bluntly, he reminded the English bondholders that “it is sometimes as well to ask, ‘Is it politic?’ as, ‘Is it my right?’” Collinson had started the war; Mahone aimed to finish it.⁷⁰

At this point, the fight to redeem the AM&O merged entirely with the public debt controversy. Even before legal proceedings began, some English bondholders had threatened that the AM&O’s default would unfavorably “reflect on the ‘Old Dominion.’”⁷¹ Once proceedings had commenced, the bondholders made the link explicit. As the debt controversy continued to worsen, calls for readjustment and even repudiation grew louder.⁷² Collinson and the English bondholders insisted that they sought foreclosure because Mahone had, “as we say, repudiated” an agreement signed in January 1876.⁷³ Mahone, in his response to the bondholders, forcefully denied charges that he had “ever given encouragement to the policy of State repudiation.” His friends in the AM&O fight, stood on both sides of the debate over the Funding Act, and he could

⁷⁰ There is an immense amount of material detailing the various struggles, both legal and in the press, in Boxes 201 and 202 in the Mahone Papers. Particularly valuable is Mahone’s *Reply*, which includes the report in which Collinson listed his charges, as well as various other pieces and extracts of correspondence. The newspaper clippings in Box 202 are the best sources for the more conspiratorial aspects of the fight.

⁷¹ “Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Bondholders Spoliation Scheme,” (London) *The Hour*, January 25, 1876, in AM&O Clippings, Box 202, WMP.

⁷² A. Dudley Mann to F.W.M. Holliday, March 1, 1878, Executive Letter Books of Governor Frederick W.M. Holliday, 1878-1881, Library of Virginia, (Microfilm) Misc. Reel 6192 (hereinafter cited as Holliday Letterbooks).

⁷³ “The A.M.&O. R.R. Fight,” *Richmond Enquirer* [n.d.], in AM&O Clippings, Box 202, WMP.

not be held responsible for every opinion held by those who agreed with his railroad policies.⁷⁴

But 1877 was an election year, and Mahone was about to make his official political debut.

Having made governors who proved disappointing, if not treacherous, Mahone set his sights on the top spot for himself. Old railroad allies like John Moncure Robinson of the nascent Seaboard Airline system desired Mahone's "election as Governor above all things."⁷⁵ It was clear that railroad control motivated Mahone but, more specifically, it was railroad control for Virginia. One friend guessed that Mahone's ambition was that he "may control the internal improvement policy and system of the state," and enforce Virginia's "sovereign" power to prevent railroads from being "diverted to other uses hostile to the purposes and ends of their construction."⁷⁶ When the court-appointed receivers in charge of the AM&O did not file a legally required report to the BPW, one press correspondent considered it, in rhetorically salient language, "another illustration of the fact that the State has no rights railroads are bound to respect." Under Mahone, the AM&O was the last bastion of Virginia-controlled railways. Now, the correspondent concluded, the receivers acting in the interest of Collinson and the foreign bondholders "don't want to be bothered by the State."⁷⁷

Control of Virginia's railroad policy, however, was not Mahone's sole motivation. Mahone was the only candidate to come out openly in favor of readjustment. Battling against obstinate foreign bondholders willing to sacrifice all other interests for their own solitary benefit, Mahone had something in common with normal Virginians who anxiously watched as public schools were robbed of funds so that foreign bondholders could be paid. Moreover, as a

⁷⁴ Mahone, *Reply*, 41, Box 201, WMP.

⁷⁵ John Moncure Robinson reportedly offered "he would assist you in every way possible," according to Mahone's longtime informant. R.F. Walker to William Mahone, February 25, 1877, Box 9, WMP.

⁷⁶ James G. Holladay to William Mahone, March 16, 1877, Box 9, WMP.

⁷⁷ Clipping, attached to R.F. Walker to William Mahone, February 22, 1877, Box 9, WMP.

beneficiary of public support for his own education and having briefly served as a teacher, Mahone knew precisely how valuable publicly funded education could be and what doors it could open that might otherwise be closed. While readjustment may have been politically expedient in Mahone's effort to save the AM&O, readjustment also meant saving the public schools. And according to Mahone, the public schools served both the children of Confederate veterans as well as "the large class of persons recently admitted to the privileges of citizenship." Ultimately, the AM&O's default opened the door to a political realignment of previously divergent interests and marked a turning point in the debt controversy.

At the Conservative Party convention, Mahone took a strong and early lead. But he was unable to overcome the combined forces of Conservatives who had long opposed his railroad schemes, in particular, John W. Daniel, who declared he would rather burn the schools than readjust the debt. Accepting defeat and hoping to still guide policy, Mahone's friends threw their support to the one-armed Frederick Holliday after he promised to follow the people's will regarding the debt. Holliday secured the nomination, and the Conservative platform was vaguely pledged to readjustment. That the Conservatives had taken any favorable stand on readjustment was due largely to Mahone forcing the issue. For the Conservative leadership, it was a reluctant submission to the popular pressure they had so long sought to contain.⁷⁸

Still, the state's bondholders and their allies in Virginia had not been defeated. The Conservative's candidate for lieutenant governor was an avowed funder, who openly denounced the party platform and called attempts to kill the tax receivable coupons "worse than revolution."⁷⁹ When the legislature passed a bill that prioritized funding schools and other

⁷⁸ Pearson, *Readjuster Movement in Virginia*, 68-75; Blake, *William Mahone*, 148-155; Moger, *Virginia*, 30-33; Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 30.

⁷⁹ *Richmond Whig*, October 10, 1877, Scrapbook 7, WMP.

government services over interest payments, Holliday reneged on his promise to follow the legislature's lead and vetoed the bill. It was, Holliday contended, nothing more than an attempt to rob the state's creditors.⁸⁰ Holliday did forward a proposal to lower the interest rate, but the London-based Corporation of Foreign Bondholders (CFB) responded that it was "useless to submit it for acceptance."⁸¹ Clearly, the bondholders were still calling the shots, but now they were nervous. Under duress, they begrudgingly agreed to come to the bargaining table.

As bondholders and legislators prepared for negotiations, proponents of readjustment ramped up their attacks in a familiar fashion. Mahone wrote that Virginia's sovereignty "and the very freedom of the people" were under attack and proposed the creation of an entirely new party dedicated to readjustment.⁸² It was Virginia against her "alien enemies," and Virginia was losing. Central to many arguments was that the so-called debt-payers were the real repudiators. The very functioning of the current system discriminated against the different classes of bondholders and interests. Since 1872, holders of peeler bonds had never received their full interest payments. On the other hand, those consol bondholders, whose coupons were receivable for taxes, made off like bandits. According to readjusters, funders were robbing Peter to pay Paul. Only Peter was their fellow Virginians while Paul was an amalgamation of foreign bondholders, brokers, and moneyed elites who could purchase coupons for cheap and dump them on the treasury. Even worse, they had also robbed Peter's poor kids! By 1879, nearly \$1.5 million had been diverted from the public schools alone. Even asylums and institutions for the blind and deaf were not

⁸⁰ Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 42-43.

⁸¹ *Sixth Annual General Report of the Council of the Corporation of the Corporation of Foreign Bondholders, 1878* (London, 1879), 54. The proposal was known as the Bocock-Fowler Act, which can be found in *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1877-1878* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1878), 230-233. For other bondholder comments on the act, see correspondence between April and August 1878 in Holliday Letterbooks.

⁸² William Mahone to H.H. Riddleberger, March 2 and July 15, 1878, in Box 1, Folder 3, Riddleberger Papers.

spared from retrenchment. There was much talk about what terms the bondholders would consent to, but many wondered why the consent of Virginians was never even asked, much less taken seriously.⁸³ The issue was that all parties involved were suffering, but many were suffering more so that few could suffer less. And the Conservative Party leadership was letting it happen.

In more ways than one, debates over the competing equity claims of different classes of bondholders, the state, and the people were eerily similar to the ongoing AM&O fight. Indeed, a London correspondent wrote in January 1879 that John Collinson would be the only representative of the English bondholders at the upcoming conference with legislators.⁸⁴ This does not appear to have been the case, at least as far as the official conference went.⁸⁵ Still, because he was frequently in the US dealing with AM&O legal matters, Collinson also acted as an agent for the CFB and regularly communicated with Governor Holliday. Collinson and Holliday quietly negotiated a proposed debt settlement bill, which Holliday later presented to the General Assembly. He even devised a code so that Holliday could communicate directly with the CFB via telegram without giving up the game. Concerned about public perception, Holliday worried that the secret talks might be mistaken as improper, at one point pleading with Collinson to keep his message away from the press and clarifying that it was “private correspondence, not official.”⁸⁶ When different bondholder associations could not agree on terms to present to the

⁸³ See various articles in Scrapbook 7, WMP; *New Virginia*, 36-38; Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, 218-229, 246-248, 256-268.

⁸⁴ “Letters from London,” *Richmond Dispatch*, January 23, 1879

⁸⁵ The official representatives of several bondholder associations were Hugh McCulloch, Samuel Ward, Charles Fry, F.A. Colston, and Isaac Carrington, who represented the Council of Foreign Bondholders. The primary associations were the Council of Foreign Bondholders and the Funding Association of the United States. “The Public Debt,” *Richmond Dispatch*, January 30, 1879.

⁸⁶ E.P. Bouverie to F.W.M. Holliday, November 1878, Cable Code between Council of Foreign Bondholders and Governor Holliday Arranged November 8, 1878, An Act, Etc., F.W.M. Holliday to John Collinson, November 16, 1878, in Holliday Letterbooks; *Journal of the House of Delegates of the State of Virginia, 1878-1879* (Richmond: R.E. Frayser, Superintendent of Public Printing), 23-26.

General Assembly, Collinson represented the CFB. The CFB's American counterpart was represented by former US Treasury Secretary Hugh McCulloch. Just days before the state-creditor conference, Collinson and McCulloch sat down to hash out the differences in their plans. They eventually agreed on a single bill to present to the legislature. When Governor Holliday signed what became known as the McCulloch Bill, Collinson wired that the news gave him "much pleasure to hear."⁸⁷

Others were less pleased. While the legislature was still considering the McCulloch Bill, a "People's Convention" met in Richmond to form a new Readjuster Party. Delegates denounced what they called the Broker's Bill since brokers tasked with funding the new bonds seemed to be the biggest beneficiaries. While the bill promised to reduce interest rates, it recapitalized the interest in arrears, compounding it yet again. Similarly, it maintained the hated tax-receivability of coupons and surrendered the state's sovereignty by forcing creditors to fund their bonds through "a syndicate of speculators" instead of dealing directly with the state. According to H.H. Riddleberger of Shenandoah County, the Broker's Bill destroyed the public schools "beyond question," as it offered no assurance that school funds would not continue to be diverted from their constitutionally mandated purpose. The delegates created a new party organization, issued a platform dedicated to complete readjustment of the debt based on the sovereign will of the state, and named William Mahone as the new party's chief. Rallying around opposition to the Broker's

⁸⁷ Several pieces of correspondence in the Holliday Letterbooks between November 1878 and late January 1879 reference the "open antagonism" of the CFB and McCulloch's Funding Association. Collinson's wired his approval on March 28, 1879. See also, "The Public Debt," *Richmond Dispatch*, January 30, 1879; *Seventh Annual General Report of the Council of the Corporation of the Corporation of Foreign Bondholders, 1879* (London, 1880), 65-66.

Bill, the new Readjuster Party set its sights on the November elections.⁸⁸ The Conservative coalition had finally exploded.

Bondholders and their agents looked on with grave concern about the broader implications of a Readjuster victory. One New York agent predicted that if successful, the Readjusters would next “meddle with the RRd interests of the State” before finally “unsettle[ing] all obligations public and private.”⁸⁹ Public debts, railroad control, and, ultimately, capitalism were dominoes in a line. Mahone had earlier declared that had he received the gubernatorial nomination in 1877, the AM&O would have been saved and the bondholders would have quickly submitted.⁹⁰ John Collinson appears to have agreed. The “Mahone-Collinson Affair,” after a period of relative quiet, suddenly resurged in the press as the two hurled charges and countercharges in a series of open letters. Collinson reiterated allegations of Mahone’s mismanagement and fraud while Mahone accused Collinson of being in league with the B&O and other “foreign” railroad corporations. With a possible foreclosure sale approaching, and Mahone leading a popular revolt against recalcitrant foreign bondholders, the stakes were higher than ever. According to the *Wytheville Dispatch*, Collinson “would now dig up the carcasses of defunct falsehoods [about Mahone’s management of the AM&O] to prejudice the great cause of Readjustment.”⁹¹ But Collinson’s effort to sow prejudice was futile. An old employee wrote to Mahone that Conservatives warned that a Readjuster victory would result in Mahone buying the AM&O. The employee simply responded, “would to God, it might be so.”⁹² November brought a

⁸⁸ On the People’s Convention, see Scrapbook 9, 28-39. For other critiques of the McCulluch Act, see Hancock, *Autobiography*, 142-157; Ruffin, *Facts*, 27-31; H.H. Riddleberger, “Bourbonism in Virginia,” *North American Review* 134, no. 305 (April, 1882): 421-425.

⁸⁹ Charles M. Fry to F.W.M. Holliday, December 16, 1878, in Holliday Letterbooks.

⁹⁰ William Mahone to H.H. Riddleberger, August 19, 1877, Box 1, Folder 2, Riddleberger Papers.

⁹¹ See various articles from 1879 in Scrapbook 5, WMP.

⁹² J.D.B. Rusk to William Mahone, November 7, 1879, Box 16, WMP.

Readjuster victory. A disappointed Hugh McCulloch concluded, “One thing the elections have demonstrated plainly enough; that nothing is to be gained by temporizing with the readjusters.”⁹³

Both the debt fight and the AM&O fight would continue beyond 1879. But the battlefield had changed drastically since the time these fights began. Compromise was no longer an option. Now, a new coalition of “the people” replaced the old Conservative coalition that had abandoned them. And while the old coalition had become increasingly conservative, the new coalition would become increasingly radical in its composition and policy. The Readjusters aimed to bring about something more than a simple readjustment of the debt. They sought to readjust the very foundations of Virginia and southern society. At the heart of their program was a true restoration of democracy, an insistence that the state should serve the masses, not the classes. This prospect was terrifying to conservatives of every stripe. Readjusters represented a challenge to the “natural” order of things. Instead of men of “honor,” Readjusters were the rabble. Over the “sanctity of contracts,” they insisted on the popular will. In the face of unequal economic and political power, they demanded equal consideration. Rather than unthinking faith in “tradition,” they saw a world rapidly changing and set about changing with it.

Nevertheless, many Readjusters viewed themselves not as radicals but as living up to the original promise of the Conservative coalition from which they came. In 1869, conservative and moderate Virginians, both white and Black, combined in a program of “universal suffrage and universal amnesty.” Together, they “redeemed” Virginia from so-called military despotism and radical rule. Virginia was to be for Virginians. Yet, in the name of economic development, the new Conservative leadership seemed bent simply on elevating new despots and allowing radical

⁹³ Hugh McCulloch to F.W.M. Holliday, November 25, 1879, in Holliday Letterbooks.

adventurers to pillage and plunder the Old Dominion and its people. They bound the state over to foreign bondholders while practically giving away much of the state's railroads to foreign corporations. Virginians pleaded again and again for forbearance and protection, and repeatedly elected men to answer their cries for relief. Instead, while preaching honor and honest obligations, politicians sacrificed the claims of their constituents in favor of the claims of foreign bondholders. Meanwhile, the promised flood of capital and immigrants never came; tax burdens increased while property values decreased; public schools and charitable institutions languished and shuttered. It was not the Readjusters who had changed; they had been quite consistent. The Conservatives, captured by hidebound Bourbons, had simply repudiated their founding promise.

This consistent belief in Virginia for Virginians formed the central link between Mahone and the Readjusters. Mahone was no disinterested saint. As one of his strongest allies later wrote, he was "not free from many of the criticisms...made upon the 'Conservative.'" The AM&O was one of the first to get a favorable settlement with the state, and its money "had been freely spent" to sway elections and legislation. Yet the people believed Mahone would "take hold of the all-absorbing debt problem, just as he would handle an engineering problem on the reorganisation [sic] of a railroad." He would work it out "without wasting time upon maudlin sentimentality, which, professing honesty, was neither honest nor sensible."⁹⁴ While Mahone's sense of Virginia's interests was heavily tinged with self-interest, his arguments were essentially unchanged. According to Mahone and his allies, the AM&O was Virginia's road. This was even more true while it was the only major transportation line in the state whose financial control was maintained by Virginians. Regardless of the means used to protect the AM&O, many believed it

⁹⁴ Wise, *Lion's Skin*, 307-308.

truly was the last remaining bastion of Virginia's economic independence. When "foreign" corporations and English bondholders threatened it or worse, betrayed it, they threatened and betrayed Virginia. More importantly, they did so with little regard to the diverse equity claims involved. Interested only in profit, they were willing to sacrifice the interests of other bondholders, shareholders, workers, contractors, suppliers, and the communities along the line. For Mahone and most Readjusters, and despite the claims of their opponents, repudiation was never the intention. It was equitable and fair consideration for all interested parties, regardless of the legal priority of their claims. Instead of "repudiating just claims," they insisted all claims were just. None should be sacrificed for the sole benefit of others. As they saw it, readjustment was essentially the path of moderation between extremes. If they were radical, it was only because others had strayed from earlier promises and imagined ideals.⁹⁵

The Readjuster convention of 1879 shared some interesting similarities and differences with the Conservative convention of 1871. Both took place in Richmond under the vaulted ceiling of Mozart Hall, and both were notable for the presence of Black delegates. Yet Conservatives in 1871 desperately avoided discussion of the public debt, fearing that it would explode their delicate coalition. Now, the debt was the primary topic, and the Readjusters laughed at the charge they were destroying the old party. In 1871, Jubal Early looked at the Black delegates and withdrew from the Conservative convention in a huff. Recalling this farce in 1879, H.H. Riddleberger proudly welcomed the assistance of Black Virginians "in restoring the rights of Virginia and protecting the interests of Virginians." Others similarly denounced attempts to divide them with old appeals to white unity. "Regardless of color or condition," they

⁹⁵ For more on how seeming moderation and conservatism could be radical in itself, see Craig Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism: Tradition, the Public Sphere, and Early Nineteenth-Century Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

were all there “to redeem the people and the state.” Readjusters proudly accepted the pejorative designation of “black and tan,” insisting “We are all Virginians, and all for Virginia.”⁹⁶ The revolution the Conservative coalition had so long suppressed had finally arrived.

⁹⁶ Scrapbook 9, 34-37, WMP.

CHAPTER 2

READJUSTERS IN BLACK AND WHITE

At the February 1879 Readjuster convention, William Jefferson stood with pride. The farmer from New Kent was answering “the call which convened the people of Virginia without distinction of color.” He acknowledged that he was “a Radical,” but his commitment to readjustment was as strong as any Conservative’s. Jefferson spoke for other Black Virginians and forcefully declared that “we don’t want to pay a cent” of the debt. Alluding to the still-fresh memory of slavery, Jefferson concluded that “we think we paid our share of it, if it was ever justly chargeable upon us, by long years of servitude.” More than burdensome taxes, underfunded public institutions, and other political matters, Jefferson raised a simple question of equity. Was it just to expect those who had been enslaved when the debt was contracted to bear an equal burden in its repayment? He added that even in freedom, Black men and women received far from equal treatment. Black Virginians lived lives marred by inequity. Good will from whites, according to Jefferson, was neither free nor equal; it was only won through humble deference. “We are anxious not to offend you.” Nevertheless, he insisted to his white counterparts that in the cause of readjustment, “your interests and our interests are identical.” Applause filled the convention hall.

Jefferson’s speech was no mere wish to let bygones be bygones as white and Black Virginians moved forward hand in hand to prosperity. As he pointed out, their interests were anything but truly identical. There was, however, an opportunity. The debt issue had destroyed the Conservative coalition. It had troubled the political waters. Now, Jefferson implied, Black Virginians held the balance of power. There was a new chance to heal themselves “of the

political leprosy which had fatally afflicted them.”¹ Instead of something to be contained, Black suffrage was now being courted. Rather than identical, Black and white interests were *close enough*.

White delegates agreed not only with Jefferson’s conclusion, but also the political significance of slavery. Shortly before Jefferson made his speech, one white delegate stated that “we owe a great debt to the colored people. They labored for and protected the families” of white men during the Civil War.² Although exemplifying Lost Cause paternalism, the speaker acknowledged a moral debt, even if not the financial one owed for centuries of enslavement. He tacitly recognized that Black Virginians did, indeed, have a right to make demands in exchange for political support. A day prior, another white delegate drew his own connection to slavery by decrying that English bondholders “not only have our bonds, but hold us in bondage.”³ Whether white or Black, Radical or Conservative, every delegate agreed that slavery provided a powerful and relevant metaphor. The public debt constrained the freedom of all Virginians. In making his own allusion to slavery, then, Jefferson further fueled the flames of white political rebellion. By referring to “long years of servitude” as justification for non-payment of the debt, Jefferson linked physical bondage and financial bondage. He implied and elicited the conclusion that both forms of bondage, while not equivalent, were unjust and in need of correction. White Virginians had long served the Conservative Party that had ceased to serve them. They had satisfied their obligations to that party by long years of deferential servitude. Now was the chance to break free

¹ Scrapbooks, Volume IX, 37, William Mahone Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University (hereinafter cited as WMP).

² “The Readjusters,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 27, 1879.

³ Scrapbooks, Volume IX, 34, WMP.

of old political bonds and bonded debts alike. Simply put, readjustment meant emancipation. A new coalition of Black and white Virginians could ensure both.

The Readjuster revolution also remained inextricable from William Mahone's ongoing fight to redeem his beloved AM&O. As discussed in the previous chapter, railroad politics went hand in hand with debates over the public debt. Mahone's opponents denounced his support for readjustment as a demagogic ploy to manipulate popular unrest for his own selfish interests. Worse, they charged Mahone and other white Readjusters with endangering white supremacy. At the same time, though, Conservative and Republican Funders told Black audiences that white Readjusters were not doing *enough* to advance Black rights. Playing both sides of the so-called "race question," Funders exposed their own anxiety about the increasingly radical and evermore popular cause of readjustment. Directly and indirectly, Mahone's railroad dealings helped strengthen the Readjuster coalition against these attempts to divide and conquer. Frequent trips to northern financial centers in search of friendly buyers obscured Mahone's political maneuverings that resulted in a formal alliance with the national Republican Party. Readjusters gained control of federal patronage, and a powerful tool for rewarding the party faithful of both races. Even when Mahone failed to save his road, it still advanced the Readjusters' mission. Funds secured from the sale provided money for public schools as well as a novel institution of Black higher education. Two years after William Jefferson made the case for interracial coalition, the Readjusters had constructed a political machine that controlled the General Assembly and won the governor's chair in a landslide.

Yet the reality of 1881 was only a hope in 1879. Facing a hostile governor and vested interests that had stifled popular unrest for nearly a decade, failure was more likely than success. Internal divisions would make the work of building the coalition all the more difficult. In short,

William Jefferson's contention that white and Black interests were identical, or even close enough, was up for debate. The journey from unlikely hope to victorious reality would involve constant convincing, plenty of trial and error, and a healthy dose of luck. To understand the Readjuster coalition, then, requires understanding the *process* of coalition building. Instead of static, it was an ongoing exercise of making and remaking, adapting to constantly changing circumstances, and reshaping old ideologies and loyalties for new partisan ends.

These old loyalties threatened to halt the process of coalition building before it even got started. As William Jefferson said, the debt controversy had troubled the political waters. The Conservative Party was split. White Virginians were split. What Jefferson saw as a reason to join the Readjusters, though, was to other Black Virginians the time to double down on the Republican Party. Practically a non-entity apart from mobilizing voters in presidential elections and distributing patronage, Virginia's Republican Party might actually stand a chance under the new circumstances. Revitalizing a decayed party organization could be easier than constructing a new one from scratch. Black Virginians, at least Black Republicans, were of divided mind. Party dogma, past experience, and racist stereotypes further complicated their dilemma.

For starters, the Republican Party was the party of "honest debts." Black men sympathetic to readjustment thus faced a difficult task in reconciling the political expediency of coalition with this central tenet of GOP financial policy. Officially, readjustment was synonymous with repudiation. Less abstractly, one of the chief architects of Republican debt dogma was an active enemy of readjustment. Hugh McCulloch, the former and future US Treasury Secretary, had co-authored the deeply unpopular Broker's Bill that launched the

Readjuster rebellion.⁴ Simply put, Republican loyalists denounced readjustment as both financially dishonest and anti-Republican.

Just prior to the 1879 elections, the Black-owned *People's Advocate* urged readers to disregard “the sophistries and fallacies” of white Readjusters. Contradicting William Jefferson’s earlier declaration, the paper argued that while Black Virginians did not create the state debt, they enjoyed its benefits and should insist on repayment.⁵ Frederick Douglass was more blunt. In response to a petition from Black Petersburgers inviting him to speak in support of the McCulloch Bill, Douglass denounced readjustment as everything the Republican Party opposed. He attacked “the plea made by demagogues” that past enslavement absolved Black Virginians of responsibility for paying the state debt. Driving his point even further, Douglass exclaimed that by the same “specious” logic, “it may be argued that you had nothing to do with obtaining your freedom; therefore you should not enjoy its blessings.” Seemingly ironic considering no one was more responsible for Douglass’s freedom than himself, he not-so-subtly implied that freedom, and “its blessings,” arose from the Republican Party.⁶ The only option for *good* Republicans was to vote against the Readjusters.

Another reason some Black leaders hesitated to join the Readjusters came from a desire to disprove white supremacist stereotypes. White Funders – Conservatives and Republicans alike

⁴ Following the end of the Civil War, McCulloch urged the rapid retirement of greenbacks and the resumption of specie payments, particularly in gold. Much of the Republican insistence on the sanctity of public debt over all other considerations was tied to the value of and payments on the massive national debt that was a consequence of the Union war effort. For more on McCulloch’s and others’ immediate efforts to address the US debt question after the war and the more long-standing effects on the economy and politics, see David K. Thomson, *Bonds of War: How Civil War Financial Agents Sold the World on the Union* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022), Chapter 6; Walter T.K. Nugent, *Money and American Society, 1865-1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1968). See Chapter 1 for McCulloch’s role in crafting the Broker’s Bill.

⁵ *People's Advocate* quoted in “Repudiation in Virginia,” *Virginia Star*, September 27, 1879.

⁶ “The Great Leader of His Race, Frederick Douglass, Comes Out for the McCulloch Bill,” Box 209, Folder 10, WMP.

– predicted that the only chance of readjusting the debt would come from the allegedly ignorant and unprincipled Black vote. At the same time the *People's Advocate* warned against Readjuster “fallacies,” it insisted that whites simply hoped “to escape the odium of repudiation by making the Negro the scapegoat.” Pointing to the fact that most Readjusters were white, it said white men could keep the odium as well as their slander.⁷ Douglass agreed and further emphasized the ties of race, party, and “honest debts.” Throughout the South, he wrote, Democrats had repudiated and readjusted public debts to the “indignation and horror” of the Republican Party.⁸ Indeed, white political leaders often denigrated Black voters and legislators to conceal their own political and financial malfeasance. Nearly every Southern state had already repudiated portions of their public debts. Democratic “redeemers” claimed these were “illegal” debts contracted during the “Negro rule” of Reconstruction.⁹ Party loyalty and race pride, then, combined to discourage Black men from supporting Readjusters. Some contended that Virginia’s credit – its honor – rested on the honesty of Black Virginians. If there were to be any stain on Virginia’s so-called honor, it would be a white one.¹⁰

⁷ *People's Advocate* quoted in “Repudiation in Virginia,” *Virginia Star*, September 27, 1879.

⁸ The Great Leader of His Race, Frederick Douglass, Comes Out for the McCulloch Bill,” Box 209, Folder 10, WMP.

⁹ See Destin Jenkins, “Ghosts of the Past: Debt, the New South, and the Propaganda of History,” in *Histories of Racial Capitalism*, ed. Destin Jenkins and Justin Leroy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 185-213. The strongest opponent of the Readjusters, William L. Royall, cast the blame for what he saw as “repudiation” on Black voters in his history of the debt controversy, titling his work *History of the Virginia Debt Controversy: The Negro's Vicious Influence in Politics* (Richmond: Geo. M. West, Publisher, 1897).

¹⁰ Gendered and racialized meanings of “honor” in the South have long been a topic of debate. For a discussion that deals specifically with Readjuster era Virginia, see Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). It is important to note, however, how these hierarchized conceptions of honor ultimately relate to debt. Anthropologist David Graeber contends that “honor makes no sense without the possibility of degradation.” Honor serves as a shorthand for determining who is worthy of respect and who is worthy of degradation. But honor’s foundation in relations of debt – more importantly the ability to repay a debt – carries with it assumptions of power and control. Failure to repay a debt is not abstractly dishonorable but implies weakness over one’s household or, in the case of states, a loss of governmental control. A case of willful repudiation or readjustment offers an even more damnable indicator of powerlessness and loss of control, i.e. honor. In a financial world system based largely on reputation, such an act warrants being classed with other “dishonorable,” “uncivilized” people or states worthy of degradation. It meant denial of credit except on

There were also understandable doubts about the sincerity of white Readjusters courting Black support. The new party's chief, ex-Confederate General William Mahone, won fame during the Battle of the Crater outside of Petersburg. Named for the massive crater left behind after US troops detonated 8,000 pounds of gunpowder under Confederate lines, the battle was notorious for the brutal slaughter of Black soldiers by men under Mahone's command.¹¹ And prior to his split from the Conservatives, Mahone was central to that party's electoral successes, largely through the use of "tissue ballots" and other tricks to undercut Black votes.¹² Some of Mahone's chief lieutenants in the new party had also criticized and opposed Black rights during and after Reconstruction.¹³ Consequently, Black leaders like Captain R.A. Paul of Richmond preferred a wait-and-see approach. Comparing Paul's hesitation to that of the apostle Nathanael, his biographer wrote that Paul initially doubted "whether any 'good thing could come out of Nazareth.'"¹⁴ Perhaps the new coalition could eventually win them over, but past experience was a tough thing to forget.

highly restrictive terms, limitations on fiscal autonomy, and possibly armed intervention. In short, it was a question of sovereignty, individually or as a state. By supporting repayment – and thus claiming honor – these Black men made a declaration of their power and their rightful claim to sovereignty and its privileges. By attempting to malign readjustment by linking it with Black suffrage, white Funders made their own claims to sovereignty by exploiting presumptions of racial (moral) inferiority. They attempted to hedge against a justification of their own potential degradation – "the odium of repudiation" – at the hands of foreign creditors. At the same time, they pre-justified any acts of degradation that might be necessary in defense of Virginia's honor. See David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (Brooklyn: Melville House Publishing, 2011), particularly Chapter 7.

¹¹ See Kevin Levin, *Remembering the Battle of the Crater: War as Murder* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), particularly Chapter 1.

¹² Nelson Morehouse Blake, *William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent*, (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, Publishers, 1935), Chapters 4-6, see 144n65.

¹³ H.H. Riddleberger, who was second only to Mahone in composing Readjuster financial policy, had earlier denounced investigations into the Ku Klux Klan as hoaxes in the paper he edited. William E. Cameron, who would become Governor, had allegedly denounced Black suffrage and called for Black men's "perpetual exclusion" from politics. Scrapbooks, Volume 1B, 64, 71-74, WMP; "Read Their Record," Broadside 1880 .D18 FF, Library of Virginia.

¹⁴ D.B. Williams, *A Sketch of the Life and Times of Capt. R.A. Paul*, (Richmond: Johns & Goolsby, Book and Job Printers, 1885), 16-17; Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984, 92.

Nevertheless, some Black men were ready to jump at the new opportunity in spite of Republican dogma and past records of anti-Black sentiment. Some even took great offence at efforts to discourage their support of the Readjusters. Several self-professed “leaders of the colord [sic] people of the State,” for instance, wrote Mahone to complain that the *Virginia Star* was edited ‘by a certain class of colord [sic] men [who had] been bought up by the Bond-holders.’ The petitioners wanted to start a rival paper and asked Mahone for financial support. Opportunity knocked, and they insisted that they did “not desire to stand still and see our people sold out by a few men against their will.”¹⁵ Even those who opposed the Readjusters understood their appeal to Black Virginians. George Arnold of Lynchburg, for instance, wrote to a friend in Philadelphia that he disagreed with how other Black men voted, but he did not doubt their loyalty to the *national* GOP. Despite his disagreement, he pointed to the realities of Black life in Virginia as explanation. Black Readjusters did not cast their votes in favor of repudiation, he concluded, but rather “to do away with a party and parties that have well-nigh made him wish he had never been made a citizen.”¹⁶ The cases for supporting the Readjusters or maintaining an independent Republican organization were both compelling. Nothing was clear-cut apart from the fact that, for the first time in a decade, Black men had a real choice. Making the wrong one could prove costly.

¹⁵ Cornelius L. Harris, Lewis Lindsay, M.N. Wooldridge, W.H. Anderson, and Richard Wooldridge to William Mahone, September 15, 1879, Box 16, WMP.

¹⁶ George M. Arnold to Isaiah T. Wears, November 20, 1879, in Herbert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (New York: Citadel Press, 1951), 728-730. Arnold did not explicitly mention his opposition to Readjustment in this letter, but there are several pieces of evidence elsewhere. Just a month before his letter, he spoke at a meeting of Black Lynchburgers who passed resolutions opposing readjustment. One resolution said that repudiation at the state level would lead to repudiation of the national debt, “which is the price paid for our freedom.” Two years later, at a state Republican convention, Arnold responded to a proposed amendment to the platform that would leave the door open to a partial readjustment by declaring that “Colored men should teach white men that they scorn repudiation.” See respectively “The Debt Question and the Colored People of Lynchburg,” *Staunton Spectator*, October 21, 1879 and “The Republican Convention,” *The Valley Virginian*, August 18, 1881.

At the same time, Conservatives warned that voters of both races faced another decision with consequences even more dire. The *Richmond Dispatch* published an imagined conversation between “A Cullud Brother” and a white Readjuster canvassing for votes. After discussing that Mahone had paid Black railroad workers a dollar a day while paying himself a whopping \$25,000 salary, the imaginary Black voter declared his preference for someone with a greater conscience. He asked his white interlocutor that if Mahone had paid himself that much for running a single railroad, how much would he “take” when he became governor and ran all of the state’s railroads.¹⁷ The article hinted that although Mahone appealed to the interests of everyday Virginians, he was not an everyday Virginian and his true motivation was to rob and corrupt the state for his own selfish ends. A Staunton paper similarly commented that Mahone spent most of his time at a campaign speech defending his railroad record, only alluding “in a few generalities to the debt question.”¹⁸ John W. Daniel, a long-time opponent of Mahone in political and railroad matters, said at a speech in Winchester that Mahone’s true aim was to commandeer the state’s sinking fund in order to purchase the AM&O.¹⁹ Other Conservatives noted suggestively that it was only after the AM&O’s default that Mahone came to view bankers and brokers as “public plunderers” rather than men of the highest esteem.²⁰ Conservatives and anti-Readjuster Republicans alike hoped to sow doubt about the real intentions of Mahone. While voters may have genuinely desired readjustment, Funders implied their votes might lead to a tyranny even worse than that of the bondholders.

¹⁷ “A Cullud Brother Speaks,” *Richmond Dispatch*, September 5, 1879.

¹⁸ “Virginia Politics,” *Staunton Vindicator*, August 29, 1879.

¹⁹ *Staunton Vindicator*, September 12, 1879. For Daniel’s opposition to Mahone’s earlier consolidation efforts, see Richard B. Doss, “John Warwick Daniel: A Study in the Virginia Democracy,” PhD diss., (University of Virginia, 1955), 24-25.

²⁰ “Bankers and Brokers,” *Richmond Dispatch*, September 10, 1879.

Yet claims that Mahone was simply a self-interested demagogue exposed deeper anxieties. Ever since John Collinson initiated foreclosure proceedings against the AM&O, Mahone's efforts to redeem the road had become indistinguishable from the Readjuster revolt.²¹ Accusations that Mahone had ulterior motives were consequently much more than old-fashioned fearmongering. Mahone had continuously exerted his influence in the legislature to challenge bondholder claims on the AM&O, repeatedly threatening to use the state as a bludgeon.²²

One such effort involved the 1879 bill John Daniel alluded to at Winchester regarding the state Sinking Fund. The bill allowed money meant to pay down the debt to be used to purchase the AM&O. Exemplifying Mahone's long-lasting fight for home rule of Virginia's railroads, the bill would have effectively made the AM&O a state-owned railroad again. Additionally, the president and a majority of directors were to be citizens *and* residents of Virginia. Many understandably believed that Mahone would be restored to the presidency. This would of course upset the aims of Collinson and the English bondholders allegedly working with the B&O and other "alien enemies of Virginia" to break up the consolidated line. As chair of the senate committee for courts of justice, Daniel wrote a majority report deeming the bill unconstitutional and the status of the state's interest in the AM&O as "about valueless." The legislative session

²¹ See Chapter 1

²² Before Collinson had even succeeded in getting receivers appointed, state senators searched for efforts to subordinate the first mortgage claim of the AM&O's consolidated bondholders to the state's second mortgage lien. The same year that Mahone campaigned for governor, a special senate committee presented a report highly unfavorable to Collinson and the bondholders, accusing them of total disregard for the rights and interests of the state. It insisted the state had ample power to protect its interests and officially notified any potential purchasers of the AM&O that they would witness this power if Virginia's interest were sacrificed. And just over a month before the Readjusters met in Mozart Hall, the general assembly passed a bill to test the constitutionality of the very law that created the AM&O and disposed of the state's prior liens on the divisional lines. See *Journal of the Senate of the State of Virginia, 1875-1876* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1875), 405-406; *Journal of the Senate of the State of Virginia, 1876-1877* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1876), 351-354; *Journal of the House of Delegates of the State of Virginia, 1878-1879* (Richmond: R.E. Frayser, Superintendent Public Printing, 1878), 112, 132.

ended shortly afterward, and the bill was dead for the time being.²³ But as Daniel warned, a Readjuster victory might bring its revival. A single election could mean the repeal of the Broker's Bill as well as the state's reentry into the railroad game. Foreign bondholders and "foreign" corporations looked on in anxious horror at the dual possibility of debt readjustment and a state-subsidized railway redemption.

Conservatives, on the other hand, feared their looming downfall from power. Even more frightening was the prospect that it would be at the hands of Black men. Indeed, while the story of the "cullud brother" turning away a white Readjuster canvasser was ostensibly about railroad politics, its focus on the gulf between Mahone's salary and the wages of Black railroad workers betrayed Conservatives' fear that efforts to break down the political color line might actually prove successful. It acknowledged that white Readjusters were actively canvassing Black voters. More importantly, by implying that Mahone was not actually "de frend of de cullud man," Conservatives tacitly acknowledged that Black voters were responding favorably to Readjuster appeals.²⁴ Deep anxieties about elite white supremacy, railroad control, state credit, and "good government" coalesced in the bogeyman of "Boss Mahone."

As it turned out, their anxiety was well-founded. Following the 1879 election, Readjusters held a slight advantage over the Funders, but not a majority. Fourteen Black Republicans held the balance of power, and it was an all-out scramble to win their votes before the legislature convened. Forever faithful to "honest debts," national GOP officials even pressed an alliance with the Conservatives. Some Black Republicans like Cephas Davis in the senate and Littleton Owens in the house already favored working with the Readjusters. But Mahone and his

²³ Correspondence of C.T. Smith in *Lynchburg News*, April 5, 1879 and April [12?], 1879, Scrapbook 5, WMP.

²⁴ "A Cullud Brother Speaks," *Richmond Dispatch*, September 5, 1879.

lieutenants knew they needed to make significant concessions, particularly a hefty share of offices and more money for Black schools. Readjuster politicking paid off. When the legislative session started in December, Black legislators voted with the Readjusters to appoint state officers and to elect Mahone to the US Senate. In the final days of the session, they helped to pass a bill that would cut the state debt nearly in half.²⁵ Governor Frederick Holliday, who had been in constant communication with foreign bondholders, vetoed the bill, charging that it would forever taint Virginia with the “deadly virus” of repudiation.²⁶ Readjusters had once again been stifled. It would be nearly two years, with national and state elections in between, before the next legislative session.

Considering the tenuous Readjuster coalition would need to survive this period of legislative limbo, it is worth noting several instances that exposed the complicated political maneuverings and ever-lingering fear of railroad influence during the coalition’s brief stint of legislative control. Ross Hamilton, the deft and flexible leader of what one historian refers to as Mecklenburg County’s “black courthouse ring,” introduced a substitute to the vetoed debt settlement bill written by Readjuster H.H. Riddleberger.²⁷ Although Hamilton’s substitute would have lowered the interest rate, it still recognized the full amount of Virginia’s debt and

²⁵ J.D.B. Rusk to William Mahone, November 7, 1879, Box 16, WMP. Correspondence indicates the efforts of white Readjusters to bring Black Republicans to their side. See C.B. Langley to William Mahone, November 12, 1879; D.J. Goodwin to William Mahone, November 12, 1879; L.L. Lewis to J.B. Meade, November 14, 1879; C.L. Davis to William Mahone, November 14, 1879, Box 16, WMP. See also James T. Moore, “Black Militancy in Readjuster Virginia, 1879-1883,” *The Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 2 (May, 1975): 171-172; Brent Tarter, *A Saga of the New South: Race, Law and Public Debt in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 58-59.

²⁶ *Journal of the Senate of the State of Virginia, 1879-1880* (Richmond: R.E. Frayser, Superintendent Public Printing, 1879), 443.

²⁷ For a detailed study of Ross Hamilton’s political career, see Harold S. Forsythe, “‘But My Friends Are Poor’: Ross Hamilton and Freedpeople’s Politics in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, 1869-1901,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 105 no. 4 (Autumn, 1997): 409-438.

maintained the tax-receivability of coupons.²⁸ Critics accused Hamilton of taking a bribe, and some Black men even accused him of race treachery.²⁹ Prior to the vote, though, it was unclear how other Black legislators would vote. Conservatives and anti-Readjuster Republicans attempted to use Hamilton's substitute to split the nascent coalition along the color line. When the vote occurred, Hamilton was the only Black legislator to vote for it. Nevertheless, Conservatives still attempted to sow racial division, making hay of Readjuster opposition to "the very first occasion that a negro member does attempt to act for himself."³⁰

Rumor was, however, that the substitute was actually written by Williams C. Wickham, the head of Virginia's Republican Party and vice president of C.P. Huntington's Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad.³¹ Wickham later confirmed that he had, indeed, written the bill, but denied it was on Huntington's orders. He also denied the charge that Huntington had sent \$40,000 to Richmond to bribe legislators to prevent the election of Mahone to the US Senate. According to Wickham, Huntington had never surreptitiously interfered in Virginia politics. Wickham further insisted that the C&O was nonpartisan, as clearly demonstrated by the fact that his fellow C&O officer, John Echols, was a Conservative in the House of Delegates. Readjusters saw this "trick" for what it was: Wall Street's "Double Track into our politics!"³²

²⁸ Moore, *Two Paths*, 66; For the text of the substitute, see "General Assembly of Virginia," *Richmond Dispatch*, February 27, 1880.

²⁹ "A Debt Boom," *Richmond Dispatch*, February 27, 1880; Ross Hamilton letter to editors, in *Richmond Dispatch*, March 1, 1880; "True History of the Ross Hamilton Substitute," *Richmond Dispatch*, March 5, 1880; *People's Advocate*, March 18, 1880.

³⁰ "Letter from Richmond," *Alexandria Gazette*, February 27, 1880; *Alexandria Gazette*, March 2, 1880; "True History of the Ross Hamilton Substitute," *Richmond Dispatch*, March 5, 1880; Moore, *Two Paths*, 66.

³¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 28, 1881.

³² "Funderism By Rail," *Richmond Whig*, August 9, 1880, "General Wickham Speaks," *Richmond Whig*, August 10, 1880, and "It Will Not Do! It Will Never Do!," *Richmond Whig*, August 10, 1880 in H.T. Wickham Scrapbook Volume I (1867-1932), 12-13, in Series 7, Box 32, Wickham Family Papers, Mss1 W6326 c FA2, Virginia Museum of History and Culture [hereinafter cited as Wickham Papers]. This exemplifies what Richard White describes railroads' and other corporations' skill in making "politics a realm of private competition." Politics was not a simple matter of partisanship, but of making a "friends" to provide advantages to one's self while hindering the efforts of corporate rivals. Huntington, as White demonstrates, was good at making such "friends." See Richard White,

Whether Huntington was actually involved is beside the point. There was plenty reason to believe the charge. The C&O and other corporations would have preferred the Hamilton-Wickham substitute because it maintained the tax-receivability of coupons. It was far cheaper to buy coupons for pennies on the dollar and use them to pay taxes than it was to pay those taxes with cash. And the C&O was a particularly notorious tax dodger, earlier agreeing to pay a third of what it owed in unpaid taxes after the US Supreme Court decided against it.³³ Opposition to Mahone spoke for itself. Mahone had been the staunchest opponent of “foreign railroads” like Huntington’s.³⁴ Most laughable of all was the contention that Huntington did not meddle in Virginia politics. Huntington had acquired the C&O from the state during military Reconstruction, using Wickham as his willing catspaw.³⁵ Indeed, even the Memphis, Tennessee, *Public Ledger* later commented on Huntington’s political “double track” in Virginia. “Beaten by the people,” it said, Conservatives “sent John Echols, Huntington’s man,” to bargain with the Republican administration in Washington to help send Wickham to the US Senate instead of Mahone. Bitter opponents publicly, Virginia’s Conservative and Republican Parties joined hands behind the scenes to defeat Mahone and the Readjusters. “But to the honor of the colored men,” concluded the *Ledger*, “the goods could not be delivered.”³⁶ It was not farfetched to believe that Huntington, or any other “alien enemy,” was attempting to sow the seeds of division and thereby stifle readjustment and the railroad politics that came with it.

Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), xxviii-xxix, 93-133.

³³ Jack P. Maddox, Jr. *The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879: A Study in Reconstruction Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 147-148.

³⁴ See Chapter 1; Maddox, *Virginia Conservatives*, 149-161; Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 84-88.

³⁵ Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Steel-Drivin’ Man, John Henry: The Untold Story of an American Legend* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 69-71.

³⁶ “Mahone,” *Memphis Public Ledger*, April 15, 1881.

Holding the tenuous coalition together during the legislative hiatus between March 1880 and December 1881 would clearly be difficult, and national politics only added to the strain. Many Virginians attempted to treat readjustment as a purely state issue. While they could divide politically within Virginia, many anticipated national affiliations would remain unaffected. Most white Readjusters remained loyal to the national Democracy; white and Black Republicans had little intention of leaving the national GOP. Ever the tactician and always searching for the middle road, Mahone sought to avoid strife by maintaining party independence and putting out a split ticket with unpledged electors in the 1880 presidential race.³⁷

Despite regular party leaders denigrating the idea, rank-and-file voters, particularly Black Virginians appeared to favor a split ticket. While continuing to urge Black Virginians to proceed with caution, the *People's Advocate* stated that the “republican masses” favored the middle road. Some Black men, according to the paper, purportedly made “fidelity to all the plans of the Readjusters a test of loyalty to race.”³⁸ When Republican leaders determined to hold their state convention at Staunton in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley, the link between race and a split ticket became even clearer. Black Republicans overwhelmingly favored the nomination of Ulysses Grant for an unprecedented third term. Virginia’s white GOP bosses, on the other hand, favored James G. Blaine of Maine. It appeared to many, then, that the convention was to be held in that “remote corner of the state” in order “to get rid of the ‘black horde of Eastern Virginia.’” That Mahone also supported Grant only tended to strengthen Black support for a split ticket.

³⁷ Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 51.

³⁸ *People's Advocate*, March 18, 1880; “Republicans vs. Readjusters,” *People's Advocate*, March 27, 1880.

Coalitionists thus hoped to gain control of the Republican convention from what they referred to as “the old ring” of “carpetbaggers,” predicting a bolt if unsuccessful.³⁹

Ultimately, the fate of the split ticket depended on the outcome of the Republican convention. Prior to the meeting at Staunton, Mahone opined that the “the Custom Ho[use] ring” and “Wickham specially are in the interests of the Funders.” He worried that these Straightout Republicans, so-called because they opposed coalition with the Readjusters, would dominate the convention proceedings. “Wickham’s game,” Mahone wrote, “is to damage our party, disintegrate it.” A straight Republican ticket would force white and Black Readjusters back to their old party banners, Mahone predicted. The Republican convention was scheduled before both the Conservative and Readjuster conventions. Conservatives would undoubtedly put out a ticket with Democratic electors. So if Wickham and his officeholders had their way, it would give Conservatives “the opportunity to press their appeals to us to come in [and] save the state from negro domination.” In short, Virginia’s Republican and Conservative Funders hoped to exploit national party loyalties to divide the Readjuster coalition along lines of race. To combat these machinations, Mahone suggested fighting fire with fire. The Readjusters should send their own men “capable of pulling the wires, marshalling the forces when battle is joined, of bursting the [Straightout] machine if they can’t have their way.”⁴⁰ When the convention met, chaos and

³⁹ “Republicans vs. Readjusters,” *People’s Advocate*, March 27, 1880; Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 136-137; Rachleff, *Black Labor*, 98-100. Allusions to the “old ring” of “carpetbaggers” represented part of Black Readjusters’ strategy of using Lost Cause rhetoric to bolster confidence in the coalition among white Virginians. See Bryant K. Barnes, “‘Are Not Our Interests the Same?’: Black Protest, the Lost Cause, and Coalition Building in Readjuster Virginia,” in “Why Race Matters: The Legacies and Presentation of Race Relations in American History,” ed. Brandon T. Jett and Timothy Fritz, special issue, *Genealogy* 7, No. 12 (February 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy7010012>.

⁴⁰ William Mahone to H.H. Riddleberger, March 19, 1880, Box 1, Folder 5, Harrison Holt Riddleberger Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary (hereinafter cited as Riddleberger Papers).

intrigue reigned. By a narrow margin of eight votes, the Straightouts carried the day against the split ticket.⁴¹

Mahone took solace in the close vote as well as the valiant fight of Black coalitionists, but his prediction of the Readjuster coalition's disintegration proved correct. A month after the Republican convention met, Conservatives opened theirs to all national Democrats, regardless of views on the state debt. Despite Mahone's best efforts to hold the fort and maintain political independence, many leading white Readjusters answered the Democratic call. By the time the Readjusters held their own convention in July, the battle lines were firmly drawn. They still managed to field an independent ticket, but it was headed by the regular Democratic nominees. Facing two separate Democratic tickets, then, Republicans of both races saw little reason to support the independent Readjuster ticket. It placed dead last in the November election. "Wickham's game" was a success. The coalition had been devastatingly routed.

Defeat, however, provided many white Readjusters with a rude awakening. They had reaffirmed their loyalty to the national Democracy, and they were still read out of the party as traitors. Their crime was in proclaiming independence of any type. In the words of one Conservative, it was not really a matter of national politics at all. The primary aim was to keep "that party of Thugs – Mahone & Co." from strengthening its hold on Virginia. Having learned their lesson, white Readjusters increasingly concluded that success would only come with the support of Black Virginians. Professions of Democratic fidelity and its white supremacist corollary had proven both unsuccessful and counterproductive. Black Virginians demanded definitive demonstrations of sincerity, not pleasing platitudes about shared interests that could be

⁴¹ Moore, *Two Paths*, 70-73; Woodward, *Origins*, 99-100.

easily abandoned to political expediency. Fortunately for the coalition, Black Virginians with grievances of their own remained open to giving their new political friends a second chance.⁴²

Not long after the 1880 electoral dust had settled, a committee of seventeen Black Richmonders called for a statewide convention of Black men to meet in Petersburg the following March. It was a declaration of independence and a subtle commentary on the recent campaign. Unscrupulous leaders, the committee insisted, had repeatedly arrayed white and Black men against each other to the detriment of both. Self interest and common sense, they added, “dictates a departure on our part from such submission.” Therefore, Black men must work “with the most liberal party in Virginia that will secure to the people a free ballot and a fair count.” Mahone was thrilled by the call. On the back of the broadside Mahone penned a message to his chief lieutenant and author of the Readjusters’ vetoed debt bill, H.H. Riddleberger of Woodstock. As Mahone saw it, the convention call indicated an earnest desire on the part of Black Virginians to give the coalition another try. He again predicted that the Straightouts would attempt to capture the convention unless Readjusters gave all the aid and attention they could.⁴³

On March 14, about 300 delegates assembled in Petersburg, Mahone’s hometown. His prediction of intrigue was again correct. The scene was one of chaos and confusion. Straightout delegates immediately attempted to usurp the chair while Readjusters shouted them down as tools of “the Wickham clique.” Unlike the white-dominated convention a few months earlier in Staunton, however, Readjusters overpowered the Straightouts. Disgusted by what they called a

⁴² For Mahone’s insistence on an independent ticket, the effect of the straightout Republican ticket, some of the divisions among the Readjusters, and subsequent desire to break away from the Democratic Party, see correspondence to H.H. Riddleberger from Mahone and others in Box 1, Folders 5-6, Harrison Holt Riddleberger Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary (hereinafter cited as Riddleberger Papers). See also Moore, *Two Paths*, 73-77 (Beverly Tucker quoted on 75); Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 51-55.

⁴³ “The Lightening Vat!” in Box 1, Folder 8, Riddleberger Papers.

“disorganized mob,” Straightout delegates bolted in protest. Shortly after they left, a message came over the wires that Mahone had voted with the Republicans in the US Senate.

Foreshadowing the outcome of the convention, one delegate noted the coincidence that “while Mahone was in Washington voting for the Republicans, the colored Republicans here were seeking to vote for the Readjusters.” The remaining delegates issued resolutions calling for “the final obliteration” of the color line and praised Readjusters’ opposition to reactionary Bourbonism. Significantly, they again declared their loyalty to the national GOP but concluded that the state party was nothing more than “a name to rally colored men to political slaughter.”⁴⁴

As the proceedings and the Straightout bolt revealed, Black Virginians were clearly still divided, torn by a slew of competing loyalties and interests. Some felt that white Readjusters still had more to prove. Equally as clear, though, was that most believed white Republicans had proven their inability, if not unwillingness, to advance Black rights and interests.⁴⁵ It was time for a new strategy, and the Petersburg convention placed its bet on the Readjusters.

Even more shocking, though, was Mahone’s bet on the Republicans in the US Senate. Fate seemed to have provided a perfect opportunity to bolster the coalition’s chances.

⁴⁴ “Wrangle and Jangle,” *Richmond Dispatch*, March 15, 1881; Resolutions of the March 1881 Colored Convention, Box 27, WMP. “An Address to the Republicans of Virginia and Our Sympathisers beyond the Borders of this Commonwealth” in Scrapbook 17 and “The Lion of the Hour,” Minneapolis Press, March 16, 1881 in Scrapbook 19, WMP.

⁴⁵ Despite charges and counter-charges of toadyism and white manipulation of Black politics, the arguments made for and against allying with the Readjusters call attention to conclusions scholars can (and can’t) make regarding Black support of Gilded Age independent movements. As sociologist Joseph Gerteis argues, continued Black *electoral* support for the Republican Party did not imply opposition to third parties. Nor did organizational segregation imply overt opposition to interracialism. Indeed, Gerteis insists, “organizational ‘biracialism’ was often in service of sustained ‘interracialism’ in practice.” Historian Omar H. Ali makes similar conclusions, noting that the choices available to Black Populists about political independence, coalition, or fusion depended highly on local circumstances more than simple ideological or racial differences. Joseph Gerteis, *Class and the Color Line: Interracial Class Coalition in the Knights of Labor and the Populist Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Omar H. Ali, *In the Lion’s Mouth: Black Populism in the New South, 1886-1900* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), particularly chapter 4. R.A. Paul noted the compatibility between electoral support and independent organization in “Capt. R.A. Paul Expresses His Views,” *Virginia Star*, April[?], 1881, in Scrapbook 20, pg. 12, WMP.

Republicans controlled the White House and the House of Representatives, but there was a tie in the Senate. Mahone held the balance of power. People had speculated about how Mahone might vote, and neither party had a strong claim. As the *New York Herald* wrote, the Democratic National Committee “threw him overboard” for daring to field an independent ticket, and the national GOP had actively opposed him and his cause.⁴⁶ Still, Mahone had been talking for quite some time with prominent Republicans who viewed “honest debts” as less important than breaking the Solid South. In exchange for choice committee assignments and a share of federal patronage in Virginia, Mahone threw his weight to the Republicans and declared death to “Bourbonism.”⁴⁷

Democratic Senators led by Georgia’s Ben Hill and Joseph E. Brown charged Mahone with making a corrupt bargain and betraying the Democracy as well as his constituents. Mahone simply reminded them that the Democracy left him, and Readjusters, not Democrats, elected him to the Senate. As for corrupt bargains and treachery, Mahone pointed out that he was not the first target of such accusations from Senator Hill. That honor instead belonged to Hill’s colleague, Joe Brown, who Mahone said had a remarkable ability to “readjust himself to all conditions,” flopping from secessionist governor to radical Republican and back again to defender of the Democratic faith within only a few years.⁴⁸ Mahone had trounced his opponents on the Senate floor, in the press, and in the popular mind. Letters of support flooded Mahone’s office. People

⁴⁶ “Mahone, of Virginia,” *New York Herald* in Scrapbook 18, pg 3, WMP.

⁴⁷ Moore, *Two Paths*, 78; Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 54-58.

⁴⁸ See Scrapbook 19 in WMP. For Mahone’s comments about Brown, see *Congressional Record*, 47th Congress, Special Session, 93-94. For a discussion of the foes-to-friends relationship between Hill and Brown, see Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 89-91, 95-96, 163-165. The back-and-forth exchange between Mahone and Hill is replicated in Thomas V. Cooper, *American Politics(non-partisan) From the Beginning to Date* (New York: C.R. Blackall & Co., 1882), Book III, 207-223.

predicted the destruction of the Solid South and the abolition of the color line. Independent movements throughout the South looked optimistically at the Readjusters' success and Mahone's course, hoping to bring about similar results in their own states. An unnamed southern Senator expressed to a Philadelphia reporter his fear that "Mahones will spring up" everywhere, and "the very existence of the Democratic Party in some states is at stake." Mahone and the Readjusters threatened a revolution bigger than Virginia.⁴⁹

Deals with Republicans, though, were not the only ones Mahone was making in the winter of 1880-81. Mahone had not given up his efforts to redeem his beloved AM&O. In fact, his frequent sojourns to the North, presumably in connection with these efforts, may have helped to conceal his political maneuverings. When Mahone was in New York prior to his fateful vote in the Senate, a reporter visited his room at the Fifth Avenue Hotel bearing a dispatch speculating about Mahone's business in the Empire State. Tellingly, it linked Mahone's AM&O fight with the Readjuster revolt and simultaneously exposed the immense political power of railroad control. Mahone needed to redeem the AM&O, the dispatch intimated, because his "strongest political rival in Virginia, General Williams C. Wickham, a Republican, was the local president of the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad." With thousands of employees and economic influence throughout the state, railroad corporations could literally decide elections. According to the dispatch, if Mahone successfully retook the AM&O, it "would guarantee the control of Virginia politics by the Senator-elect for years to come, and enable him to act with whatever side he chose in the Senate."

⁴⁹ For extensive coverage of the Senate fight and its anticipated consequences, see Scrapbook 19, in WMP. The quote of a "prominent Southern Senator" can be found in "The Entering Wedge," *Philadelphia Dem.*, April 17, 1881 on page 143 of this scrapbook.

The confounding conflation of readjustment, railroad control, and national politics was nothing new, but Mahone and his lieutenants now played into the confusion. John Wise, the “brawny and brainy looking” son of antebellum governor Henry Wise, read the dispatch aloud before asking if the visiting reporter could print “cuss words.” Calling the report mistaken in its speculations was not accurate enough, it seemed. More politely, Mahone denied that he was in New York in relation to the AM&O. He enigmatically said that he was well aware of plans regarding the road’s future but was not personally involved. Another ally and business associate then interjected that it sounded like the dispatch’s author wanted to “give reasons why you [Mahone] should act with the Republicans of the Senate.” Mahone slyly replied that “perhaps his reasons are sound, too.” With a wink, Mahone feigned ignorance that there was to be a tie in the Senate and that he was “the greatest political puzzle of the period.”⁵⁰

Mahone and his partners clearly reveled in the uncertain interest their New York visit generated. A notorious gambler, Mahone knew how to exploit uncertainty, especially when he held all the cards. Practically everyone knew Mahone was searching for investors to help him redeem the AM&O. But his visits to financial centers in Philadelphia and New York coincidentally brought him closer to men like Donald and Simon Cameron and Roscoe Conkling, prominent Republicans who favored more actively assisting the Readjusters.⁵¹ As mentioned above, neither the Democrats nor the Republicans had a strong claim to Mahone’s tie-breaking Senate vote. Feeding the speculation, then, only aided Mahone’s wheeling and dealing, both in business and in politics. As long as people could not be sure what interests Mahone was pursuing or how he would act, the more concessions he could demand from everyone. He could give

⁵⁰ *New York Herald* quoted in “Under Which Flag, Mahone?” in Scrapbook 18, 31, WMP.

⁵¹ “Conkling and Mahone,” *Baltimore American* in Scrapbook 18, 6, WMP; “Capt. R.A. Paul Expresses His Views, *Virginia Star* in Scrapbook 20, 12, WMP.

Republicans complete control of the federal government, or he could assure a split government and legislative deadlock. Viewed as a political leper by both parties just a few months earlier, Mahone now stood miraculously healed, the object of both parties' desire. Similarly, Mahone's newfound political leverage carried into his AM&O negotiations. Investors would be less inclined to play hardball with the leader of a political party that could prove vindictive if it strengthened its power in the state through which the line ran. After all, Mahone had already threatened legislative revenge when the AM&O first entered receivership.⁵² Regardless of the outcome in either arena, the spotlight shone brightly on Mahone and the Readjusters.

Contrary to his public statements, Mahone was in fact meeting with prospective buyers. By February 1881, his war to save the AM&O from the clutches of John Collinson and the "alien enemies of Virginia" had been going on for five years. Collinson and the English creditors had allegedly aligned with the Baltimore & Ohio to break up the consolidated line.⁵³ Efforts to stop the foreclosure sale only delayed the inevitable. Unable to get the state to purchase the road, Mahone turned to steamship and rail magnate William P. Clyde for cash. Forty-one years old and just over six feet tall, Clyde was a "model of physical and manly beauty." He was quick, confident, and bold to a fault.⁵⁴ Importantly, Clyde had gained control of the Richmond & Danville from Mahone's old rival, the Pennsylvania Railroad, the previous June. Moreover, Clyde's various interests made him an opponent of the B&O and thus a natural ally of Mahone.⁵⁵

⁵² See Chapter 1.

⁵³ Quote in "The A.M. & O. R.R.," *Richmond Whig*, December 9, 1878, Scrapbook 5, np, WMP; See also, "The A.M. & O. R.R.," *Richmond Whig*, January 27, 1879, Scrapbook 5, np, WMP.

⁵⁴ David Schenck Diary Volume 7, December 15, 1881, in David Schenck Papers #653, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁵⁵ Maury Klein, *The Great Richmond Terminal: A Study in Businessmen and Business Strategy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1970), 86-87; Fairfax Harrison, *A History of the Legal Development of the Railroad System of the Southern Railway Company* (Washington, DC: np), 147, 177, 497-498.

Clyde and Mahone put together a syndicate of investors to provide funds so the company – its stockholders – could purchase the road from Collinson and the bondholders before the official foreclosure sale. But “certain malign influences” led to a last-minute collapse of the Clyde-Mahone syndicate. Federal judges denied motions to delay the sale and amend the provision of the decree requiring full payment in cash – a requirement intended to favor Collinson and the English bondholders. The sale proceeded with three groups making bids: Collinson’s bondholder syndicate, Clyde’s representative, and Clarence H. Clarke of Philadelphia. Clarke made the final bid, and the AM&O fight finally came to an end.⁵⁶

Speculation about the unknown buyers initially caused concern, but fears quickly turned to cheers. Clarke denied rumors that he represented the infamous Jay Gould and promised that the road would be operated in the interest of Virginia, its cities, and its citizens. Traffic would not be redirected away from its terminus at Norfolk, which “need have no fears.” Even the *Richmond Dispatch*, no friend to Mahone or the AM&O, breathed a sigh of relief because “we know what a terrible draught these [northern] cities are.” Like Clyde, Clarke’s existing investments in Virginia – including a road running parallel to a B&O line – assured “the escape from our ancient foe, the Baltimore and Ohio Company.” Readjusters took the opportunity to once again link their cause with the railway victory. Not only had they defeated the B&O; they had defeated Collinson, “the real author of the bill which bears the name of old played-out Hugh

⁵⁶ It is not entirely clear why the redemption syndicate fell apart. Mahone said to the AM&O stockholders after the sale that it was not the fault of the “leading capitalists” in the syndicate – Clyde – but others who withdrew “for reasons best known to themselves.” See “The A.,M. & O.R.R. Co.,” [*Richmond Whig* ?, nd], Scrapbook 5, np, WMP. However, John S. Wise later claimed that it was due to the unwillingness of some of the members to agree to also pay the unsecured claims of unpaid workers and contractors, totaling about \$200,000. See “A Card from John S. Wise,” *Richmond Dispatch*, September 24, 1889. For general accounts of the syndicate, proceedings and sale, see “To Be Sold To-Day,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1881; “A Railroad Bought,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 11, 1881.

McCulloch!” Of course, the supporters of the blasted Broker’s Bill, they declared, had also profited handsomely from Collinson’s treacherous misrule of the AM&O. “Thank God,” read the *Richmond Whig*, that the AM&O “is out of Collinson’s grip; his Broker’s Bill is dead.”⁵⁷

There was more to the connection than mere rhetoric, however. Much of the popular anxiety about the foreclosure proceedings revolved around the status of the state’s claim on the AM&O. When the state chartered the road and allowed consolidation, it subordinated its claims on the divisional lines to encourage the sale of bonds eventually bought by Collinson and the English bondholders. Virginia’s first mortgage became a second mortgage. Foreclosure, though, essentially made this claim worthless. Nevertheless, in his negotiations with Clyde, Mahone had convinced the syndicate to pay \$500,000 for the state’s legally worthless claim. With the last-minute collapse of the Clyde-Mahone syndicate, the agreement went up in smoke, and the state’s claim again became worthless. Only it would have been if Mahone had not convinced Clarke & Co. to accept the original deal negotiated with Clyde!⁵⁸ As later chapters will show, Clarke & Co. agreed to pay more than was legally required to curry favor with Mahone and the Readjusters. Thanks to Mahone’s efforts and the perceived strength of the Readjusters, the sale of the AM&O was not a complete loss to the state.

More important was what this meant for the future of the coalition. The AM&O proceeds were a windfall for the state treasury that had been hemorrhaging funds for a decade. And since

⁵⁷ See Scrapbook 5 in the Mahone Papers, specifically “Sale Consummated, [*Norfolk Landmark* ?]; “The A.M. & O. R.R. Case,” [*Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1881, quoted in *Norfolk Landmark* ?]; “The A.,M. & O. R.R.,” [*Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1881, quoted in ?]; “The Sale of the Road – Norfolk’s Interest to be Protected,” [originally in *Norfolk Virginian*]; “Collinson: Cad and Cadger,” *Richmond Whig*, February 12, 1881; “Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad,” *Portsmouth Times* February 12, 1881; “A.,M.&O.,” *Norfolk Landmark*, February 15, 1881.

⁵⁸ Handwritten copies of the agreement to purchase the state’s interest in the AM&O, with the Clyde syndicate and the Clarkes, are in the Board of Public Works files. The text is almost entirely the same, apart from the date and parties named. Atlantic, Mississippi, and Ohio Railroad correspondence and records, 1870-1887, Virginia Board of Public Works, Record Group 57, entry 118, Library of Virginia.

the public schools had suffered most from this fiscal bleeding, the Readjusters knew exactly where the money should go. Conservatives had left the incredibly popular public school system more than \$1.5 million in arrears during their rule. In their vain attempt to preserve the so-called honor of the state, Conservatives had literally robbed the schools. Of course, Black schools suffered first and worst from this “honorable” fiscal policy. So the Readjusters decided to reverse the distribution of wealth that had left Virginia schools impoverished. First, they used \$400,000 from the AM&O sale to partially reimburse the school fund.⁵⁹ The remaining \$100,000 was to fund a novel experiment in Black higher education. A.W Harris, a Black delegate from Dinwiddie County and highly skilled debater, championed a bill to create the Normal and Collegiate Institute, the first publicly funded four-year college for Black students in the country.⁶⁰ Of course, bondholders challenged this in the courts, but, indicating the shifting tide, their legal efforts failed.⁶¹ Even though they were unable to redeem the AM&O, Mahone and the Readjusters still advanced their mission of saving the schools while expanding educational opportunities for all Virginians, regardless of race.

The other significant consequence of the AM&O sale was that it practically assured Mahone’s alliance with the Republicans in the US Senate. Mahone needed patronage to counter the wealth and power of the Funders (Conservative and Republican) in Virginia. Despite the favorable terms he had secured from Clarke & Co, Mahone’s failure to redeem the AM&O

⁵⁹ *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1882), 473-474.

⁶⁰ *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1882), 283-287. On Harris’s debating prowess, see George F. Bragg, *The Hero of Jerusalem: In Honor of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of General William Mahone of Virginia* (n.p., 1926), 13.

⁶¹ See “The \$500,000 from the A.,M and O. in Court,” *Norfolk Landmark*, May 4, 1882; “Murder Will Out!,” *Woodstock Virginian*, May 12, 1882; “Five Thousand Votes Gained for the Readjuster Party,” *Richmond Whig*, July 10, 1882, Scrapbook 29, 43, WMP; “The Five Hundred Thousand Dollars,” *Alexandria Gazette*, January 27, 1883.

meant that he could not use it as a cog in the Readjuster machine. The Republicans were the next best thing. As mentioned previously, when Mahone broke the Senate tie by caucusing with the Republicans, he gained a share of the federal patronage. With the crucial 1881 statewide elections rapidly approaching, Mahone greatly increased the odds that the Readjuster coalition would live to fight another day.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to believe that Mahone acted simply out of expedience or that patronage alone would guarantee Readjuster success. Patronage was useless without voter support. Republicans throughout the South knew this all too well. And although Mahone had occasionally indicated a personal proclivity for at least some Republican policies, he knew that he could not lead Virginians, particularly white Virginians, where they had no desire to go. Mahone's gamble on the Republicans, though, was not much of a gamble at all. Before he ever took his Senate seat, correspondents throughout the state had flooded him with letters declaring their willingness to work with the Republicans. "They absolve allegiance to the Demo. Party and ask for a new departure," Mahone wrote H.H. Riddleberger.⁶² Surely, not all white Virginians were thrilled to take the leap. But many, like one Lynchburg man, considered themselves "more Republican than I ever dreamed I would be."⁶³ What had recently seemed

⁶² William Mahone to H.H. Riddleberger, December 2, 1880, Box 1, Folder 7 in Riddleberger Papers.

⁶³ John E. Boze to William Mahone, March 11, 1881, box 25, WMP. In her chapter about patronage politics more broadly, Jane Dailey discusses how fusion with Republicans more often than not led white men to completely abandon independent movements. She therefore views the coalition, particularly white coalitionists, more skeptically. Similarly, she rightly argues that the Readjuster alliance with the Republicans would be the source of future struggles within the coalition. However, as I have argued elsewhere and will argue in subsequent chapters, these struggles (with their racial connotations) were not insurmountable. The historiographical tendency to view interracial third-party coalitions as doomed to failure because of racial divisions not only presumes that white southerners were unbendingly and essentially racist, but also implies that Black southerners were therefore naïve dupes for supporting these coalitions in the first place. See Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, Chapter 2; Barnes, "'Are Not Our Interests the Same?'"

highly unlikely, if not impossible, was actually happening. All Mahone had to do was cast the vote to make it official.

And it was Black Virginians who made it possible. At almost every step in the process of building the Readjuster coalition, Black men made the first substantial move. Both white and Black men understandably viewed the coalition with a mixture of optimism and skepticism. The living memory of slavery, war, and Reconstruction had sown distrust that was difficult to overcome. When Mahone described “Wickham’s game” to “disintegrate” the coalition in the 1880 national elections, he explained precisely how the color line would be drawn. Wickham wanted to “exasperate many against our colored friends...to cause many in our ranks to cry out damn the nigger, he can’t be trusted.”⁶⁴ The primary obstacle to coalition was not an inherent hostility between races. As one Black newspaper noted at the time, “There are thousands of native white men in the state more liberal than even the republican leaders are that will vote with the Negroes and for them even.”⁶⁵ Instead, the challenge for white Readjusters was overcoming decades of racist propaganda that Black men were easily manipulated and incapable of political independence, that they were simply tools of unscrupulous Republican bosses. Again and again, Black men dispelled the myth. In 1879, they resisted Republican dogma about “honest debts” and elected men favorable to readjustment. Black legislators then voted with white Readjusters to pass the Riddleberger Debt Bill, defeat the Hamilton-Wickham substitute, and send Mahone to the US Senate. Although unsuccessful, Black Republicans favoring a split ticket nearly seized control of the 1880 state party convention from “the Wickham clique.” And following the predicted disintegration, Black men called a convention to denounce the state Republican Party

⁶⁴ William Mahone to H.H. Riddleberger, March 19, 1880, Box 1, Folder 5, Riddleberger Papers.

⁶⁵ “Republicans vs. Readjusters,” *People’s Advocate*, March 27, 1880.

and formally endorse the Readjusters. In short, Black Virginians fostered white confidence in the coalition by repeatedly proving and finally proclaiming their political independence. They demonstrated that white Readjusters had nothing to fear by forming an alliance with the national Republicans because they held no sway over Black Readjusters.⁶⁶

Just three months later, in June 1881, the Readjusters held a “very noteworthy” convention. Former Confederate soldiers were “sitting side by side and voting for the same candidates” as formerly enslaved men.⁶⁷ The *New York Times* commented that “there was no herding of colored men in a particular corner,” and Black delegates participated as equals during the convention proceedings.⁶⁸ Longtime Mahone protégé and Petersburg mayor William E. Cameron won the gubernatorial nomination and made his intentions abundantly clear. Looking to the campaign ahead, he declared, “I don’t propose to carry the war into Africa, but Africa into the war.” He was loudly applauded.⁶⁹

The Readjusters put forward an exceedingly liberal platform. They promised to enact the Riddeberger debt bill, abolish the poll tax, destroy sectionalism, equalize taxation, regulate corporate power, and fund the public schools.⁷⁰ Less than two months before the elections, an assassin’s bullet elevated Chester Arthur to the presidency. Unlike his predecessor, who had reluctantly tolerated the Readjuster-Republican alliance, Arthur was fully committed. He handed absolute control of patronage to Mahone and sent word that Republican officeholders should

⁶⁶ The racist assumption of Black dependence existed long before emancipation and enfranchisement and persists to the present, including in scholarship. Denise Ferreira da Silva refers to this assumption as ascribing non-white people to the position of “affectability” – while white people are presumed to possess the capability of full self-determination, this is not the case for non-whites, whose fate is (explicitly or implicitly) seen as entirely outer-determined. See *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

⁶⁷ “Virginia Readjusters,” *New York Tribune*, June 4, 1881, in Scrapbook 20, 65, WMP.

⁶⁸ “The Readjusters’ Convention,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1881.

⁶⁹ “Their Ticket,” *Richmond Dispatch*, June 4, 1881.

⁷⁰ “Readjuster Convention,” *Richmond Dispatch*, June 3, 1881.

support the Readjusters or find new employment. The Readjusters elected their ticket by an overwhelming 12,000 votes, increasing their majority in the legislature and winning the governor's seat.⁷¹ Virginia's government was solidly in the hands of the Readjusters. Coincidental senate ties and presidential assassinations helped carry them over the finish line, but the path had already been cleared by the hard work of breaking old ties and building new confidence in coalition. "Having no fear of equal rights, and alarmed only by the pretension of any to special and exclusive privileges," Readjusters had readjusted themselves.⁷² Their next task was to readjust Virginia.

⁷¹ See Moore, *Two Paths*, 79-82. For a more detailed story of the national Republicans' complicated and diverse relationship to the Readjusters, see Vincent P De Santis, *Republicans Face the Southern Question: The New Departure Years, 1877-1897* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), 141-158.

⁷² *Richmond Whig*, May 18, 1881 in Scrapbook 20, 58, WMP.

CHAPTER 3

RAILROAD FRIENDSHIPS AND “MAHONEISM UNVEILED”

Political excitement in Virginia had reached a fever pitch, and understandably so, wrote the Richmond correspondent of the *People's Advocate*. The Readjuster triumph in the 1881 elections brought a “curious and, at the same time, wholesome conglomeration of men and measures” to the state legislature. “Ardent and uncompromising” Republicans now voted with Conservatives “who, a few years ago, stood first and foremost among the enemies of what was then called radicalism.” This “blending and communion,” wrote the correspondent, was neither “superficial” nor “ephemeral.” It was the sign that Virginians were freeing themselves from the tyranny and stagnation of so-called Bourbon rule. And all was going smoothly for the curious coalition until the “unfortunate rebellion” of John E. Massey, the auditor of public accounts and self-styled “father of readjustment.” Yet, as the correspondent saw it, Massey’s rebellion was not unfortunate for the Readjuster Party; it was unfortunate for Massey. Other, better men had betrayed and abandoned the coalition, but Massey “has learned, like the greater ones whom he attempted to imitate, that the party can do without him.” Although the Conservative press joyfully predicted the collapse of the Readjuster coalition, the *People's Advocate* correspondent insisted that it was merely a “temporary flurry” from which the Readjusters would emerge only stronger.

It is telling that the correspondent focused less on the details of Massey’s rebellion than he did on the exciting and exceptionally noteworthy composition of the coalition. The writer matter-of-factly dismissed the rebellion as old-fashioned ambition. Massey, like the “greater ones” before him, believed he was bigger than the Party. When the Party refused to accede to

Massey's demands, he doubled down on his self-importance. Having painstakingly constructed the coalition by bringing erstwhile enemies into "wholesome conglomeration," the Party told Massey good riddance. The coalition was bigger than one man. Massey's defection, then, was simply the most recent in a series of defections that the coalition had already survived. Indeed, the correspondent declared that rather than suffering, "liberalism grows in force and fulness [sic] among all classes of citizens."¹ Others agreed. Once strong supporters of Massey now condemned his treason and proclaimed, "Down with any man, who undertakes to split us."² One man denounced Massey while at the same time expanding the significance of the Readjuster Party beyond the bounds of Virginia. "The party of Progress in the South is too strong and too earnest to be injured or impeded by any one man."³

In spite of the confidence of these Readjuster partisans, however, it was clear that the coalition was still at risk of disintegration. Massey was not the first to rebel, he was not alone, and he would not be the last. The Readjuster speaker of the House of Delegates penned to party boss William Mahone about the urgent need to reinforce party discipline, predicting that unless Massey were completely crushed, "there will be sub-rebellions and inside ones without number."⁴ Could the Readjusters survive their divisions, or would they be torn asunder by internal disputes, petty jealousies, and personal ambitions? Could they strengthen party discipline and at the same time "safely ventilate the conduct of the traitors and defy them in the Future?"⁵

¹ "Virginia Politics," *People's Advocate*, February 11, 1882.

² R.O. Eddins to William Mahone, January 21, 1882, Box 41, WMP.

³ C.R. Moore to William Mahone, February 8, 1882, Box 42, WMP.

⁴ I.C. Fowler to William Mahone, March 12, 1882, Box 43, WMP.

⁵ E.W. Hubbard to William Mahone, February 4, 1882, Box 41, WMP.

Historians have surprisingly not asked these questions but have rather described the Massey rebellion as the beginning of the end of the Readjuster movement. Massey's and others' charge of bossism – or the more sinister “Mahoneism” – serves as a shorthand for the seemingly unavoidable and insurmountable divisions within the Readjuster coalition. Whether ambitious rivals and upstarts bucking against Mahone's “dictatorial” leadership or white supremacist anxieties regarding the ballooning influence of Black Readjusters and Mahone's alleged efforts to “Africanize” and “Republicanize” Virginia, the 1882 rebellion purportedly proves that the Readjusters' ultimate downfall came from within. Even historians who question the legitimacy and sincerity of accusations of bossism maintain this underlying presumption. Acknowledging partisan spin and racist fearmongering, scholars fail to question the justifications of the admittedly partisan, jealous, and racist rebels. Cries of “Mahoneism” were thus overblown *and* accurate, according to historians.⁶

The myopic and retrospective focus on the rebellion as the first portent of doom has not simply reinforced this contradiction, though. It has led to the implicit and unintentional argument that interracial third parties will always suffer from internecine strife, particularly because of racism. This framing simplifies the motives behind various Readjuster reforms and *presumes* that defeated reforms were unpopular to [white] Readjusters, that [white] Readjusters were ashamed of them, or even that unscrupulous Readjusters attempted to sneak them through on an

⁶ Most exemplary of the narrative of collapse from within is James T. Moore's conclusion that “Mahoneism provided only a partial explanation for the Readjuster collapse. Instead the root cause lay much deeper – in the diverse and antagonistic character of the groups which supported the debt revolt.” Among others, see Charles Chilton Pearson, *The Readjuster Movement in Virginia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917), Chapter 12; Raymond H. Pulley, *Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1968), 38-43; Allen W. Moger, *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), Chapter 3; James Tice Moore, *Two Paths to the New South: The Virginia Debt Controversy, 1870-1883* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), Chapter 8; Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

unsuspecting yet opposed [white] electorate. The framework of opposition to “Mahoneism” uncritically assumes that those white men who abandoned the coalition (or never supported it to begin with) embodied the will of all white men, whether Readjusters or not. Moreover, this formulation renders moot the wills, intentions, hopes, and efforts of Black coalitionists.⁷ In short, the “Mahoneism” framework erases the continuously changing nature of the coalition as well as the labors – of white and Black alike – that went into building, sustaining, and radicalizing the coalition. Further, it ignores the Readjusters’ emphasis on party over individual; it turns Mahone’s leadership, however important, into the cause of its failure.

This retelling of the 1882 Massey rebellion emphasizes the ongoing *process* of coalition building. More important than the rebellion are the means by which the Readjusters attempted to overcome it. More important than the rebels’ charges are the coalitionists’ rebuttals. And more important, still, are the hidden motivations of those who actively opposed Readjuster reforms and enthusiastically welcomed the rebellion. This account draws attention to the internal workings of the Readjuster machine. Under Mahone’s leadership, the Readjuster organization had won an election, but it quickly learned that even a single defection could bring legislation to a standstill. Consequently, what critics called “Mahoneism” was the effort to strengthen the party machinery and thereby protect the Readjusters’ ability to implement their platform. Readjusters clearly and consistently communicated that what critics called “Mahoneism” was defense of patronage, the *power* that patronage provided, and attempts to reclaim state power over railroads.

⁷ This historiographic tendency places non-white people in what Denise Ferreira Da Silva calls “affectability.” Even when the scholarship is sympathetic, it reproduces the very strategies of power that assume that whites are capable of full self-determination while non-whites are not; their fate is entirely outer-determined. See *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

From this new perspective, which focuses on the hidden power of railroads that came to dominate the state, the rebellion appears in a revealing new light. Not only did the coalition become more radical in the face of the rebellion; it grew stronger and more committed as it did. The Readjusters' relationship with several railroad corporations makes this increasingly radical commitment unequivocally clear. Oft-used yet insufficiently examined sources show that Readjusters made deals with railroad corporations in order to break the Massey rebellion. Yet even as they did so, the Readjusters' continued insistence on the sovereign supremacy of the state, particularly through strict regulations and limits on corporate powers, rubbed many railroad corporations the wrong way. When the iron horses consequently bucked and Readjusters sought to break them, the rebellion entered a new stage. Loath to submit to the will of the Readjuster machine, Massey and these railroads discovered they shared a common enemy. Together, they began forming a curious coalition of their own to combat the machine of Boss Mahone and his purportedly pliant and subservient party slaves. More than a matter of white and Black, Conservative and Republican, political independence and boss rule, it was a matter of railroads and Readjusters.

Before Massey made his fated break, the Readjusters began laying the groundwork for party discipline and unity. Just prior to the 1881 elections, Mahone and local party leaders asked legislative candidates to pledge themselves to act with the Readjuster caucus on any legislation or appointments agreed upon by a majority of the caucus. Those seeking appointment to state office were also expected to sign the pledge. Most Readjusters signed but, importantly, not all. As newly elected legislators and office seekers poured into Richmond following their success at the polls, Readjusters met to lay out their plans for the upcoming legislative session. Particularly

important was the question of who was going to get valuable state jobs. In the era of the spoils system, patronage could give a party life, but it could also bring deadly intra-party jealousies if not distributed smartly. After all, President James Garfield had just been murdered by a disappointed – if delusional – office seeker. So the caucus determined to divvy up state offices based on Congressional districts. Only Readjusters from those districts could be named to the offices assigned to them.⁸ In theory, the policy would level the playing field and make sure that the spoils of office would be distributed somewhat evenly throughout the state while limiting the possibility of favoritism that had so long plagued the Old Dominion. According to the Readjuster Speaker of the House, “all went along smoothly” until it was time to name the state auditor.⁹ Massey’s refusal to abide by the “dictation” of the Readjuster caucus served as the impetus for his rebellion, but it was not the origin.

Parson John Massey was a former Baptist preacher, originally from Rockingham County in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley. Like his father before him, Massey was an “old-line Whig.” But a visit in the 1850s to his brother, himself a preacher in Massachusetts, convinced Massey “that none but the Democrats were friends of the South.” As a consequence, he changed his party. When he moved to Albemarle County shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, Massey prided himself on being kept “in the minority – a Whig in the Democratic county of Rockingham, and a Democrat in the Whig county of Albemarle.” Following the war and

⁸ Elizabeth H. Hancock, ed., *Autobiography of John E. Massey* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1909), 200-201, 203-204; “Colonel Frank G. Ruffin’s Letter: A Terrible Arraignment. Mahoneism Unveiled!...,” 1882, 5-6, F231.M25, Library of Virginia. For more general discussions about Readjuster patronage politics, see Moore, *Two Paths*, 93-108 and Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 48-76. Moore’s account challenges unquestioned critiques of so-called “Mahoneism” by disaffected party members as well as Funder opponents. He demonstrates that Readjusters’ patronage policies were business as usual in Gilded Age politics, were highly democratic, and far from corrupt. Dailey’s account focuses primarily on patronage as a means of building and weakening cross-racial ties within the Readjuster Party.

⁹ “The Trouble,” *Richmond Whig*, February 3, 1882, Scrapbook 27, WMP.

Reconstruction, Massey was elected to the legislature and quickly became a dominant and outspoken proponent of readjustment. According to Massey, his 1875 pamphlet, *Debts and Taxes*, which denied Virginia's moral responsibility for the state debt and called for its partial assumption by the federal government, "had entirely changed [Mahone's] views" and converted him to the cause.¹⁰ Indeed, Massey's role as an "original Readjuster" was unquestioned. John S. Wise, no fan of the Parson, later wrote that very few possessed Massey's grasp of Virginia finances. "He was a battle-scarred veteran in all the State-debt conflicts," Wise declared, and his prowess as a debater struck fear into the hearts of Funders, for whom Massey was "the pet abomination."¹¹

But Massey was ambitious and, as his pride at being "kept in the minority" revealed, quite fond of declaring his independence. When his ambitions failed, his independence remained his only comfort. After losing reelection to the state senate in the 1879 elections, the Readjusters appointed him Auditor of Public Accounts. With ten clerks and a messenger, Readjuster John S. Wise recalled that the Auditor's office came with a "considerable" patronage. Importantly, the Readjuster caucus instituted the very same rule regarding official appointments that caused such rancorous outrage two years later. Massey refused to allow the caucus to appoint his subordinate officers, arguing that the fiduciary nature of the positions required that he alone could make the appointments. Due to his prominent status in the movement, the Readjusters exempted Massey from the caucus rule and allowed him to make his own appointments. Nevertheless, Massey's heart truly longed for the U.S. Senate. The Readjuster caucus chose Mahone instead. Next, he set his sights on the gubernatorial nomination, but the Readjusters in convention awarded that honor

¹⁰ Hancock, *Autobiography of John E. Massey*, 26-28 59-98, 150.

¹¹ John S. Wise, *The Lion's Skin: A Historical Novel and a Novel History* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1905), 313-314.

to Petersburg mayor William E. Cameron. Twice denied what he believed to be rightfully his, Massey expected that the Readjusters would finally give him his due by elevating him to serve alongside Mahone in the US Senate. Instead, they elected H.H. Riddleberger, Mahone's chief lieutenant and author of the Riddleberger Debt Bill. Massey blamed Mahone personally for these slights, insisting that Mahone was jealous of his popularity. Mahone, Massey claimed without any sense of irony, sought to bend the party to his own selfish will.

All the while, Massey refused to agree to the caucus rules and even "respectfully declined" to make a contribution to the Readjusters' campaign fund. As he saw it, the Party owed him, not the other way around. After the Readjuster legislators consequently passed Massey over for the senate, he demanded to be continued as auditor, steadfastly refusing all pleas that he agree to the caucus rules. The caucus vigorously attempted to draw Massey back into the fold. Again, they expressed their willingness to compromise by allowing Massey the right to remove any caucus appointee who proved unsatisfactory. He declined. In the words of the speaker of the house, "Every member of the caucus desired him to be Auditor again. Mr. Massey wanted the office on his own terms – that is, without making the pledge. The caucus wanted to give him the nomination on *its* own terms." At an impasse, the Readjusters dropped Massey and made another nomination. In response, Massey openly sought the support of Conservatives to overrule his own party. With the aid of the Conservatives and four unpledged Readjuster senators known as the Big Four, Massey brought legislation to a deadlock.¹²

¹² See Hancock, *Autobiography*, 178, 193-209; John E. Massey, "Letters of the Hon. John E. Massey, Auditor of Public Accounts to the Readjusters of Virginia," January 31, 1882, F231.M42 1882, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia; "Legislative Labors," *Richmond Dispatch*, January 12, 1882; "Contest over the Auditorship," *Valley Virginian*, February 16, 1882; "The Trouble," *Richmond Whig*, February 3, 1882, Scrapbook 27, WMP; "Mahone and Massey, [Richmond Whig?, 1882?], Scrapbook 1B, WMP; Wise, *The Lion's Skin*, 314-316.

Considering the major role of the Big Four in the standard narrative of Massey's rebellion and Readjuster disintegration, relatively little is known about the men themselves apart from the contention that they "saved the day" from "Mahoneism."¹³ This dearth of information has tended to flatten the extent of their support for Massey as well as their personal and political differences. Yet according to Massey, "it would be difficult to find four other men who were more unlike, or who had less in common, than these four."¹⁴ The current historiography has ignored these differences. By instead taking this statement of personal, political, and ideological difference as a starting point, the revolt takes on a new meaning. It reveals that the Big Four revolt occurred in two separate stages separated by a brief period of peace. The first stage rested on the Big Four's attempt to force the Readjuster caucus to reappoint Massey as auditor. More than ideology or partisanship, they acted largely out of personal friendship and loyalty to Massey. But they also hoped to extract favorable concessions from the caucus for themselves. Later, the second stage of the Big Four revolt revolved around the so-called "caucus measures." It was these measures that allegedly embodied the dictatorial horrors of Boss Mahone. During both stages of the revolt, railroad corporations played a significant role, helping to break the deadlock of the first stage and sustaining the revolt in the second. In fact, that the four were joined by another practically forgotten senator during the second stage simultaneously complicates the supposed anti-Republican sentiment of the rebels and further highlights the centrality of railroad politics.

The Big Four consisted of Samuel H. Newberry, Peyton G. Hale, A.M. Lybrook, and B.F. Williams. Newberry and Hale previously identified as Conservatives while Lybrook and Williams had actually been Republicans. Significantly, they did not oppose the caucus on its

¹³ Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 153 n. 44.

¹⁴ Hancock, *Autobiography*, 211.

own. They consistently voted for caucus-approved candidates before and after Massey inaugurated his fight for the auditorship.¹⁵ When one candidate for treasurer withdrew his candidacy in protest of the caucus pledge (for the very same reasons as Massey), the Big Four raised no protest.¹⁶ They were simply loyal to Massey, and they stalled for time while Massey, his term as auditor legally expired, continued to hold the office. By delaying the vote, they hoped to repair, not widen, the breach between Massey and the caucus.¹⁷

In the meantime, the caucus and the Big Four tried to come to an understanding. Publicly, tensions were high, and accusations flew. H.H. Riddleberger proposed an investigation into rumors that Massey or his agents had bribed legislators, which, of course, implicated the Big Four.¹⁸ Suspicion ran even higher considering the barely concealed joy the Conservatives took in sustaining the deadlock.¹⁹ Behind the scenes, though, negotiations continued. After all, “the Massey men” did not object to “anything else but Auditor.”²⁰ Lybrook, a former judge, intimated that he would cooperate if the caucus would retain his friend on the state supreme court. And Newberry said that he “would have proposed easy terms of cooperation” had he not been implicated in the Massey investigation.²¹ Williams’s behavior was chocked up to his ineligibility

¹⁵ See votes for various offices from minor positions to judges on the state supreme court in *Journal of the Senate of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1881), 11-13, 113-119, 127-131, 138-140, 317, 323-325, 329-331, 355-358, 366. Occasionally, one of the four did not vote for any candidate. Apart from the auditorship, there were only a few instances in which one or two voted *against* the Readjuster nominee. Lybrook was the most consistent opponent, primarily in regard to judgeships, being the first to explicitly declare opposition to the Readjuster Party. See “Remarks Made in the Senate by Mr. Lybrook When it was Proposed to Elect a Judge for Prince William County,” *Richmond Dispatch*, March 9, 1882.

¹⁶ Volaski Vaiden was the president of the 1879 Mozart Hall convention where the Readjusters formally organized as a new party. “Getting Tired of the Harness,” *Shenandoah Herald*, December 21, 1881. It is important to note that Vaiden, unlike Massey, simply withdrew his name from consideration and did *not* immediately join the opposition.

¹⁷ The Big Four, led by Newberry, voted with the Conservatives to prevent taking a vote on several state offices.

¹⁸ “Massey Blocks Mahone,” *Staunton Vindicator*, January 27, 1882.

¹⁹ “The Election of Auditor,” *Valley Virginian*, March 2, 1882.

²⁰ “Ten True,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 16, 1882.

²¹ N.B. Meade to William Mahone, February 8, 1882, Box 42, WMP. For the bribery investigation, see Senate Document Number 22 in *Journal of the Senate of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1881).

for reelection, which removed “the incentive that usually induces legislators to regard the will of their constituents.”²² Senator Hale’s constituents, on the other hand, let him “down easy” by praising his loyalty to Massey but instructing him “to stand by the caucus and its nominee for Auditor, whosoever he may be.”²³ Eventually, Hale broke with the others to finally allow the legislature to vote on the auditorship. He did so with the understanding that all Readjuster legislators would be free to vote how they pleased. When the roll was called, Massey received only four votes in the senate and two votes in the house. The total number of votes cast was 125.²⁴ The caucus had remained strong and emerged triumphant.

But the Readjusters had figured out a way around the Big Four altogether and secured additional support from an unlikely source. Joseph A. Wingfield was a Straightout Republican who opposed the Riddleberger debt bill and answered to none other than that arch enemy of readjustment, Williams C. Wickham.²⁵ Searching for ways to break the deadlock, reliable sources believed that Wickham promised to exert his influence over Wingfield in exchange for “passing his [Wickham’s] schemes.”²⁶ The schemes were straightforward: the Chesapeake & Ohio railroad, of which Wickham was vice president, had bills pending before the legislature.²⁷ So Mahone and the Readjusters endeavored to win over Wickham. Rail magnate William P. Clyde, who had earlier aided Mahone’s efforts to redeem the AM&O, wrote that he had called

²² F.E. Buford to William Mahone, January 28, 1882, Box 41, WMP.

²³ C.C. Clarke to William Mahone, February 9, 1882, Box 42, WMP; “Grayson Speaks!,” *Richmond Whig*, February 10, 1882.

²⁴ “Allen Auditor,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 24, 1882; *Journal of the Senate of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882*, 308, 316-317.

²⁵ At the end of January, Riddleberger and Wingfield butted heads in the Senate, and Riddleberger denounced Winfield for being the tool of Wickham. “The Senate Rests,” *Richmond Dispatch*, January 29, 1882.

²⁶ R.F. Walker to William Mahone, February 3, 1882 and E.W. Hubbard to William Mahone, February 4, 1882, Box 41, WMP.

²⁷ *Valley Virginian*, February 2, 1882.

upon an agent of the C&O, who “is at work trying to do what you wished.”²⁸ One Conservative paper contended that even bigger guns were used to force Wickham and, through him, Wingfield, into compliance. Wickham’s boss, C&O president C.P. Huntington, the editorial read, had valuable legislation before Congress. Mahone’s pivotal vote in the US Senate was thus incredibly “important, which fact Mahone knows.” With a wink and a nudge, the article continued, “*presto, change* – we find Wingfield acting with the Mahoneites in opposition to Massey.”²⁹ This, along with Hale’s compromise, temporarily broke the Massey deadlock.

Regardless of which “schemes” proved most decisive, railroads provided the necessary leverage to break the deadlock. And as the correspondence with Clyde reveals, it was not just the C&O. For Clyde was the controlling figure in the rapidly growing Richmond & Danville system and had developed a strong relationship with Mahone. Still, there was yet another corporation at play. U.L. Boyce of the Norfolk & Western, the successor to the AM&O wired Mahone asking to discuss “important business.”³⁰ A week later, Clyde wrote that Mahone’s “hint” to Boyce had “borne fruit.”³¹ Within a relatively brief period after the start of the Big Four revolt, three of Virginia’s most important railroad corporations had thrown their weight behind Mahone and the Readjusters, more specifically the caucus Readjusters.

Support from powerful railroads was a telling vote of confidence in the Readjuster Party. This is not to say that these railroads supported the Readjusters in a partisan sense. Rather, they made a calculated decision that the Readjusters might be better as friends than as enemies. In his

²⁸ W.P. Clyde to William Mahone, February 9, 1882, Box 42, WMP.

²⁹ “Why Wingfield Winged his Way to Mahone,” *Stuanton Spectator*, February 21, 1882. Another prominent Readjuster, Abram Fulkerson, who later abandoned the coalition, similarly claimed that Mahone and the Readjusters allied with Huntington, Wickham, and Wingfield to break the deadlock. See “The Canvass in the Southwest,” *Alexandria Gazette*, August 31, 1882.

³⁰ U.L. Boyce to William Mahone, February 2, 1882, Box 41, WMP.

³¹ W.P. Clyde to William Mahone, February 9, 1882, Box 42, WMP.

masterful history of the transcontinental railroads, Richard White shows that railroad corporations made “politics a realm of private competition.” They made and abandoned “friends” in government purely to secure their interests and stifle the aims of their competitors. “Affection,” White writes, “was not necessary.”³² These railroads could have declined to lend aid to the Readjusters and could just as easily have sustained the deadlock. Ultimately, they sided with the Readjusters because the party was strong *in spite of* the rebellion. For starters, the Readjusters secured the aid of the Arthur administration and won the state elections in a landslide. Moreover, while the Big Four stalled, the caucus repeatedly held firm and surrendered no ground to the bolters. And as the Big Four rebellion was limited to the auditorship, it by no means indicated a breakup of the coalition. As far as these railroads saw it, the Readjusters were firmly in control. The railroads had important legislative business to conduct, the deadlock hindered that business, and a favor to the new sheriff in town could go a long way. A former railroad man and notoriously deft political manipulator himself, Mahone’s “hint” was that he knew the value of “friendship.”

Based on correspondence with Mahone, often in code, these railroads, particularly the Richmond & Danville and the Norfolk & Western, helped to break the deadlock in exchange for the Readjusters considering certain pieces of legislation. Mahone agreed to consider these bills, but he insisted that certain terms must be met. In line with his long-held policy, Mahone demanded that Virginia interests be protected above all else. His and the Readjusters’ actions during the next few months reveal that they were in no way anti-railroad. Nevertheless, they would only extend their aid with the express understanding that Virginia would not abdicate its

³² See Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), xxviii-xxix, 93-133.

sovereignty. As governor Cameron declared in his inaugural address, the state should encourage railroad development while keeping in mind that “the paramount obligation of railways is to the people of the commonwealth.” Just days later, the governor vetoed a railroad bill that he viewed as an “absolute surrender” of Virginia’s sovereignty and risked establishing a precedent that “a creature shall be stronger than its creator.”³³ Some railroads soon rejected these terms of “friendship” as too restrictive.

The primary bill the N&W hoped to pass was one creating the Norfolk Terminal Company. With powers to build terminal and port facilities as well as construct tracks to serve these purposes, the Norfolk Terminal was not problematic in theory. Yet the bill contained certain features, particularly its fifth section, which allowed the N&W to consolidate with other railroad companies. Referring to the bill occasionally by the codename “Jericho,” Mahone had communicated with members of the legislature’s railroad committees that the fifth section should be stricken out. However, this section was “the whole bill.” Its absence would have made it useless to the N&W. So Mahone and Boyce, with Clyde’s assistance, agreed on compromise amendments to ease Mahone’s anxieties. Only when the legislature passed the bill, it did so without the agreed-upon amendments!

Mahone and others were outraged and looked for an explanation. The legislative session was quickly approaching its end, and it was a mad dash to push through bills that had been delayed during the deadlock. In the scramble, the unamended bill got railroaded through both houses. Boyce reneged on the compromise. He reportedly wooed some legislators with free

³³ *Journal of the Senate of Virginia, 1881-1882*, 72-73, 102-104. Coincidentally, Samuel Newberry, one of the Big Four, was personally interested in this railroad, the Richmond and Louisville. The bill was later passed and enacted, “the objectionable features set forth in the veto message having been eliminated.” See “Letter from Richmond,” *Alexandria Gazette*, January 13, 1882 and “Legislative Notes,” *Valley Virginian*, January 26, 1882.

railroad passes to New York. Others, he misled to believe that Mahone was satisfied and no longer opposed the bill. Still others believed that “we owed them something for aid in breaking dead-lock.” As the bill rested on the governor’s desk, the *Richmond Whig* revealed the underlying fear about the fifth section of the Norfolk Terminal bill. The N&W aimed to consolidate with another road it owned, “whether agreeable to the State or not.” After accomplishing this consolidation, it would divert traffic northward and away from Virginia cities. With great reluctance as we will see, Governor Cameron signed the bill into law. Afterwards, Mahone penned a letter to Cameron explaining his “earnest and persistent opposition” to the unamended bill and expressed his “determination to make war on [the bill] and the concern [the N&W].” He regretted any impression that he sought to dictate Cameron’s action, insisting that he only desired “to protect the State and especially the interests of her seaboard cities against the wicked and unfriendly misuse” of the former AM&O.³⁴ Boyce’s betrayal of the Readjusters and the state was made more painful by Mahone’s personal affection for the road. Just a year earlier, in his final message as president, Mahone fondly referred to it as “the pride and sole object of the best days of my life.”³⁵

On the other hand, the Readjusters’ relationship with William Clyde tells a different story, one that brings to light a complex compatibility between railroads and Readjusters. In

³⁴ There are several pieces of correspondence regarding the Norfolk Terminal in the Mahone papers, but particularly relevant are C.C. Clarke to William Mahone, February 4, 1882; Thomas Cross to William Mahone, February 9, 1882; H.H. Riddleberger to William Mahone, March 1, 1882; C.C. Clarke to William Mahone, March 4, 1882; W.F. Gidding to R.F. Walker, March 6, 1882; R.F. Walker to Mahone, March 6, 1882; William Mahone to William E. Cameron, March 7, 1882; R.H. Rawles to William Mahone, March 22, 1882. See also William Mahone to H.H. Riddleberger, no date, Box 2, Folder 29, Riddleberger Papers; *Richmond Whig*, March 6, 1882. For the text of the final Norfolk Terminal Law, see *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1882), 281-283. Several draft bills indicating both the N&W’s desire to consolidate with other lines as well as Mahone’s efforts to prevent various discriminations against Virginians and Virginia can be found in Box 203, WMP.

³⁵ “The A,M.&O. R.R. Co.,” *Bristol News*, March 1, 1881.

exchange for his aid, Clyde got quite a bit in return. Clyde headed a syndicate that owned the R&D railroad as well as a holding company known as the Richmond Terminal. This system (later the Southern Railway) would become the most powerful and politically influential corporation in the South thanks primarily to powers granted by the Readjusters, a fact never before discussed by historians. In short, Clyde and his associates used the Richmond Terminal, chartered in March 1880, to sidestep the fact that the R&D was prohibited from owning the stocks of other railroads. It was a modification of the holding company strategy used by Tom Scott and the Pennsylvania Railroad during the 1860s and '70s. Clyde's R&D indirectly acquired control of other southern railroads through the Richmond Terminal, which could legally use its stock to purchase other companies' securities. Initially, the Richmond Terminal's capitalization was limited to five million dollars. But Clyde hoped to rapidly expand his new southern railroad empire, and five million was far too little. By December 1881, just as the legislative session began, the Richmond Terminal had reached its limit. On the very day the deadlock broke in February 1882, Governor Cameron signed a bill that completely removed the limit on capitalization. Almost immediately, Clyde and his partners tripled the Richmond Terminal's capitalization to \$15 million!³⁶

Arguably, the revisions to the Richmond Terminal charter granted far more powers than the Norfolk Terminal bill that so worried Mahone. But while Boyce and the N&W openly

³⁶ Clyde communicated with Mahone and other Readjusters consistently during the legislative session, often using code when communicating via telegram. Clyde also went by the codename "Bonsacks." For example, see Bonsacks to William Mahone, February 11, 1882 and William P. Clyde to William Mahone, February 11, 1882. In the coded telegram, "Bonsacks" refers to the senate as "X" and the Richmond Terminal bill as "Sacramento." Clyde's direct letter to Mahone goes into more detail and does not use the code words. For a general treatment of Clyde, the R&D, and the Richmond Terminal, see Klein, *Great Richmond Terminal*, particularly Chapter 4. See also *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1879-1880* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1880), 231-232; *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1882), 151-153.

deceived and misled, Clyde seemed more willing to play ball on the Readjusters' terms. Indeed, Clyde hoped to secure similar charter amendments for another holding company in which he was interested. The legislature passed this bill at the same time it passed the unamended Norfolk Terminal bill. Prior to signing both bills, Governor Cameron sent a coded message to Mahone's secretary that he would "let all go by default rather than [the Norfolk Terminal] become law." But he added that Clyde's bill also had similarly "objectionable features." He could not consistently veto one and approve the other.³⁷ Upon finding out that the N&W had railroaded its bill through the legislature and conscious of Cameron's dilemma, Clyde and his agents urgently messaged to let their bill die. They preferred "that General Mahone's wishes should be carried out and the Governor placed even beyond suspicion of inconsistency," adding that "we have been treated too kindly to complain if we have to suffer for the general good."³⁸ Of course, Clyde could afford to fall on his sword considering the "friendship" the Readjusters had already shown the Richmond Terminal.

Yet even in this, the Readjusters extracted valuable concessions for Virginia's benefit. The Richmond Terminal amendments contained certain requirements upon which the enlarged powers were contingent. Before the Richmond Terminal could build or acquire other railroads, within or without Virginia, at least \$100,000 had to be subscribed to those companies with \$20,000 actually paid. Moreover, the Richmond Terminal had to deposit with the state \$20,000 in cash or approved bonds as collateral until another \$20,000 had been spent on the new or

³⁷ C.C. Clarke, whose codename was "Roanoke" wired Cameron's (codename "Macon") concerns to Mahone. I have removed dummy words crossed out in the original telegram and changed the codeword "Jericho" to Norfolk Terminal. See "Roanoke" to William Mahone, March 6, 1882, Box 43, WMP.

³⁸ Decoded telegrams from James W. McCarrick copied in C.C. Clarke to Mahone, March 7, 1882, Box 43, WMP.

acquired roads.³⁹ In effect, this meant that Clyde actually had to spend money on the roads he acquired. They could not be what were known as “paper railroads” with “pocket charters” that existed solely to keep competitors at bay with no real intention of ever being built. Similarly, Clyde could not acquire competing lines simply to take them off the board, letting the ties rot and leaving communities along the way to fend for themselves. The Readjusters, primarily at Mahone’s insistence, practically mandated that railroads acquired by Clyde and the Richmond Terminal would first and foremost benefit the communities through which they ran. Increased powers and capitalization incentivized investment, but the investment had to be at least partially legitimate, not simply a vehicle for speculation. If money were not spent on construction or improvement, the Richmond Terminal’s rights would be revoked, and Virginia would keep the collateral in its treasury. As Governor Cameron had insisted, capital was to be welcomed, but the creature would not be stronger than the creator.⁴⁰

“Friendship” with the railroads, the Readjusters learned, was complicated and risky. It could serve partisan ends by helping to break the legislative deadlock. But its affectionless nature welcomed betrayal. Trust depended on the terms of the *quid pro quo*. As with the caucus rules, the Readjusters insisted on setting these terms themselves. They would “let [railroads] have needed and proper legislation – to be decided upon by the Caucus of the party,” read the *Richmond Whig*.⁴¹ Like Massey, some railroads felt that caucus rule constrained their independence far too much, so they rebelled. When the legislature reconvened for an extra

³⁹ *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1882), 151-153.

⁴⁰ Later, the *Richmond Whig*, the official organ of the Readjuster Party and allegedly unofficial mouthpiece of Mahone, published an article contrasting “bona-fide” investment with speculative schemes, see “Railroads – and The Lobby Tramps and Pocket-Charters,” *Richmond Whig*, April 4, 1882.

⁴¹ “Legislature? Or Lobby?,” *Richmond Whig*, April 1, 1882

session, the Readjusters declared war on the recalcitrant railroads. In response, these railroads discovered a newfound interest in the obstructive capacity of Massey and the Big Four.

Due to the deadlock during the regular legislative session, the Readjusters were only able to implement a few of their major reforms. In addition to passing the Riddleberger debt bill and two laws known as coupon killers, they also passed an amendment to abolish the poll tax and set a date for Virginians to ratify it. Importantly, none of the Big Four opposed these measures.⁴² Still left undone, however, were the Readjusters' plans to equalize taxation, redraw congressional and judicial districts and, crucially, to regulate railroads. Calling an extra session, Governor Cameron urged the consideration of "those bills which concern the public welfare" and pleaded that "no factious attempt shall be made to relieve the majority in the General Assembly of the right or the responsibility of legislation."⁴³ It was a simple request, which the opponents of "Mahoneism" would not abide.

The most controversial bills presented during the extra session became known as the "caucus measures." A.M. Lybrook, one of the Big Four, later published "Mahoneism Unveiled!," in which he exposed "the plot against the people." Two of the "spurious" bills he helped defeat dealt with the judiciary. According to Lybrook, these measures were a "revolutionary blow to crush the courts." In essence, the Readjusters hoped to pack the courts with judges friendly to readjustment. Another bill sought to make commissioners of sales, tasked with managing and

⁴² Each of the Big Four voted in favor of these laws, apart from Hale, who did not vote on the poll tax amendment. Lybrook had reservations about the Riddleberger bill largely because it did not repudiate *enough* of the public debt, saying that he voted for it "for the sake of peace." See *Journal of the Senate of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882*, 66 (poll tax), 84-85 (coupon killer # 1), 99 (coupon killer #2), 181-182 (Riddleberger bill); "The Senatorial Fight," *Valley Virginian*, February 2, 1882; "Remarks Made in the Senate by Mr. Lybrook When it was Proposed to Elect a Judge for Prince William County," *Richmond Dispatch*, March 9, 1882.

⁴³ *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Extra Session* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1882), 5.

overseeing property ordered to be sold under judicial decree, appointed by the governor instead of by judges. Lybrook charged this was nothing but a means to create scores of new offices to further boost the patronage power of Boss Mahone. Moreover, commissioners could select newspapers in which to publish information about court-ordered sales and thereby subsidize “partisan newspaper[s] to support the personal interests of William Mahone.” Especially unforgivable was the Readjusters’ congressional reapportionment bill. At best, said Lybrook, this was to prevent Massey from running as an independent candidate for Congress. At worst, it was to gerrymander the state “to elect eight out of ten members in the interest of William Mahone and Arthur and Stalwartism.”⁴⁴ The “caucus measures,” according to the standard narrative, were nothing more than partisan tricks to build a political machine and an effort to sell out the state to the Republicans.

Mahone and the Readjuster faithful said that was exactly the point. As for the judicial bills, it was the courts that had again and again been the bondholders’ sanctuary against every demonstration of the popular will regarding the public debt. Virginians gave Readjusters control of the legislature, the governorship, and the Attorney-Generalship. The Big Four’s “Treason,” said Readjuster legislators, prevented Virginians from finally taking full control of their destiny and protecting the debt settlement from hostile Funder judges. Regarding the commissioner of sales bill, the legislators said that it was a means of making sure the agents acting for the state were not simply the favored attorneys of Funder judges with no true accountability and interested only in collecting fees. It was a matter of protecting the people while weakening the power of the notoriously anti-democratic courthouse cliques. Even two of the Big Four admitted the need for

⁴⁴ A.M. Lybrook, “Mahoneism Unveiled! The Plot Against the People Exposed...” 1882, F231.M25 L9, Library of Virginia.

this reform, only taking issue with the governor's power to appoint the commissioners. Finally, the Readjusters proudly declared that their redistricting plan was "a party measure – a strictly party measure." And the purpose was, indeed, to send eight congressmen "who shall be committed and pledged to support President Arthur and his administration." They added that their only regret was "that the Bourbon-Funders are allowed so many [two] under the plan." There was no shame or trickery about it, for "we avow this frankly," and "The people of Virginia are perfectly conversant with the situation." The people wanted these reforms, the House of Delegates passed these reforms, and the Readjusters openly admitted that their partisanship was what any self-respecting party would and should do.⁴⁵

Indeed, upon further examination, the standard narrative of the rebellion against "Mahoneism" tends to collapse. Opposition to "Republicanism" provides an insufficient explanation. Both Lybrook and Williams had previously identified as Republicans, yet they voted against the congressional reapportionment bill. Even more confounding, and telling, was the opposition of the sole Straightout Republican senator, Joseph Wingfield. Having helped to break the deadlock during the regular session, Wingfield now joined the rogue Readjusters in the special session against each of the so-called caucus measures.⁴⁶ During this stage of the rebellion, the Big Four were actually the "Famous Five." Conservative papers heaped praise on these patriots for their bold stand, especially Williams and Wingfield for resisting the pressures

⁴⁵ The *Richmond Whig* contains several articles about these measures and the "treason" of the Big Four. In particular, see "How Are the Mighty Fallen!," *Richmond Whig*, March 29, 1882; "It is War!," *Richmond Whig*, March 30, 1882; "The Re-Arrangement of the Circuits," *Richmond Whig*, April 4, 1882; "A Readjustment Bill," *Richmond Whig*, April 7, 1882; "The Congressional Re-Appportionment," *Richmond Whig*, April 10, 1882; "Traitors and Treason," *Richmond Whig*, April 25, 1882; "The Address of the Readjuster Members of the Legislature!," *Richmond Whig*, June 6, 1882. In Lybrook's "expose," he said that he and Samuel Newberry "wished to show the people that the source of this office [Commissioner of Sales], and not the office, was the ruling consideration" in Lybrook, "Mahoneism Unveiled!," 7.

⁴⁶ *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Extra Session*, 91, 151-152, 191. One of the judicial bills regarding the tenure of judges never actually went to the senate.

of state and national Republican leaders.⁴⁷ Republicans, in effect, made the obstruction of the caucus measures possible. As one prominent Readjuster later wrote, the so-called evil of Republicanism was merely “the pretext for the bolt of [Massey] and friends.”⁴⁸ There was, of course, more to the story. A Petersburg Republican hit close to the mark when he concluded that Virginia suffered from the “alliterative affliction” of Williams and Wingfield, both of whom, he said, were controlled by “one big W:” Straightout Republican boss Williams Wickham.⁴⁹ The railroad “friendship” that led Wickham and Wingfield to help break the initial deadlock was short-lived. In May, Wickham wrote to C&O president C.P. Huntington that he opposed reconvening the legislature to pass the congressional reapportionment bill because it would be “next to impossible to prevent legislation that will be most hurtful to our interests.”⁵⁰ The relative obscurity of Wickham and Wingfield in the standard narrative, if not their practical erasure from it, has almost completely concealed the railroad stakes beneath “the pretext” in the fight against Boss Mahone.⁵¹

When Massey later recounted the valiant stand of the Big Four, conveniently leaving out Wingfield, he interestingly used a railroad metaphor. They were Virginia’s “brakemen.” Like the

⁴⁷ See “The Five Famous,” *Richmond Dispatch*, April 14, 1882; *Charlottesville Jeffersonian*, *West Point Star*, and *Harrisonburg Old Commonwealth* quoted in *Richmond Dispatch*, April 21, 1882. Interestingly, Peyton Hale, who had previously been a Conservative, was believed to be on the verge of voting *in favor* of the reapportionment bill! The same article insisted that “Republican, democratic and readjuster opponents of Bossism will fight against any such tactics to the bitter end” in “From Richmond,” *Alexandria Gazette*, April 15, 1882.

⁴⁸ Wise, *The Lion’s Skin*, 316.

⁴⁹ “Views of a Virginian, (Washington, DC) *National Republican*, April 24, 1882.

⁵⁰ Williams C. Wickham to Collis P. Huntington, May 8, 1882, Collis P. Huntington Papers, 1856-1901 (Microfilm) Series I, Reel 28.

⁵¹ In most studies of the Readjuster period, Wingfield is practically unknown. Wickham is more present, but simply as the leader of Virginia’s Straightout Republican faction. The erasure of Wingfield is most starkly demonstrated by a memorial portrait of Massey and the Big Four unveiled in Virginia’s Old Senate Chamber in 1931. Charles C. Pearson, who wrote the first historical study of the Readjuster Revolt and gave the address at the portrait unveiling, said that Newberry, Hale, Lybrook, and Williams, were “sometimes joined by Wingfield.” See “Report of the ‘Big Four’ Commission,” *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, 1932 (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, 1932), Document No. 7. Among others see, Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*; Moore, *Two Paths*; Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*; Tarter, *Saga*.

brave men who deftly jumped along the tops of railcars to apply the brakes, often preventing railroad catastrophe, the Big Four “put down the brakes when measures were wrong.”⁵² Unclear, however, was *for whom* these measures were wrong.

In early April 1882, just over two weeks into the extra session, Conservative Democratic Congressman John Strode Barbour wrote to Massey with a special plea. In addition to serving in Congress, Barbour was the president of the Virginia Midland railroad, which had been owned by the Baltimore & Ohio. Indeed, as an agent of the B&O, Barbour had been at war with Mahone in both railroading and politics since the heady days of Reconstruction. Even more telling, Barbour had very recently helped the B&O strengthen its control of the Virginia Midland when he served as the court-appointed commissioner of sales! Now, he implored Massey “to prevent, if possible, the wild legislation which has been initiated.” That Massey held no office, much less a legislative position, was no matter to Barbour. Massey, he said, was “doing for Virginia what no other man could do.” In fact, Barbour generously offered to “personally” fund Massey’s rebellion. A companion letter written by another Democratic congressman left it to Massey to “determine how far you can go to accomplish the desired results.” Whatever Massey determined, the congressman assured him that his views about the state debt would not be opposed. Barbour and his fellow congressman knew that Massey’s utility came from his influence over the Big Four. They similarly knew that the way to his heart involved playing into his sense of heroic self-importance and independence. Massey responded with blushing pride that “circumstances” had provided him with the means of “performing a sacred duty to my state.” This was reward

⁵² “Ex-Auditor Massey on the Stump,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, June 21, 1882. Massey did occasionally mention the “Firm Five” in his stump speech, although focusing primarily on the original four. See “Massey on Mahone,” *Washington Post*, May 24, 1882.

enough, Massey insisted, and thus removed any need for further compensation.⁵³ As we will see, Massey did not go without reward, but in the meantime, he got to work for his new political “friends.”

One of these pieces of “wild legislation,” to which historians have only alluded, was a bill to dramatically strengthen Virginia’s railroad commission. Although Virginia was the first southern state to establish a railroad commission, it was notoriously weak.⁵⁴ One newspaper jibed that it was the only state office “in which an assistant was required to help to do nothing.”⁵⁵ During the regular session, the Readjusters had put forward bills to create a commission modeled on that of Georgia, one of the strongest commissions in the world with what one early scholar called a “despotic power” over freight and passenger rates.⁵⁶ Now, during the extra session, the Readjusters hoped to settle some scores. Almost daily, the *Richmond Whig* let loose a barrage of invective against railroad corporations and their lobbyists, whose presence in the halls of the legislature even some Conservatives found unsettling. The paper broke down in detail the evils of specific railroad bills, especially those put forward by the traitorous N&W. When one Richmond publication referred to the Readjusters’ proposed commission as a “star chamber for the railroad companies,” (an allusion to the British monarchy’s early modern chamber to

⁵³ Hancock, *Autobiography*, 213-215. For the rivalry between Barbour and Mahone, see Nelson Morehouse Blake, *William Mahone: Soldier and Political Insurgent* (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, Publishers, 1935), 70-134; James T. Quinn, “John S. Barbour, Jr. and the Restoration of The Virginia Democracy, 1883-1892, MA thesis, (University of Virginia, 1966), 5-18; Jack P. Maddex, Jr., *The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879: A Study in Reconstruction Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 73-79. For Barbour’s role as commissioner of sales, see Charles M. Blackford, *Legal History of the Virginia Midland Railway Co., and of the Companies which Built its Lines of Road* (Lynchburg: J.P. Bell & Co, Printers, 1881), 131-199.

⁵⁴ Maxwell Ferguson, *State Regulation of Railroads in the South* (New York: Columbia University, 1916), 43.

⁵⁵ “At the State Capital,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, June 19, 1883.

⁵⁶ Ferguson, *State Regulation*, 44.

constrain the power of English lords), the *Whig* responded that it was past time “to crush out the arrogance of these companies” who held themselves superior to the state.⁵⁷

According to Massey, the Readjusters’ railroad commission was “one of the most outrageous” of the caucus measures. The model of the Georgia railroad commission, Massey said, was not enough for Mahone. So Readjuster legislators put forward a bill that would grant the new commission the power to remove “any officer, agent or employee” at will. Massey declared in a stump speech that Mahone specifically wished to punish the officers of the N&W who “gave offence to the Virginia boss.” The bill, Massey claimed, was meant to intimidate railroad officers and employees into submission. Upon being asked to oppose the railroad commission bill, Massey “resolved that it should not pass so long as I held the balance of power.” Once it was defeated, Massey, who again held no office, “received complimentary passes from railroad companies over roads I have never seen.” The Readjusters’ protests against railroad lobbyists, Massey now proclaimed, was “all buncomb.”

Then, in July, Massey was taken by carriage to the home of Virginia Midland president and Congressman John Barbour. Several other leading Conservatives were there as well. As Massey sat in Barbour’s parlor, these prominent Conservatives urged Massey to run as an independent candidate for Virginia’s at-large congressional seat. Skilled in the dance of feigned reluctance, Massey expressed his intention to retire forever from politics. His hosts insisted. They provided Massey with a pen, paper, and ink. His arm so delicately twisted, Massey wrote

⁵⁷ *Richmond Whig*, April 15, 1882. Articles condemning the railroad lobby can be found throughout issues of the *Whig* between late March and the end of April 1882. In particular, see “Legislature? or Lobby?,” *Richmond Whig*, April 1, 1882; “Railroads – and the Lobby-Tramps and Pocket-Charters,” *Richmond Whig*, April 4, 1882; “Our Solemn Protest,” *Richmond Whig*, April 5, 1882; “State Sovereignty? Or Railroad Rule?,” *Richmond Whig*, April 11, 1882. Regarding particular railroad bills, see “The Norfolk Terminal,” *Richmond Whig*, March 31, 1882; “Senate Bill No. 27,” *Richmond Whig*, April 1, 1882; “Senate Bill No. 3,” *Richmond Whig*, April 3, 1882. For Conservative commentary on the presence of lobbyists, see “Capital Notes,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, April 5, 1882.

his official announcement of candidacy.⁵⁸ The avowed enemies of readjustment formed an open alliance with the self-proclaimed “father of readjustment,” and anti-Readjuster railroads had found a new friend.

It is important to remember, however, that the Readjusters’ relationship with railroads was complicated, sometimes confusingly so. The Readjusters’ continued “friendship” with the R&D showed that not all railroads were so staunchly anti-Mahone. Indeed, it became a major topic of discussion going into the congressional elections that fall. Commentators were unable to decide who was the real boss in the relationship, Mahone or Clyde, the Readjusters or the R&D. Either way, the fact that the Readjusters continued working with the R&D at the same time they waged war on other roads added to the confusion. Were they sincerely committed to railroad regulation, or was their anti-railroad rhetoric simply a means to coerce railroad officials and trick the people? A series of open letters in August and September between Frank G. Ruffin (a newly minted anti-Mahoneite) and H.H. Riddleberger provides insight into this confusing conundrum. Ruffin and Riddleberger’s correspondence reveals how “friendship” with the Readjusters worked in practice. Riddleberger frankly explained the logic behind favorable legislation and its relationship to the party’s larger goals. At the same time, Ruffin’s keen grasp of railroad finance, combined with his traditional anti-monopolism, allowed him to paint a remarkably clear picture of the political power and value of railroads, and, more specifically what motivated and terrified these corporations.

Frank Ruffin was yet another of the “original readjusters” to rebel in 1882. A wealthy planter before the war, Ruffin spent much of his time after the war as a leader of the Grange and

⁵⁸ Hancock, *Autobiography*, 219, 232-233, 237; ““Old Man Massey,”” *Richmond Dispatch*, April 4, 1882.

a vocal proponent of commercial improvements to the James River. When he was not bragging about his relation to the rabid secessionist Edmund Ruffin, who preferred shooting himself to sharing a country with the “perfidious, malignant, & vile Yankee race,” *Frank* Ruffin developed a fondness and a talent for pamphleteering. And the debt controversy, understandably, provided Ruffin with an exciting subject upon which to unleash his pen. His distaste for the British and his even more bilious (and familial) hatred for Yankees led him to favor a more complete repudiation of Virginia’s debt (held mostly by Northerners and the English). Despite his preference for repudiation, Ruffin was an early and consistent advocate of readjustment. Consequently, the Readjusters appointed him to a clerkship in the state treasury.

But in July 1882, the Readjusters fired him. Like Massey, he had refused to contribute to the campaign fund, bucked against the caucus rules – though he relied on them to protest his removal – and penned pseudonymous critiques of Mahone and the caucus. Then, after his removal and at Massey’s public urging, Ruffin released his “terrible arraignment” of the boss in several public letters. Insisting that he was not motivated by “vindictiveness” for being fired, Ruffin condemned the devious schemes of Mahone and his caucus measures. But he reserved a large portion of his exposé for the matter of railroads. The caucus-pledged Readjusters, Ruffin charged, had reneged on the party’s platform pledge to control railroad monopolies. At the same time, though, and despite his professed antimonopolism, he denounced the railroad commission bill as “an outrage.” In short, Ruffin charged the Readjusters with being both too easy *and* too hard on the railroads.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ For a general, relatively favorable biography of Ruffin, see Lynwood Clair Barthurst, “Virginia’s Restive Rebel: Colonel Frank G. Ruffin, His Life and Times, 1816-1892,” M.A. Thesis (Virginia Commonwealth University, 1997). Regarding Ruffin’s removal, see “Ruffin Versus Reveley,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 9, 1882. Ruffin’s original articles appeared in the *Richmond Dispatch* between August 18 and August 20, but were later published in pamphlet

Yet there was not as much contradiction in Ruffin's sentiment as might appear. He was an antimonopolist in the purest sense. He absolutely opposed the unchecked power of railroad corporations. But he equally opposed too large a concentration of power in the government, regardless of who was in control. A leader of the Grange, he believed in equal rights to all and special privileges to none. A white supremacist, he could make exceptions to this credo, but as far as railroad corporations were concerned, he believed they still had rights the state was bound to respect. In contrast, Mahone and other Readjusters believed corporate rights, special or otherwise, arose from and lived at the mercy of the state. If corporations accepted this dynamic, the state would deal with them favorably. Otherwise, the state could just as easily exert its power to crush them.⁶⁰

As H.H. Riddleberger pointed out in his response, there was more at stake than inflexible ideology. Ruffin charged that the Readjusters had made a corrupt bargain with the R&D by allowing it to increase its capital stock and discharge a debt to the state with new Virginia bonds. Riddleberger bluntly declared that there was, indeed, a "bargain." It was his, "and not Mahone's." The R&D wanted (needed, as we shall see) to increase its capitalization, and it had repeatedly attempted to pay its debt to the state with old, depreciated Virginia bonds. Seeing an opportunity, Riddleberger negotiated a deal with the R&D. The Readjusters would allow the R&D to discharge its indebtedness not with *any* Virginia bonds, but with new "Riddleberger bonds" created by the Readjusters' debt law. The success of this law depended entirely on people exchanging old bonds (consols, peelers, McCullochs, etc.) for new bonds. If the R&D could be

form by the Conservative central committee. Edmund Ruffin's final diary entry before killing himself is quoted in Eric H. Walther, *The Fire-Eaters* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 230

⁶⁰ State Sovereignty? Or Railroad Rule?," *Richmond Whig*, April 11, 1882. For a recent work on the complicated diversity of thought within the broader antimonopoly tradition, see Daniel A. Crane and William J. Novak, eds., *Antimonopoly and American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

coaxed into making this necessary exchange, it would be worth it. Riddleberger's bargain, then, was meant to jumpstart the refunding process and thus give the Readjuster debt settlement a fighting chance. As for increasing the R&D's capital stock, Riddleberger made the privilege contingent on the R&D giving up its chartered exemption from state taxes. The state secured the right to tax property worth millions of dollars that otherwise would have been "forever exempt." If the R&D gained from the deal, Riddleberger insisted, "it certainly did not fail to give the state a *quid pro quo*."⁶¹ Virginia's financial sovereignty and the security of the debt settlement were the determining factors in the Readjusters' railroad policy.

Again, this was nothing new or out of the ordinary as far as the Readjuster faithful saw it. What Ruffin viewed as a betrayal of the Readjusters' railroad plank was a misunderstanding. Mahone and other Readjuster leaders never meant to punish past opponents simply out of spite. When they promised retaliation against corporations that had exerted their influence against readjustment, it was a forward-looking threat. The past was the past. Former sins against readjustment and Virginia interests could be washed away *if* the sinners repented and denounced their sins. It was the carrot *or* the stick. Railroads could decide which one they wanted. And one of their chief sins revolved around railroad employees. Several railroads had earlier discriminated against outspoken Readjusters. Meanwhile, they allowed Funders to be "loudmouthed in their partizantry." Once the Readjusters won power, however, a few railroad

⁶¹ "The Ruffin Pamphlet," *Richmond Whig*, September 13, 1882; "Ruffin vs. Riddleberger," *Richmond Whig*, September 21, 1882; "Senator Riddleberger Speaks Again," *Richmond Whig*, September 23, 1882. Riddleberger said this was similar to how the initial Funding Act was fostered by Walker's "free railroad policy." See Chapter 1. The importance of refunding is demonstrated by the experience of the McCulloch Bill. Refunding stopped after the Readjusters won the 1879 elections. See Hugh McCulloch to F.W.M. Holliday, March 19, 1880, Executive Letter Books of Governor Frederick W.M. Holliday, 1878-1881, Library of Virginia, (Microfilm) Misc. Reel 6192 and *Report of the Council of the Corporation of Foreign Bondholders...For the Year 1879* (London: Wetheimer, Lea and Co., Printers, 1880), 66.

presidents gave “full promise of indemnity for past political persecution of Readjusters and... security against such persecution in the future.” With these companies, the Readjusters engaged in “rightful and legitimate negotiations.”⁶² Evidence indicates that the R&D continued to honor the terms imposed by the Readjusters.⁶³

Other companies, though, had quickly “resumed their ancient airs of insolence and mastery.”⁶⁴ Among these was the N&W. As a consequence of “their impudence, their arrogance, their cupidity, their treachery,” the Readjusters attempted to withdraw the privileges contained in the Norfolk Terminal law that had been deceptively pushed through during the regular session.⁶⁵ With barely half of the House voting, the motion to take up the revised charter failed to secure the necessary two-thirds majority by three votes.⁶⁶ Prior to this, N&W agents allegedly bragged that the amendment would be “of no avail” even if it passed.⁶⁷ Further flaunting their disregard for state authority, stockholders of the N&W-owned Shenandoah Valley Railroad later authorized its directors “to accept or reject all legislation in Virginia or West Virginia.”⁶⁸

But where legislation proved impotent, railroad “friendship” became useful. Ruffin’s rumor-fueled conspiracy was remarkably close to reality. The R&D actually *was* getting special treatment because it was “more compliant.”⁶⁹ Clyde continued to provide Mahone with

⁶² “Legislature? Or Lobby?” *Richmond Whig*, April 1, 1882. See also, *Richmond Whig*, April 21, 1882.

⁶³ James W. McCarrick to William Mahone, October 14, 1883, Box 79; William P. Clyde to Mahone, November 5, 1883 Box 81, WMP.

⁶⁴ “Legislature? Or Lobby?” *Richmond Whig*, April 1, 1882.

⁶⁵ “Our Solemn Protest,” *Richmond Whig*, April 5, 1882. For a commentary on the proposed charter amendments, as well as the amendments, see “The Norfolk Terminal,” *Richmond Whig*, March 31, 1882.

⁶⁶ *Journal of the House of Delegates of the State of Virginia, Extra Session* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1882), 199.

⁶⁷ *Richmond Whig*, April 3, 1882.

⁶⁸ *Commercial & Financial Chronicle*, No. 34, 550.

⁶⁹ Ruffin’s open letter was published and commented on in practically every newspaper throughout the state in the fall of 1882. “A Response to Mr. Massey’s Open Letter,” *Richmond Dispatch*, August 18, 1882; “Another Count,” *Richmond Dispatch*, August 19, 1882; “Indictment Complete,” *Richmond Dispatch*, August 20, 1882.

information about various railroad bills brought before the legislature. He explained which schemes were harmless, which ones concealed ulterior motives, and which ones could help the Readjusters settle scores. For instance, one law would have removed from the N&W exclusive control of the “most valuable iron and mineral section of the state.”⁷⁰ Its passage, according to one correspondent, would “be felt about as deeply by the N&W crowd as a veto of their Terminal bill.”⁷¹ The legislature did not pass this bill, but the correspondence suggests that the Readjusters could reach non-compliant railroads indirectly by limiting their access to valuable, yet-to-be-developed markets and opening them up for those “more compliant” roads.

All of the major trunk lines were competing for access to iron and coal deposits as well as the agricultural produce of the South and West. The C&O, N&W, R&D and others were all rapidly expanding their systems westward and southward while at the same time developing port facilities in Newport News (C&O), Norfolk (N&W), and West Point (R&D) from which to ship the bounties carried over their respective lines. Indeed, the trunk lines were engaged in a rate war, progressively undercutting each other in the hopes of attracting new prospective business.⁷² By granting special favors, then, Mahone and the Readjusters could effectively use state power to intervene in competition between railroads. For instance, the powers granted to the Richmond Terminal allowed Clyde and the R&D to finally halt the B&O’s decades-long attempt to

⁷⁰ W.P. Clyde to Mahone, February 27, 1882, Box 42, WMP. See also Clyde to Mahone, January 27, 1882, Box 41; Clyde to Mahone, January 30, 1882, Box 41; Clyde to Mahone, February 7, 1882, Box 42; Clyde to Mahone, February 9, 1882, Box 42; Clyde to Mahone, February 11, 1882, Box 42; Clyde to Mahone February 29, 1882, Box 42; Clyde to Mahone, March 1, 1882, Box 43; Clyde to Mahone, March 6, 1882, Box 43; Clyde (Bonsacks) to Mahone, March 14, 1882, Box 43, WMP.

⁷¹ A.H. Bronson to William P. Clyde, March 24, 1882, Box 42, WMP.

⁷² See *Commercial & Financial Chronicle*, No. 34, 61 (for N&W and rate war), 178 (for R&D), 343 and 547 (for C&O). Also see discussion of an “apprehended break in rates” in “Our Richmond Letter,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, June 21, 1882

penetrate the Deep South.⁷³ As one Conservative newspaper linked to Virginia Midland president John S. Barbour enviously contended, if the R&D opposed any particular scheme, “its fate was sealed.”⁷⁴ Clyde’s cooperation was not a simple case of legislative *quid pro quo*. He provided information and wielded his massive and quickly growing economic power on behalf of the Readjusters. Of course, Clyde benefited tremendously from this policy, but he made his intentions and loyalty to Mahone clear. In anticipation of other railroads’ efforts to push their schemes through the legislature, Clyde insisted that he could “get along without further legislation if necessary and have the field free for such policy as you may think best to meet the situation.”⁷⁵ “Friendship” could serve the Readjusters just as much as it could serve compliant railroads.

Interestingly, Ruffin’s arraignment of “Mahoneism” provided the exact reason Clyde was being so cooperative. As historians have discussed, Ruffin accused Mahone of selling out the state and converting “Democratic Readjusters” into Republicans. By stopping here, however, they have ignored the larger picture. Why, Ruffin asked, would Clyde and the R&D “wittingly or unwittingly” agree to execute these plans on behalf of Boss Mahone? Perhaps it was because Clyde was a Republican. But this did not explain the support of several Virginia officers and directors of the road who had long been prominent Democrats. Had their “accursed hunger for gold,” Ruffin wondered, “wrought in them indifference to convictions?” No. The R&D could only expand its burgeoning empire through the Richmond Terminal, which, thanks to the

⁷³ Klein, *Great Richmond Terminal*, 92-93, 97, 104. Through the Terminal, the R&D purchased the Virginia Midland from the B&O in 1881, the completion of the deal took some time, and it remained uncertain whether “Mr. Garrett will give up the control.” The R&D did not acquire complete control until early 1883. See *Commercial & Financial Chronicle*, No. 35, 764; *Commercial & Financial Chronicle* No. 36, 109, 141, 332.

⁷⁴ “Letter from Richmond,” *Alexandria Gazette*, March 9, 1882.

⁷⁵ Clyde to Mahone, March 14, 1882, Box 43, WMP. Clyde signed using his codename of “Bonsacks,” but Mahone’s secretary, who provided brief summations of Mahone’s incoming correspondence, indicated that it was from Clyde.

Readjusters, could increase its capitalization indefinitely. For the plan to work, though, the R&D had to purchase any newly issued Terminal stock in such proportions that would assure the R&D maintained majority control. It did so by issuing new stocks of its own (hence Riddleberger's bargain) as well as taking on new debts.⁷⁶ To many investors anxious about the security of their investments, this proved concerning. Uncertainty-fueled speculation led to massive swings in the market.⁷⁷ Later, the R&D president dispelled rumors that the road was "borrowing at exorbitant rates."⁷⁸ In short, although Ruffin was foggy on the details, he correctly pointed out the Republican Clyde and the Democratic directors in the R&D desperately needed capital and, more importantly, to inspire the confidence of investors. "May not this fact, with all that it implies, have suggested the prudence of an alliance which should override what some of them may have regarded as 'a mere sentiment?'" Partisan politics, Ruffin implied, was of no real concern to railroad men.⁷⁹

It was in this context that the Readjusters pushed for their partisan "caucus measures." They believed these measures were popular, necessary reforms. And they were absolutely intended to cement the Readjuster's patronage power. Massey, Ruffin, and the Big Four were correct. But they were wrong in believing that the aim was to make Mahone an unstoppable dictator. Control of the federal patronage had proven a deciding factor in the Readjusters' ability to overcome the influence of the Funders, both Conservative and Republican. Increasing their control of state patronage would only further strengthen the Readjusters. What historians have

⁷⁶ "Ruffin's Rejoinder," *Richmond Dispatch*, September 20, 1882; See also Klein, *Great Richmond Terminal*, 86-98.

⁷⁷ Klein, *Great Richmond Terminal*, 94-96. Clyde discussed these fluctuations with Mahone. See Clyde to Mahone, February 28, 1882, Box 42, WMP; Clyde to Mahone, March 1, 1882, Box 43, WMP; Clyde to Mahone, March 6, 1882, Box 43, WMP.

⁷⁸ *Commercial & Financial Chronicle* No 35, 405.

⁷⁹ "Ruffin's Rejoinder," *Richmond Dispatch*, September 20, 1882.

missed, however, is what “bossism” and the “caucus measures” meant to railroads, particularly the non-compliant ones.

The Readjusters’ attempt to pack the courts with partisan judges, for instance, posed just as much of a threat to the railroads as it did to foreign bondholders. Courts could and often did protect railroads from popular resentments and state regulation.⁸⁰ They could even force laws to be enacted without legislative consent. One railroad scheme, for example, narrowly passed the legislature, only for it to be recalled before the governor could sign it. Months later a judge ordered that the bill became law because the governor, who had returned the bill to the legislature as requested, had not actively vetoed the bill within five days of receiving it.⁸¹ Clyde and the R&D had opposed the bill because it would give a rival system the ability to cut off “all the seaport towns of the state.”⁸² The case demonstrates that courts frequently favored the rights of property over the rights of the state, even to the extent of creating a corporation by judicial decree. Indeed, as the next chapter will show, it would not be long before some of the non-compliant corporations proved just how useful “non-partisan” judges could be.

⁸⁰ William G. Thomas offers an excellent study of how railroad corporations navigated and ultimately shaped the law in their favor. One way was by unofficially or officially putting judges on the payroll. *Lawyer for the Railroad: Business, Law, and Power in the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), in particular 47-48, 80-81

⁸¹ “A victory for major Wellford’s Railroad Bill,” *Richmond Dispatch*, August 4, 1882. The law was printed in *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1883-1884* (Richmond: R.U. Derr, Superintendent Public Printing, 1884), 751-753.

⁸² Clyde to Mahone, February 11, 1882, Box 42, WMP. The rival system was Moncure Robinson’s growing Seaboard Air Line. Interestingly, one of the incorporators, C.E. Wellford was a longtime clerk and later secretary of the C&O. Evidence indicates that the C&O, N&W, and Seaboard Air Line had formed a community of interest. All three companies, for instance, had jointly acquired control of the Old Dominion Steamship Company in early 1882. Whether they were cooperating against the R&D system and/or the Readjusters is not entirely clear, but it may be likely considering the favors received by the R&D. Wellford’s brother, a judge, was at one point a topic of discussion in efforts to break the Massey deadlock. See James Frazier to Mahone, January 22, 1882, Box 41, WMP. Regarding the shared acquisition of the Old Dominion Steamship Company, see *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* No. 34, 85.

The commissioner of sales bill similarly posed a threat to railroad corporations. Taking the patronage power from unelected judges and placing it under gubernatorial control was one thing, but the provision to subsidize a “partisan newspaper” in every county and city was terrifying.⁸³ It was a well-known fact that railroads subsidized the press. Mahone himself had done exactly that when he ran the AM&O.⁸⁴ Controlling, or at the very least influencing, the channels of information was absolutely crucial. Locally, it could shape the way people perceived railroads, channeling popular sentiment toward paths less radical. Most importantly, though, information could free or freeze capital. As mentioned above, railroads were competing for access to valuable agricultural and mineral trade. They were also competing for the capital needed to fund their expansion into these new markets. Mahone and the Readjusters were already using their newspaper columns, particularly in *The Whig*, to attack specific companies and their schemes. Still recovering from the 1873 Panic, investors were skittish, especially in the South where “the repudiation principle” was “more or less prevalent.”⁸⁵ A Readjuster-state-subsidized press could serve partisan ends, but it could also influence capital markets, thereby extending Readjuster influence beyond the notoriously short reach of legislative power. Perhaps Mahone’s message to the English bondholders who had foreclosed on the AM&O back in 1876 best demonstrates the value of information. Popular prejudice against railroads, Mahone said, “may be unfounded and senseless; but, nevertheless, it exists, and however much you may argue against it as unjust and undeserved, still it will continue to manifest itself.”⁸⁶ Mahone knew that

⁸³ Lybrook, “Mahoneism Unveiled!”

⁸⁴ “Collinson’s Falsehoods,” *Richmond Whig*, April 4, 1879 in Scrapbook 5, WMP. See also chapter 1.

⁸⁵ “Hard on Southern Securities,” *Shenandoah Herald*, September 13, 1882. Chapter 5 will go into more detail about the larger context of southern public debt controversies.

⁸⁶ William Mahone, *A Reply to John Collinson’s Report to the Consolidated Bondholders of the Atlantic, Mississippi & Ohio Rail Road Co.* (np., 1877), 49.

the value of “friendship” was both political and economic. He also knew that its publicly expressed absence could be just as valuable.⁸⁷

Finally, the last and most vital bastion of corporate power was influence over employees. Ruffin pointed out that Virginia railroads employed tens of thousands whom they had “more than once...wielded in elections.” These employees, upon whose wages their wives and children depended, “have an electoral value, which Mahone appreciates.”⁸⁸ This, to the railroads, was the epitome of “bossism,” as evidenced in the headlines of articles discussing the Readjusters’ railroad commission bill.⁸⁹ Parson Massey declared from the stump that Mahone wished to put “every employee of a railroad under his control.”⁹⁰ The *Lynchburg Virginian* intimated that the proposed railroad commission would “convert the railroads of the State into a readjuster political machine.”⁹¹ Accordingly, “Mahoneism” and “bossism” could be viewed as removing the job lash from the hands of corporations that had again and again defiantly used it to defeat the popular will. Partisanship was politics. Mahone and the Readjusters aimed to make partisanship serve Virginia and Virginians instead of brokers, bondholders, and “foreign” corporations. Responding to the abuse hurled at Mahone and other Readjuster leaders, the *Richmond Whig* said it was only a tantrum thrown by “the Bosses who are losing their slaves.”⁹²

Going into the congressional elections that fall, Mahone and the Readjusters leaned into their repudiation of Massey and the Big Four. They were “living and howling” proof that the

⁸⁷ On the importance of information, particularly as it relates to railroad corporations, politics, and finance, see Richard White, “Information, Markets, and Corruption: Transcontinental Railroads in the Gilded Age,” *Journal of American History* 90, no. 1 (June, 2003): 19-43.

⁸⁸ “Ruffin’s Terrible Arraignment,” 10.

⁸⁹ “Bossism,” *True Index*, April 22, 1882; “Bossism,” *Norfolk Landmark*, October 13, 1882.

⁹⁰ Hancock, *Autobiography*, 233.

⁹¹ Quoted in “A Railroad Commission in Virginia,” *Winchester News*, April 14, 1882.

⁹² *Richmond Whig*, April 14, 1882.

caucus and the pledge were necessary.⁹³ Massey and his Big Four merely followed other politically dead men who had earlier returned to the “Bourbon vomit.”⁹⁴ These men had forgotten that the debt was just “the entering wedge.”⁹⁵ That some men were unable and unwilling to continue as the coalition matured and developed was to be expected. Historians Rachel Sheldon and Erik Alexander contend that party instability and fluidity were “an inherent feature of nineteenth-century politics, not a bug.”⁹⁶ Nevertheless, out of eighty-three Readjusters in the General Assembly, “only four could be induced *by every appliance* to side with Massey.”⁹⁷ Confidence in the living cause of readjustment as well as the commitment to coalition remained largely unshaken.

Ultimately, the significance of the Big Four was not in their *opposition* to the caucus but in their *position* in the state senate. By siding with the Conservative Democrats, or “anti-Mahonites” as Massey called them, the four could “defeat any bill by a majority of one.”⁹⁸ The defection of just one would have made their collective opposition fruitless, and their names, at least as the Readjuster faithful saw it, would have gone down in history as unremarkable. When one Conservative later recounted the policy of opposition to the Readjusters, he felt no need to describe the measures themselves. More important, he intimated, was how they were stopped. It was “simply a policy of obstruction.”⁹⁹ More than indicating a major shift of sentiment within

⁹³ “That Pledge,” *Richmond Whig*, September 1882.

⁹⁴ *Richmond Whig*, April 26, 1882; *Richmond Whig*, September 16, 1882.

⁹⁵ Bland South and West quoted in “The Coming Contest,” *Richmond Whig*, April 17, 1882; “The Future of Readjustment,” *Richmond Whig*, May 8, 1882.

⁹⁶ Rachel A. Sheldon and Erik B. Alexander, “Dismantling the Party System: Party Fluidity and the Mechanisms of Nineteenth-Century U.S. Politics,” *Journal of American History* 110, no. 3 (December 2023): 437.

⁹⁷ *Richmond Whig*, August 25, 1882.

⁹⁸ Hancock, *Autobiography*, 211.

⁹⁹ Beverly B. Munford, *Random Recollections* (n.p., 1905), 150-151.

the Readjuster coalition or among the larger electorate, the Big Four, along with the Straightout Wingfield, only made the obstructionist policy easier and more effective.

This is not to say that white supremacist anxieties and fears of “Republicanism” were unimportant or even uncommon. Rather, the coalition approach shows that “Mahoneism” meant different things to different people. Its convenient vagueness provided a blank canvass upon which a host of diverse and contradictory grievances could be projected. The mistake is in presuming that opposition to “Republicanism” was a universal grievance. As we have seen, the defeat of the caucus measures was secured by the votes of Republicans. That there were other Republican Readjusters who abandoned the coalition after losing their positions or feeling that “true” Republicans were not getting a fair share of the patronage similarly challenges the traditional narrative.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, treating the Readjuster movement as an ongoing process of coalition building takes internal disputes and dissension as given. They have plagued every political party and did not foretell inevitable collapse. Focusing on how Readjusters responded to these common disputes and dissensions not only provides new insight into the workings of the Readjuster coalition, but also spotlights how their opponents constructed their own complicated coalition. At the head of this new coalition were railroad men dissatisfied with the “friendship” of Readjusters.

A few weeks prior to the congressional elections, an anonymous New York Republican using the pen name of “Clinton” described the disgusting state of affairs in Virginia under Boss Mahone. Virginians, disappointingly, had been cowed into humiliating servility, and the railroads had been made subservient. Mahone’s complete power over his “legislative slaves” had

¹⁰⁰ “A Card” and “Open Letter to Hon. John F. Dezendorf” in *Richmond Dispatch*, August 3, 1882; “John W. Woltz’s Open Letter to Senator Mahone,” *Staunton Vindicator*, August 25, 1882.

absolutely terrified the state's railroad corporations until they "knelt at his feet." When Mahone ordered the railroads to remove various officers and employees, the fearful corporations "meekly obeyed." The race of men who ruled the Old Dominion in 1861 and who would never have tolerated such degradation was dead, the author opined. Mahone and the Readjusters had taken their place. And they had proven themselves unfit to govern. Consequently, "Clinton" contended, courageous men "must come here and take possession of the business, the industries, [and] the farms of the State."¹⁰¹

Virginia Midland president John Barbour and C&O vice president Williams Wickham were courageous men whose railroads fully intended to take possession of this endangered bounty. Readjuster rule did not suit them. For starters, Mahone and the Readjusters had supplanted Wickham in the hearts of Virginia Republicans and convinced the national GOP to practically kick him to the curb. Due to his consequent loss of patronage power and the need to pass his railroad measures, Wickham seems to have "knelt" before the boss and helped break the initial legislative deadlock. But when the Readjusters removed a judge Wickham favored, the temporary "friendship" reportedly soured.¹⁰² Meanwhile, the Readjusters' "friendship" with William Clyde had allowed the R&D to acquire ownership of Barbour's road. Only now the Virginia Midland and its previous owners, the B&O, were having second thoughts about the new

¹⁰¹ "Bossism in Virginia," *Staunton Spectator*, October 17, 1882.

¹⁰² "The Canvass in the Southwest," *Alexandria Gazette*, August 31, 1882. It is not clear which particular judge was removed, but it is most likely Edward C. Burks of the supreme court of appeals. Burks had been appointed to fill a vacancy and was a staunch opponent of readjustment. The terms of the supreme court judges were set to expire at the end of 1882, but Burks and others contended that his term was distinct from the term of the judge he replaced and was thus not set to expire. The Readjusters disagreed and removed Burks. Wickham's agent, Wingfield, declared that "he was willing to vote for Readjusters and to choose between them, but he was not willing to vote to fill the place of a judge whose term had not expired." See "The Supreme Court," *Richmond Dispatch*, February 26, 1882. Burks unsuccessfully contested his removal before the new Readjuster supreme court. See *Burks v. Hinton*, 77 Va. 1 (Va. 1883).

arrangement.¹⁰³ In his annual report, Barbour said that the Virginia Midland sent the R&D six times more trade than it received in return. Clyde was literally using Barbour's road to siphon business away from Baltimore while sending northbound traffic via his own steamships, skirting Baltimore altogether! "This movement of freight in one direction only," Barbour concluded with disappointment, "has necessarily made the freight traffic less profitable."¹⁰⁴ Conveniently, this unfortunate trade imbalance could be made up for by a new partnership with the C&O, which agreed to send 1500 carloads of wheat over the Virginia Midland.¹⁰⁵ Barbour and Wickham united their roads to counteract the effects of "Mahoneism" on their business interests. They would similarly unite their parties to secure their political interests.

Like they had in the 1880 elections two years earlier, Conservatives and Straightouts intended to disintegrate the Readjuster coalition. Conservatives charged the Readjusters with turning Democrats into Republicans while Straightouts charged them with the inverse. By portraying the contest as one between Democrats and Republicans, Barbour and Wickham's "Funder coalition" hoped to draw away Readjusters from the margins.¹⁰⁶ Barbour had engineered Massey's candidacy as the Conservative's unofficial candidate for congressman-at-large. In return, Massey proclaimed the debt controversy settled and implored white Readjusters to stand with Democracy and the white race.¹⁰⁷ For their part, the Straightouts nominated John M.

Dawon, a Black preacher from Williamsburg. Readjusters denounced the nomination as

¹⁰³ "The Virginia Midland," *Richmond Whig*, July 25, 1882.

¹⁰⁴ "Baltimore Wants All," *Richmond Whig*, December 21, 1882; "From Washington," *Alexandria Gazette*, December 30, 1882; *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* December 30, 1882, 764; *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, February 3, 1883, 138.

¹⁰⁵ It turns out the Virginia Midland was losing out doubly because the N&W had begun diverting traffic it previously sent over the Virginia Midland to its own Shenandoah Valley Railroad. "The V.M.R.W.," *Alexandria Gazette*, July 19, 1882.

¹⁰⁶ "The Howls of Funder and Bourbon Despair!," *Richmond Whig*, May 3, 1882; *Culpeper Times* quoted in "Analysis of the Funder Coalition," *Richmond Whig*, November 22, 1882.

¹⁰⁷ Hancock, *Autobiography*, 238-245.

“Wickham’s Trap” to “catch the negro vote.”¹⁰⁸ According to one Black school principal, the Straightouts had lost influence with Black voters and now wished to deceive them with the prospect of electing “a ‘black man like you and me.’” The ploy, he concluded, was a transparent attempt to split the Readjuster coalition “and defeat its great measures and aims.”¹⁰⁹

With three candidates in the field – a Readjuster, a Straightout, and an “independent Readjuster-Democrat” – the race for congressman-at-large was effectively a referendum on Mahone, the caucus, and Virginia’s relationship with the Republican administration in Washington. When the votes were tallied, the Readjuster candidate received nearly 6000 more votes than Massey. Dawson received a little more than 4000 votes in total. Overall, the Readjusters carried six of Virginia’s ten congressional seats.¹¹⁰ Following the victory, the *Whig* mockingly asked, “Where is the color-line?”¹¹¹ The Readjusters had narrowly withstood the attempt to disorganize and disintegrate their coalition. But Barbour and Wickham, though defeated, remained determined to try again. With the aid of other non-compliant railroads, they planned to strengthen their nascent coalition into an effective counterrevolutionary force that could overthrow the Readjuster machine once and for all.

¹⁰⁸ “Wickham’s Trap,” *Richmond Whig*, July 28, 1882; “A Trap to Catch the Colored Voter,” *Petersburg Lancet*, September 2, 1882. Wickham wrote to Huntington that he believed that Dawson “could be easily elected if the negroes had sense and firmness & I may add principle enough to stand by him.” Williams C. Wickham to Collis P. Huntington, October 28, 1882, Collis P. Huntington Papers, 1856-1901 (Microfilm) Series I, Reel 30.

¹⁰⁹ “The Colored People,” *Richmond Whig*, September 12, 1882.

¹¹⁰ The Readjuster candidate, John Wise, received 99,992 votes to Massey’s 94,184 and Dawson’s 4,342. *Appleton’s Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1882* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1886), 831. Moore correctly points out that turnout was relatively low in this election, but I disagree with his conclusion that the elections “proved indecisive.” By the numbers alone, Wise did secure only a very narrow majority of the votes. But considering that both Wise and Dawson had pledged to vote with the Republicans in Congress, 52.3% of voters favored a Republican of some stripe, whether Readjuster or Straightout. Regarding the low turnout, the Readjusters fairly pointed out that many people, white and Black, were likely prevented from voting by the poll tax. For those who simply stayed home, even this implied a “silent acquiescence” to the Readjusters’ course. Moore, *Two Paths*, 112-113; “Where is the Color-Line?,” *Richmond Whig*, November 22, 1882.

¹¹¹ “Where Is The Color-Line?,” *Richmond Whig*, November 22, 1882.

CHAPTER 4

RAILROADS, READJUSTERS, AND THE COUNTERREVOLUTION OF PROPERTY

It “was a day of days” in Bowling Green in early August 1883. The Democrats of Hanover and Caroline Counties hoped to name a strong candidate for state senate. Control of the legislature was up for grabs, and these “staunch” and “representative” Democrats anxiously hoped to do their part in ousting the Readjusters from power.¹ Only one man fit the bill. Unanimously, the convention called on Straightout Republican Williams C. Wickham as the “citizen most likely to combine all the elements of strength... in behalf of the cause of good government.”² Wickham, “recognized as a consistent Republican,” blushed at the compliment bestowed by the Democrats. He proudly accepted the call and announced himself “in full accord” with their mission. Regardless of past political differences, Wickham proclaimed that he would gladly “strike hands with them” so that “Virginia may be redeemed from misrule.”³ An evening newspaper commented approvingly that “The existing [Readjuster] coalition, it seems, is to be met by coalition.”⁴

Of course, Readjusters were unsurprised and defiantly mocked the proceedings as a farcical display of desperation. Just two weeks earlier, Conservatives held a statewide convention at Lynchburg, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Renaming themselves Democrats

¹ “Caroline and Hanover,” *Richmond State*, August 9, 1883 in H.T. Wickham Scrapbook Volume I (1867-1932), 44, Series 7, Box 32, Wickham Family Papers, Mss1 W6326 c FA2, Virginia Museum of History and Culture [hereinafter cited as Wickham Papers].

² “Organizing to Win,” *Richmond State*, August 10[?], 1883 in Wickham Scrapbook Volume I (1867-1932), 44, Wickham Papers

³ “To The People of Hanover and Caroline,” typewritten announcement of candidacy in Wickham Scrapbook Volume I (1867-1932), 45-46, Wickham Papers.

⁴ *Washington Evening Star*, August 9, 1883.

and proclaiming the debt settled, they “arraigned the Republican Party for every high crime and misdemeanor.” Now, they “abjectly” begged the most prominent, long-standing Republican leader in the state to save them. The Conservatives-turned-Democrats had warned that the Readjusters threatened a return to the dark days of Reconstruction. Yet, scoffed the *Richmond Whig*, they now “cheerily” followed a man who had supported the so-called radicals who made those days so dreadful! It was all a sham, plain and simple blustering bloviation, an insult to the “ordinary intelligence” of their fellow citizens. The humiliating show of the “Demo-Wickham-Crats” of Hanover and Caroline counties belied every pretense of legitimate opposition to the Readjusters. Principles of consistency were of no value. It was simply “anything to beat Mahone.”⁵

The *Page Courier* in the northern Shenandoah Valley asked, “is the fight this fall to be one of the people against the railroads?” Wickham’s nomination only confirmed what was already more than apparent. At the Lynchburg convention, the Democrats had named Congressman John S. Barbour as their new party chairman with immense power and authority. With railroad president Barbour leading the Democratic campaign and railroad vice president Wickham running as a fusion candidate, it was clear that railroads took a deep interest in the canvass. Not to mention, the *Courier* added, Barbour was connected with the Baltimore and Ohio, which was coincidentally “the only road in the state that still refuses to pay its taxes in accordance with the provisions of the Riddleberger bill.”⁶ Readjusters were engaged in a war with railroads threatening Virginia’s financial sovereignty, robbing Virginians through extortionate freight rates, and bucking against regulations meant to rein in their abuses.

⁵ “Demo-Wickham-Crats,” *Richmond Whig*, August 13, 1883.

⁶ *Page Courier* quoted in *Woodstock Virginian*, August 31, 1883.

Democrats and Straightouts, professing eternal and righteous opposition to “Boss Mahone,” now asked “the people to help set up railroad bosses.”⁷ But the people, exclaimed the *Whig*, knew how to control these recalcitrant corporations and meant to do it.⁸ Warning against the dangers of railroad supremacy, the Readjuster Party pledged itself to “make railroads know their place and keep it.”⁹

Rather than a railroad war, though, historians have viewed the fateful campaign of 1883 as a war of races. White supremacist backlash against the appointment of two Black men to the Richmond school board fueled the charge that Readjusters favored “mixed schools and mixed marriages.”¹⁰ Even worse than the specter of social equality was the alleged reality of “Negro Rule” in the Southside city of Danville, where white citizens begged to be saved from an “awful state of *humiliation and wretchedness*.”¹¹ With racist vitriol shouted from the stumps, echoing in the town squares, and emblazoned in newspaper headlines, the tension reached a breaking point three days before the elections. Danville erupted into violence when white Democrats turned a street scuffle into a massacre that left four Black men dead. Before the ballots were even counted, it was clear that the Readjusters had suffered a devastating loss. According to historian Steven Hahn, “as a ‘movement’ – a biracial movement – the Readjusters had plainly reached the end of their tether.”¹²

⁷ *Woodstock Virginian*, September 7, 1883.

⁸ “Wrecking,” *Richmond Whig*, August 23, 1883.

⁹ “Railroad Rule,” *Richmond Whig*, September 28, 1883.

¹⁰ “Policy of the Coalition Party,” *Staunton Spectator*, August 21, 1883.

¹¹ “Coalition Rule in Danville,” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, accessed September 21, 2017, <https://encyclopediaivirginia.org/entries/coalition-rule-in-danville-october-1883/>.

¹² Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003), 406. Interestingly, Hahn immediately follows this leash-snapping defeat of interracialism by pointing to the “reconstituted and reinvigorated Republican party [the Readjusters formally declared themselves the Republican Party of Virginia in 1884] capable of amassing between 40 and 50 percent of the state vote and thus of mounting a serious challenge to the Democrats.” Hahn’s allusion to the continued strength of the Republican Party after the supposed failure of interracialism represents a major flaw in the

Historians have thus concluded, borrowing the words of one Readjuster senator, that “There is no doubt that every issue was absorbed in the one issue, [the] Race issue.”¹³ Racism was certainly a major factor throughout the Readjuster revolt and especially in 1883. Readjusters knew it all too well. Nevertheless, scholars’ myopic focus on race as *the* all-absorbing and determinative issue conceals far more than it reveals. It flattens the Readjuster story into an artificially simplified dichotomy of white versus Black, Democrat versus Readjuster. Not only does this reify the distinctions made by Democratic propagandists, but it also fulfills the propagandists’ intended purpose. That Democrats drew the color line is all that matters; Readjusters’ refutations and efforts to draw attention to what they called the “real issues” were all in vain.¹⁴ Issues like the public debt, free suffrage, and corporate regulation, for instance, become merely incidental. Ironically, historians have fallen for the very “political gimmick” to which the Readjusters allegedly succumbed.¹⁵ Blinded by race, scholars have largely ignored all

historiography of the Readjusters. I will discuss this further below, but, in brief, historians artificially segregate the Readjuster period from the period after their 1883 defeat. The continued viability of the Republicans seemingly has no relation to the viability of interracialism, which, presumably, had reached the end of its tether. In effect, Virginia Republicans (formerly Readjusters) served as an effectively annoying brake against rampant white supremacism but were hopelessly unable to win elections because of that very white supremacism. While scholars mention fraud and corruption as affecting Republican success at the polls, they contend that the true source of Republicans’ hopeless inability to win were the same presumably insurmountable racist animosities that led to the 1883 defeat. It is a tautology in which the Readjusters “failed” because the “tether” of interracialism was of finite length; the Readjusters-turned-Republicans continued to “fail” because the Readjusters had already stretched the “tether” to its inflexible limit. The promising potential of Readjuster interracialism was always already doomed to failure from within.

¹³ J.L. Powell to William Mahone, December 12, 1883, Box 82, WMP.

¹⁴ “Nigger, Nigger!” *Richmond Whig*, June 7, 1883. Like in this mockingly titled article, Readjusters consistently denounced efforts to draw the color line and thereby “cause the real issues to be forgotten in a senseless clamor that white supremacy is endangered and that we are threatened by negro domination.” Opponents of the Readjusters had raised the cry for four years, but it “has not availed to save the Brokers’ lobby from continual defeat, nor to keep the Readjuster party from repeated victory.” Again, historians’ presumption that Readjusters’ arguments were futile against the white supremacist arguments of Democrats – that rank and file voters were ignorantly blind to what everyone else could see as “senseless clamor” – only reinforces the Democratic contention that their victory was legitimately popular and not a consequence of fraud, corruption, and violence.

¹⁵ Exemplifying how historians treat race-baiting rhetoric as a plain-as-day trick that was apparent to all *but* the subjects being studied is Moger’s conclusion that “The idea that white solidarity was necessary to preserve southern civilization was a political gimmick used in Virginia during the 1880’s to defeat the Republicans and in effect to establish the one-party system in the state. Its use is a fact of history. It was, however, a gross exaggeration as a

other issues and interests. If the color line was intended, as historians agree, to distract the Readjusters from their self-proclaimed revolution, who were the counterrevolutionaries? If their concern for white supremacy was pretended, then what about the Readjuster revolution proved so terrifying that “staunch” and “representative” Democrats would look for political salvation in “a recognized and consistent Republican?” If the 1883 campaign was not simply Democrats versus Readjusters but coalition versus coalition, what united the respective coalitions?

By failing to fully challenge what W.E.B. Du Bois called the propaganda of history, we have failed to see that the 1883 election was a counterrevolution of property.¹⁶ Railroad corporations played the leading role. As shown in the previous chapter, the Readjusters vigorously attempted to force these corporations to submit to the power of the state and, through it, the will of the people. In response, non-compliant railroads exploited divisions within the Readjuster Party and engineered a so-called revolt that hampered but did not destroy the Readjuster coalition. The legislative battle between railroads and Readjusters became a full-blown war in 1883. When railroads, now facing significantly higher taxes, attempted to pay with coupons instead of cash, Governor Cameron ordered the confiscation and sale of the defiant railroads’ property. Every railroad but one – the B&O – quickly submitted and paid their taxes in cash. At the same time, the bondholders earlier faced a major setback when the US Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Readjuster’s debt settlement. The Readjusters were decisively winning their wars against both the railroads and the bondholders. Perhaps not since the passage of the original Funding Act had the interests of the foreign bondholders and

campaign issue, for white control was not seriously endangered.” Allen W. Moger, *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), 68.

¹⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1998 [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935]).

“foreign” corporations aligned so perfectly. The Readjusters had to go. With the London-based Corporation of Foreign Bondholders funding legal battles against the state and bankrolling a national smear campaign against the Readjusters, longtime B&O ally John Barbour stepped in to manage the political fight, enlisting the aid of other railroad executives like Williams Wickham.

Examining this coalitional collaboration is crucial to understanding exactly how the anti-Readjusters drew and manipulated the color line. Barbour and the Democrats deliberately chose *not* to draw the color line in their platform because its effectiveness was in serious doubt. Moreover, doing so would have undermined the strategy of the anti-Readjuster coalition. In short, the Democrats and Straightouts played *both sides* of the color line and deployed it strategically to different audiences in different parts of the state. In the heavily Black districts of the east and Southside, Democrats and Straightouts fielded fusion and stalking horse candidates against the Readjusters. Here, where no candidate could win without Black votes, the argument was not that the Readjusters endangered white supremacy but that they were doing *too little* on behalf of Black voters. Alternatively, it was in the predominantly white Valley and Southwest that Democrats most vigorously raised the specter of “Negro rule.” More than a call for white solidarity against Black rights, the color line was an attempt to turn white and Black Readjusters against each other – to *disintegrate* the coalition that had proven remarkably durable.

And if there were a literal color line dividing east from west, Black from white, it was John Barbour’s Virginia Midland. Both the Danville circular and later news of the bloodshed spread via Virginia Midland trains, branching throughout the Valley and Southwest over other roads similarly bucking against Readjuster rule. But rapidly spreading racist propaganda – propaganda of admittedly uncertain effect – was only one tactic used by the railroad bosses, who

bolstered the color line with the generous use of money and a vigorous application of the job lash. Rather than a “failure” of interracialism, the Readjusters went down in a railroad-led coup.

On the heels of their successful Congressional campaign, the Readjusters started the new year with yet another win. The \$500,000 that Mahone secured from the sale of the state’s interest in the AM&O had been tied up in the courts for several months. Shortly after the Readjusters had appropriated this money to the public schools and the Normal and Collegiate Institute in the spring of 1882, bondholders filed suit to stop the appropriations. Bondholders asserted that under the terms of the original Funding Act, the proceeds belonged to them, not the state. A Conservative circuit court judge in Richmond sustained the bondholders and enjoined the state from dispersing the money, but even the Conservative State Court of Appeals overturned this decision in December 1882. Fleeing to the US Supreme Court as a final bastion of hope, the bondholders were again shot down. The state could use the money how it pleased. Following the decision, Governor Cameron and the Board of Education immediately directed the money to the schools.¹⁷

That the Readjusters’ first victory of 1883 revolved around public schools and competing claims to state money is significant considering that both would figure prominently in the coming campaigns. While many Conservative leaders viewed public education as an unnecessary luxury, this was especially true for the Normal and Collegiate Institute. Funders in the predominantly white Valley, for example, “swore” that the \$100,000 appropriated to the new

¹⁷ “The \$500,000 from the A.,M and O. in Court,” *Norfolk Landmark*, May 4, 1882; “Murder Will Out!,” *Woodstock Virginian*, May 12, 1882; “Five Thousand Votes Gained for the Readjuster Party,” *Richmond Whig*, July 10, 1882, Scrapbook 29, 43, WMP; “The Five Hundred Thousand Dollars,” *Alexandria Gazette*, January 27, 1883.

Black college in Petersburg “was a tax levied on property to educate the ‘nigger.’”¹⁸ Others took issue with the fact that the school was to be run entirely by Black men. Well before construction even began, commentators were already disparaging the school as a “humbug” in comparison to white-run schools like the Hampton Institute. In response, R.L. Mitchell, a member of the school’s Board of Visitors, argued that it was absurd to contend that tax-paying Black Virginians should be content with just one privately funded school while several white colleges received state funds every year. The training and facilities currently available to Black students was simply inadequate. Stingingly, Mitchell declared that so far, “The superior race have managed for us and have failed. We can at least do no worse than they.”¹⁹ One Black editor echoed Mitchell’s defense of Virginia’s novel educational experiment as an “opportunity for showing what *we* can do.”²⁰

And it was this fair-play opportunity to demonstrate ability, competence, and worth that underlay the demand of “colored teachers for colored schools.” Though some people professed a desire for integrated schools, many activists argued they had little interest in such a prospect. Education was more than a means of moral and intellectual training for students; it was a good job, one of very few good jobs available to well-educated Black men and women. Not only that, Readjusters mandated that Black teachers be paid the same as whites under penalty of law.²¹ Well aware of the prejudices held by many white people, Black school advocates knew that integration would likely endanger if not completely shut the door on Black teachers.

¹⁸ “Murder Will Out!,” *Woodstock Virginian*, May 12, 1882; “A Heaven Appointed Outrage,” *Woodstock Virginian*, January 26, 1883.

¹⁹ “The Colored Normal and Collegiate Institute,” *People’s Advocate*, March 25, 1882.

²⁰ “Mr. Mitchell’s Letter,” *People’s Advocate*, March 25, 1882.

²¹ James T. Moore, “Black Militancy in Readjuster Virginia, 1879-1883,” *Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 2 (May, 1975): 179.

Far from erasing the educational color line, then, they insisted that it be more firmly drawn. Placing more Black teachers in the public schools would provide multiple mutually reinforcing benefits. In addition to opening more jobs to Black educators, these same educators would serve as role models who could reinforce the lessons parents wanted their children to learn. According to Black Petersburgers in the summer of 1882, the prevalence of white teachers in Black schools hindered proper instruction. White teachers were ill-equipped to train Black pupils, whom even the most well-intentioned white teachers tended to view as inferior. Black teachers, on the other hand, would not be hamstrung by such prejudice and, most importantly, would be willing to mingle with their students socially. The line between classroom and community was meant to be highly permeable. Proper moral and educational training took place both in and outside the classroom. The current system of “mixed teachers” was therefore “an unhealthy mixture.” In their petition to the Petersburg school board, they insisted that “we are not asking for mixed schools, but asking that they be *unmixed*.”²² Even some Conservatives acknowledged this as a reasonable demand and promised to hire Black teachers for Black schools.²³ At least, they did so on the stump.

The Petersburg school board’s response to the request to hire Black teachers was a slap in the face. Although the Readjusters had won the spring 1882 municipal elections against a biracial coalition of Conservatives and Straighouts known as the “Citizens Party,” the terms of

²² “Colored Citizens and the City School Board,” *Petersburg Lancet*, July 15, 1882. Also see “Professor Wiley Lane,” *Petersburg Lancet*, June 23, 1883; “Temperance,” *The People’s Advocate*, March 4, 1882; “To Parents,” *Petersburg Lancet*, September 9, 1882; *Virginia Star* quoted in “Our Colored Public Schools,” *Petersburg Lancet*, July 1, 1882. The *Petersburg Lancet*, August 12, 1882, said that the education of students in their political rights would make black men “feel a respect for himself” upon which would follow the “respect of all good men;” Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 70-

²³ *Staunton Spectator*, August 23, 1881. Dailey mistakenly refers to the Conservative-Democrat who made this promise, John Goode, as a Readjuster. See *Before Jim Crow*, 70.

the current school board members, appointed by the previous administration, had not yet expired. Readjuster members attempted to negotiate a compromise with the Conservative-Straightout majority, but to no avail. The board refused to replace white teachers with Black ones and insultingly “appointed” two Black teachers to stand in waiting in case a vacancy opened. Outraged, some Black parents considered boycotting the public schools altogether. Others turned to a higher power. Petersburg native Governor Cameron, as a member of the state Board of Education, exploited a rarely used power and vacated the old board, replacing it with a new one that included three Black trustees. “We agitated the old moss back School Board out of office,” cheered the *Lancet*. And thanks particularly to the efforts of newly appointed Trustee W.F. Jackson, a tobacco factory foreman and lieutenant in the city’s Black militia, the new board hired twelve Black teachers as well as two Black principals, who, significantly, would oversee the still-remaining white teachers. It was a momentous win that Black Petersburgers proudly credited to their unflinching persistence in the face of all opposition and excuse.²⁴ So-called “old Virginians” who bloviated about “their family lineage and their greatness” might protest, but they would have to accept it or, like the old school board, be tossed aside into the dustbin of history.²⁵

By the time Governor Cameron repeated this strategy in Richmond in early 1883, Black teachers had already replaced white teachers in the public schools of Lynchburg, Petersburg, Norfolk, Hampton, Danville, Charlottesville, and Manchester. Richmond’s Conservative school trustees, however, remained obstinate and repeatedly disregarded the hiring recommendations of

²⁴ “We Won,” *Petersburg Lancet*, August 19, 1882; “Victory,” *Petersburg Lancet*, September 2, 1882; “Colored Teachers,” *Petersburg Lancet*, September 2, 1882; Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 70-76; William D. Henderson, *Gilded Age City: Politics, Life and Labor in Petersburg, Virginia, 1874-1889* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980), 112-113, 135-139.

²⁵ “Hard to Realize the Truth,” *Petersburg Lancet*, September 2, 1882.

the Readjuster school superintendent.²⁶ So Cameron tossed the old board and named a new one, which included two Black men, R.A. Paul and Richard Forrester. Immediately, Richmond Conservatives raised a hue and cry against what they insisted was the most outrageous of outrages. The members of the old board ran screeching to the courts about their imperiled right to rule the schools as they saw fit, damning the wishes of the superintendent, the state Board of Education, and nearly half of the city's population. As was increasingly the trend, they lost. Richmond's white elite arrogantly proclaimed to speak for the people of the city and the state, who would no doubt "rise in their might to put down a party guilty of such an outrage."²⁷

Historians, in turn, have taken these Richmond shriekers at their word and credited the appointment of Paul and Forrester to the capital city's school board as one of the most devastating blows to the Readjuster coalition. White Virginians, Richmond's racist doomsayers and historians agree, would never willingly consent to Black men serving as school trustees or in any other such prominent position.²⁸ The only problem is that they did consent to it and had done so for quite some time.

For starters, Richard Forrester had already served on Richmond's city council since before the Readjusters took power, and R.A. Paul captained one of Richmond's Black militias, having received his commission from a Conservative governor. "Yet there was no mob, no riot, no seditious calls for protest and popular uprising when these good citizens took those positions," proclaimed the *Whig*. Black men had served as legislators as well as legislative officers appointed by Conservatives. It was only "right and proper" that Black Richmonders

²⁶ "Colored Teachers in Colored Schools," *Virginia Star*, December 9, 1882.

²⁷ "The City Schools," *Richmond Dispatch*, February 20, 1883; "School Case Solved," *Richmond Dispatch*, May 12, 1883.

²⁸ James T. Moore, "Black Militancy," 184 and *Two Paths to the New South: The Virginia Debt Controversy, 1870-1883* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 105; Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 77-102

would finally have representation on the city school board.²⁹ The performative outrage of the Conservative *Richmond Dispatch* was all the more laughable considering the proprietor's son, J. Taylor Ellyson, as president of the city council, had named two Black men to the council's school committee. Ellyson's Conservative predecessor had done the same thing. As a matter of fact, school committee members possessed even more power than school trustees because they were also city councilors!³⁰

Even then, Governor Cameron was not the first governor to appoint Black men to serve on school boards. His three Conservative predecessors – every governor since the end of military Reconstruction – had all appointed Black school trustees without incident, outrage, or any danger to white supremacy.³¹ Rebuking complaints that Paul and Forrester would control the instruction of white students, the *Whig* reminded readers that the school board was responsible for instructing both white *and* Black students. By the same nonsensical logic, challenged the *Whig*, one could say that Cameron had appointed seven white men to oversee the instruction of Richmond's Black students. "Now which statement is the strongest and truest, and conveys the best reason for complaint?" It concluded, "Don't let us be either knavish or foolish."³²

The labor that Black Readjusters had invested into building the coalition and easing white supremacist anxieties did not evaporate simply because Richmond's ruling class fumed about their waning power. White Readjusters reminded people of "the real facts." The contention that Black Virginians exhibited a "mad solidity of race for race domination" was "cruelly unjust," professed the *Whig*. In 1879, Black Virginians rallied with white Virginians under the

²⁹ "Rabid Partizany," *Richmond Whig*, February 22, 1883.

³⁰ *Richmond Whig*, February 24, 1883.

³¹ "The Race Question," *Richmond Whig*, June 23, 1883.

³² *Richmond Whig*, March 1, 1883.

Readjuster banner despite the opposition of the Straightouts and the federal administration. They had reaffirmed their willingness to break from old party ties and leaders at the Petersburg Convention in 1881 and, since then, had repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to interracialism and “the best interests of all, without distinction of race, or color, or party, or condition.”³³ Petersburg’s Black press likewise called the attention of its “narrow-minded” and “presumptuous” contemporaries to the recent experience with Black school trustees in that city. The spirit of interracialism had proven so contagious that when one of Cameron’s appointees resigned in April 1883, Democrats on the city council nominated a Black brick mason to take his place. “Why did not our raving contemporary pour out its invective upon honest, and honorable Democrats of this City who actually voted for [a] ‘Negro school trustee?’” inquired the *Lancet*. Surely, it intimated, such bigoted and hypocritical vitriol would backfire in the coming elections.³⁴

This was precisely what many Conservatives in the east and Southside feared. One “life-long Democrat” from Norfolk wrote after the county and municipal elections in May that Richmond’s racist hysteria had little effect on the Readjusters in white majority districts. But in the Black majority districts, it had threatened the fruitful “*entente cordiale*” that white Conservatives had painstakingly constructed with Black voters. It would be a “suicide policy” to draw the color line and thereby slam “the door in the faces of people who are ready and willing to assist us in crushing our enemies!”³⁵ Conservatives in Fairfax reminded their fellow partisans that *their* party had appointed Black school trustees and pleaded that it not be made the “pretext

³³ *Richmond Whig*, February 26, 1883. See also Chapter 2.

³⁴ *Petersburg Lancet*, June 23, 1883.

³⁵ C.S.H. letter to the editor of the *Norfolk Landmark*, quoted in “The Color Line,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, June 26, 1883.

for raising the race issue” because it would “result in no good.”³⁶ Meanwhile, the *Petersburg Index-Appeal* republished an article from the *New York Herald* mocking the hypocritical attempt to make an issue out of Black school trustees. “What was good democratic policy” under Conservative governors “is a readjuster infamy under Governor Cameron,” jeered the *Herald*’s Richmond correspondent. The article concluded that the color line’s effect on the white vote was highly doubtful, but it would without a doubt turn Black voters against the Conservatives.³⁷ One *Index-Appeal* writer repeated these cautions and took special pride that the first vote he “ever cast was for a democratic ticket on which was the name of a colored man.”³⁸

The political reality in Virginia had changed dramatically. Even if they could not understand it, Conservatives reluctantly acknowledged that the Readjusters had won again and again. They had done what they said they would do – what Conservatives and Straightouts alike had said was impossible. It was absurd to think that the Readjusters would abandon their course in the face of these victories.³⁹ As the Richmond correspondent to the *New York Herald* noted, those who did abandon the party had very little to show for it. John E. Massey, the self-proclaimed “father of readjustment” who bolted the Readjusters and attempted to sow discord on behalf of John S. Barbour and other leading Conservatives, lost his race for Congressman-at-large. Samuel Newberry, one of the Big Four renegades who followed Massey, and ex-Congressman Abram Fulkerson, another bolting “original readjuster,” both ran for Congress in

³⁶ *Fairfax Herald* quoted in *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, July 9, 1883.

³⁷ “Political Issues in Virginia,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, July 12, 1883.

³⁸ *Petersburg Index-Appeal* quoted in “Rabid Partizantry,” *Richmond Whig*, February 22, 1883.

³⁹ Several articles from the *Petersburg Index-Appeal* quoted at length in “Indexes and Appeals,” *Richmond Whig*, March 17, 1883. Later in September, just two months before the election, the *Woodstock Virginian*, owned by H.H. Riddleberger, sarcastically commented on the thoughtful moderation of certain Democratic papers like the *Norfolk Landmark*, the *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, and the *Staunton Vindicator*. Implying that Virginians were turned off by the “rant and rot” of “the average Funder newspaper,” it joked that these papers’ reasonableness was actually harming the Readjuster Party. “Cannot our friends of the *Landmark*, *Vindicator*, and *Index-Appeal* once in a while join the gang of villifiers and thereby help readjustment a little?” *Woodstock Virginian*, September 7, 1883.

Virginia's 9th District and lost against the Readjuster candidate by a whopping margin of seventeen and a half percent! Again, in the 1883 spring elections, Fulkerson, Newberry, and fellow Big Four bolter Peyton Hale all saw their counties remain in the Readjuster column.⁴⁰ Most indicative of the Old Dominion's altered political situation, however, was the abolition of the poll tax. A free ballot meant a larger electorate. Poor and middling white and Black men – those whom the poll tax was intended to disfranchise – now had a chance to make their voices heard.⁴¹ Considering that the poll tax disproportionately affected Black voters, the fact that Virginians ratified its repeal by a majority of nearly twenty four percent clearly indicated that a free ballot in Black hands was not to be feared.⁴²

When the US Supreme Court sustained the Readjusters' debt settlement in March, it removed the other primary issue upon which Conservatives distinguished themselves from the

⁴⁰ "Political Issues in Virginia," *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, July 12, 1883. For the 1882 9th Congressional district vote totals, see *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1882, 831. In a very lengthy letter from H.H. Riddleberger published in his *Woodstock Virginian*, he noted that "two candidates for Congress" helped to defeat the Readjusters' congressional reapportionment bill because it kept them in the same district. Although he does not name them, he was most likely referring to Fulkerson and Newberry. See "Letter From Hon. H.H. Riddleberger," *Woodstock Virginian*, August 10, 1883.

⁴¹ In February, the *Richmond Whig* argued that "The thirty or forty thousand colored voters and the fifty or sixty thousand white voters who have been enfranchised by the Liberal movement in behalf of free suffrage are not likely to cast their recovered ballots against the party that rescued them and in behalf of the faction which wished to degrade them forever. These eighty or one hundred thousand re-enfranchised citizens are also the chief beneficiaries of the re-established free schools, of reduced taxes, and of all the other popular and common benefits which Liberal-Readjustment has conferred." It then mockingly asked, "What stupendous cheek it will require in these Brokers' Lobbyists to solicit the co-operation and votes of these poor white trash and d—d niggers in this last desperate assault upon the entrenchments of the Liberal Readjuster Party!" See "O, Democracy – What Things are Done in Thy Name!" *Richmond Whig*, February 14, 1883. Interestingly, historians have argued that this is exactly what happened. Pointing to the "irony" of the Readjusters suffering their biggest losses in the 1883 elections in the predominantly white Valley and Southwest in large part because of the repeal of the poll tax, historians *presume* that these previously disfranchised white men voted against the Readjusters due to fears of "Negro Rule." While racism was certainly a factor, historians' presumption that it was *the only* factor has led them to never even consider the role of poverty and economic dependence. As discussed below, the power of employers, landlords, and creditors over employees, tenants, and debtors played an enormous role in the campaign. These men, previously disfranchised *due to their poverty* were now, under a free ballot, more susceptible to the economic coercion of the job lash and the economic incentive of bribery. That historians have consistently chosen to see the "irony" of newly enfranchised poor whites "voting against their interests" rather than the gross imbalance of economic power further demonstrates the still-prevalent influence of the propaganda of history. See Moore, *Two Paths*, 117; Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 151.

⁴² Charles E. Wynes, *Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1961), 24-25.

Readjusters. In the face of repeated electoral and judicial defeat, Conservatives were finally realizing that they needed to reconsider their tactics. Old racist shibboleths had lost their potency, and incessant blathering about “honor” had failed to slow the Readjusters’ forward march. All agreed that a change was necessary. The only question was what needed to change. While many were quick to endorse abandoning the debt issue, at least politically, the question as to whether to draw the color line, as we have seen, remained contentious. Richmond politico and Conservative Party chair A.M. Keiley declared after the Supreme Court decision that he “would drop the interest of the creditors without a sigh” if it meant maintaining white supremacy.⁴³ But this declaration in favor of raising the “race issue” must be viewed largely as the death rattle of an ineffective party boss who knew his days were numbered. The call for a Conservative convention to meet in Lynchburg instead of Richmond was a clear-cut repudiation of the reactionary Richmond ring that had dictated Conservative Party policy since the war.⁴⁴ Scheduling the convention to take place *after* the spring elections was intended to avoid locking the party into any particular policy that might hamper local efforts at anti-Readjuster coalition building.⁴⁵ But no matter how one looked at it, Keiley’s “Konservative Kommittee,” as the Readjusters mockingly called it, was in its final days, to be replaced with new men and desperately needed new ideas.⁴⁶

⁴³ “Bourbon-Funder ‘Fudge’,” *Richmond Whig*, March 7, 1883

⁴⁴ Moger, *Bourbonism*, 51.

⁴⁵ Keiley, who desperately resisted calling a convention for various reasons, argued that “It is well known that these [local] elections in many counties are not conducted on party lines – almost everywhere, indeed, elections for county offices turn as much on personal as on political considerations – and the effort through a convention to make the fight uniformly a party fight would be regarded unwise in many quarters – fatal in some.” See “Letter from the Chairman of the State Executive Committee,” *Richmond Dispatch*, January 10, 1883. See also quote from *Fairfax Herald* condemning the race-baiting of Keiley and the Richmond press and the editorial commentary in *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, July 9, 1883.

⁴⁶ “Perplexed Politicians,” *Richmond Whig*, February 15, 1883.

Meanwhile, as Conservatives debated which new ideas and new men would be most likely to lead their party to salvation, the Readjusters' war on the railroads entered its next phase. Although they were unable to create a strong railroad commission, the Readjusters enacted a new tax law compelling railroad corporations to pay their fair share. Previously, railroads assessed the value of their own property. Predictably, these self-assessments were laughably low. Between 1870 and 1881, railroads paid less than two percent of total tax receipts! Under the new tax law, however, the state Board of Public Works valued railroads at a more accurate \$15,000 per mile. So when railroad companies received their new tax bills, they were three times higher than previous years! And since companies were often delinquent in their payments, the law allowed for a penalty valuation of \$20,000 per mile if the company did not pay within sixty days. As a quarter of these corporate taxes were earmarked for the public schools, Readjusters fully intended to collect and collect promptly.⁴⁷ Moreover, they killed the tool that corporations used to further skirt their taxes: the coupon.

The purpose of the so-called Coupon Killers was apparent enough. Tax-receivable coupons, the "cutworm of the treasury," had been the bane of Virginians for over a decade. Coupons satisfied tax obligations, but every coupon meant less real money in the state's coffers. Without cash, public schools and other public institutions languished. Every attempt to free the state from its fiscal parasite proved unsuccessful because the courts insisted that the coupon represented a contract with the state's creditors. Any attempt to deny the tax-receivability of the

⁴⁷ *Acts and Joint Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1882), 506-507; Jack P. Maddox, Jr. *The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879: A Study in Reconstruction Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 148; Moore, *Two Paths*, 20, 88; Joseph A. Greene, Jr., "A Critical Investigation of Virginia's System of Taxing Railroads" (PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 1951), 18-21; Robert Clinton Burton, "The History of Taxation in Virginia: 1870-1901," (PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 1962); 66-71, 95-99.

coupons, so the courts said, impaired the obligation of contracts and was therefore unconstitutional. So the Readjusters came up with an ingenious workaround. Instead of challenging the coupon's receivability for taxes and breaking the contract, the Readjusters simply made it as difficult as possible to pay with coupons. Taxpayers were perfectly free to tender coupons, but, until a jury could verify their authenticity, they *also* had to pay cash. If the coupons were authentic, the taxpayer would have their cash refunded. Essentially, the Coupon Killers tied up coupon-payers in lengthy and costly jury trials while also removing the incentive for paying with depreciated coupons in the first place – avoiding paying the full tax bill. Those who refused to provide cash along with their coupons would be considered delinquent, and treasurers could seize their property instead.⁴⁸ When the US Supreme Court, in *Antoni v. Greenhow*, upheld these provisions, it was a major victory for the Readjusters and their aggressive defense of Virginia's financial sovereignty.

Nevertheless, several railroads decided to test just how far the Readjuster state would go to maintain its sovereign authority. Within weeks of the decision, a “combination of wealthy and powerful railroad corporations” illegally tendered coupons without the required cash. “The conspiracy is widespread, flagrant, complete, and it has committed its first overt act of sedition and rebellion,” thundered the *Whig*.⁴⁹ Whether the move was a bluff or not, Governor Cameron called it, referring to the “proposition to deprive the state of its revenues by a combination of the bondholders and Corporations” as “revolution.” He ordered the recalcitrant roads' property be seized and sold at auction. If the railroads wanted war, Cameron would gladly oblige. Cameron

⁴⁸ *Acts, 1881-1882*, 10-12, 37-39. All of these provisions were part of Coupon Killer No. 1, passed January 14, 1882. Coupon Killer No. 2, passed January 26, 1882, dealt more generally with the collection of taxes and barred tax collectors from accepting coupons and allowed for tax-payers to sue collectors if they believed the collector acted unjustly or illegally in collecting taxes. For a more detailed study of the Coupon Killers, see Tarter, *Saga*, Chapter 6.

⁴⁹ “The Crisis,” *Richmond Whig*, March 21, 1883.

boasted in an interview with the *New York Herald* that the actual amount owed by these companies was “nothing to be considered” because the treasury, under Readjuster rule, was overflowing. It was a matter of principle, and Cameron intended to uphold it. He then taunted the rebellious corporations. They would surely seek protection in the courts, as was their right, but the court of public opinion was a more fickle and unforgiving judge. Regular people who had to pay their taxes with hard-earned money would hardly sympathize with corporations “owned and controlled by persons outside of Virginia” that discriminated against Virginians. Their disobedience, Cameron warned, would do little to “increase their hold upon the public favor.”⁵⁰ Railroads could submit or suffer the consequences. It was their choice. According to one correspondent, “locomotives and cars are quite [as] useful as...past due coupons.”⁵¹

Following Cameron’s interview in the *Herald*, railroads began to flinch. U.L. Boyce, the N&W director who had deceptively forced the Norfolk Terminal bill through the legislature without the revisions agreed upon by Mahone a year earlier, wrote the Governor personally that his company would pay with cash.⁵² Another director insisted that the company had “no intention whatever to put themselves in an antagonistic position with the State authorities.”⁵³ On the other hand, the N&W-controlled Shenandoah Valley Railroad, took its time and suffered the higher valuation, which it meekly accepted. “The State gains \$1,800 penalty by the company’s not settling promptly at first,” bragged the *Whig*.⁵⁴ When the Augusta County Treasurer seized the C&O roundhouse at Staunton, that road also threw in the towel, paid the higher assessment,

⁵⁰ “The Coupon War,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, March 23, 1883.

⁵¹ “At the State Capital,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, March 27, 1883.

⁵² “Things Are Working,” *Richmond Whig*, March 23, 1883.

⁵³ “The Norfolk & Western Railroad,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, March 31, 1883.

⁵⁴ “The Shenandoah Valley Comes to Taw,” *Richmond Whig*, April 18, 1883.

and had its property returned. Other companies promptly fell into line.⁵⁵ That old “alien enemy,” the B&O, however, refused to submit.

Four Virginia roads controlled by the B&O declined to pay cash for a combined tax bill of \$6,411, offering only coupons in violation of the Coupon Killer. In response to the attack on Virginia’s financial sovereignty, the Augusta County Treasurer seized sixty-one freight cars and an engine and prepared to sell them at auction. Taking advantage of its status as a Maryland corporation, the B&O filed suit in federal court to enjoin the treasurer from selling the confiscated rolling stock. In a split decision, the B&O succeeded in securing the injunction. Judge Robert W. Hughes wrote a lengthy dissent, saying that the suit was one against the state and violated the Eleventh Amendment. He added that it was beyond the jurisdiction of the court and against sound public policy to prevent states from collecting taxes. He dismissed as “frivolous” the B&O’s claim that the seizure posed an “irreparable injury” to its interests. The B&O, lambasted the judge, was “one of the most wealthy railroad corporations in the world” and “its operations are on so large a scale as to be part of the public history of the times.” Any contention that the tax was more than “inconsiderable” to such a corporation was absurd. Nevertheless, his fellow judge, fittingly named Hugh Bond, issued a brief, nine-paragraph decision sustaining the B&O’s complaint, and granted the injunction.⁵⁶ It was a devastating blow that threatened to unsettle the debt once more. But it only served to further enrage the Readjusters against the recalcitrant railroads.

Following the decision, the *Richmond Whig* denounced “The Alien Alliance and Menace” that threatened Virginia’s autonomy. “Judge Bond, of Baltimore, decided to issue an

⁵⁵ “At the State Capital,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, April 2, 1883; “Coupon Lovers,” *Richmond Whig*, April 2, 1883.

⁵⁶ *Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Co. v. Allen*, 17 Fed. Rep. (1883): 176-197.

injunction in behalf of Mr. [John W.] Garrett, of Baltimore, in the case of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, of Baltimore, against the Commonwealth of Virginia.” Foreign corporations had combined with foreign bondholders to “subjugate” the state and its people to the power of concentrated capital.⁵⁷ While the B&O tried its case, William L. Royall, a native Virginian who represented the London-based Corporation of Foreign Bondholders (CFB), tried similar cases to compel the state to accept coupons. When Judge Bond made his decision, Royall cheered.⁵⁸ The CFB likewise viewed the decision as “a very important one” in protecting the interests of the bondholders.⁵⁹

More concerning to the Readjusters, however, was that the bondholder-railroad alliance was changing. Railroads seemed to be taking a more open and leading position. Until recently, the railroads had looked on the Readjusters’ regulatory aims “with mingled fear and hate,” hesitating to enter “open war against the party, whose power compelled some show of respect from them.” But now, railroads grew increasingly bold in their defiance. The question was no longer a matter of whether Virginians would submit to brokers and bondholders. Rather, it was “whether or not we shall submit to a coalition in which railroads are to be masters.” The coming campaign would decide who would rule Virginia – corporations or Virginians.⁶⁰

With their state convention rapidly approaching in July, Conservatives were asked the same question about their party. And to the chagrin of some, the answer seemed to have already been determined. Frank G. Ruffin, who broke with the Readjusters in 1882, warned as early as January against the clear frontrunner for the chairmanship, John S. Barbour. Having arraigned

⁵⁷ “The Alien Alliance and Menace,” *Richmond Whig*, May 18, 1883.

⁵⁸ “Bond and the Bourbons,” *Woodstock Virginian*, May 25, 1883.

⁵⁹ *Eleventh Annual General Report of the Council of the Corporation of Foreign Bondholders* (London: Wentheimer, Lea and Co, 1884), 111.

⁶⁰ *Richmond Whig*, May 23, 1883.

Mahone and the Readjusters for leading Virginia into the Republican Party, Ruffin said that there was one thing that “negatives [Barbour’s] high qualifications as completely as if he were a Republican – the gentleman is the president of a railroad.”⁶¹ A correspondent to the *Clarke Courier* understood precisely why Barbour was favored – his railroad “controls several thousand votes” and had deep pockets. Yet like the proverbial pigeons that enthroned the hawk to protect them from other birds of prey, the power and safety that Barbour and the railroads promised would certainly come back to bite them. Virginians of every political stripe demanded restricting the power and extortions of railroad corporations, and the correspondent implored his party not to take their leader “from the ranks of the enemy.”⁶² But to many Conservative politicians, victory was the only meaningful metric. And according to the *Staunton Vindicator*, the selection of John Barbour, with his “*practical business*” know-how and organizational prowess, would “*insure the legislature to the Democracy.*”⁶³

As Conservatives began pouring into Lynchburg, all anxiously wondered what the outcome would be. Who would lead? What recognition would rebel Readjusters receive from their erstwhile enemies and traducers? Most importantly, what platform could unite the disparate factions comprising what Readjusters called “The Mongrel Convention?”⁶⁴ Some believed that the best platform would be one that was as vague as possible. For the Conservatives were not simply divided on matters of the debt and corporate power. They faced different regional political realities that could not be ignored. As the *Lynchburg Virginian* saw it, the convention “must not undertake to say exactly how the lines shall be formed in the East, or the West.”

⁶¹ “Colonel F.G. Ruffin on the Convention Question,” *Richmond Dispatch*, January 19, 1883.

⁶² *Clarke Courier* reproduced in “John S. Barbour as Chairman of the Democratic State Executive Committee,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 13, 1883.

⁶³ “Augusta’s Delegates to the Lynchburg Convention,” *Staunton Vindicator*, June 15, 1883.

⁶⁴ “The Mongrel Convention,” *Richmond Whig*, July 25, 1883.

Opposition to “Mahoneism” was all that united the party, and local leaders must be allowed discretion to define “Mahoneism” in a way that made sense in their districts.⁶⁵

Of course, these differing political realities were demographic. Racist fearmongering about the Richmond School Board and the alleged slippery slope to “mixed schools and mixed marriages” was still being condemned by eastern Conservatives. One magistrate near Norfolk insisted that the “cunning appointment [of Paul and Forrester] was without a doubt for the deliberate purpose of leading our people into the pit in which they have so foolishly rushed.” He himself had just been reelected by Black votes despite the foolishness of the Richmond press.⁶⁶ In fact, while historians have concluded that white Readjusters reacted against the appointment of Paul and Forrester and returned to the Conservative camp, Conservatives actually boasted that their gains in the May local and county elections came not from white men but from Black men in the eastern counties!⁶⁷ It was for this reason that some Conservatives referred to drawing the color line as a “suicide policy.” Moreover, the contention that the Readjusters hoped to bait Conservatives into adopting the “suicide policy” was not so far-fetched.⁶⁸ A Readjuster judge from Botetourt County wrote to Mahone on July 4 to suggest sending “a false friend or two” to the convention who could lead it to do “indiscreet things.” The false friends, he said, could

⁶⁵ “Union; Harmony; Co-operation,” *Lynchburg Virginian*, July 13, 1883.

⁶⁶ C.S.H. to editor of the *Norfolk Landmark* quoted in “The Color Line,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, June 26, 1883.

⁶⁷ Perhaps the most confusing and egregious example is James Tice Moore in “Black Militancy in Virginia.” Moore dismisses Readjusters’ counters to Conservative race-baiting as futile, as “the whites continued to move into the Funder camp.” Yet the very sources he cites contradict this contention. The Readjuster *Woodstock Virginian* and the Conservative *Staunton Vindicator* both state that Conservatives gained votes primarily in the heavily Black eastern counties. The *Vindicator* took it even further, saying that the abolition of the poll tax essentially backfired by freeing Black voters to vote against the Readjusters. The Democratic *New York World* also wrote that “The democratic vote increased in the districts where the colored vote is the strongest...Now the negroes see that they have been deceived and they turn to the democrats, with whom their real interests lie.” See Moore, “Black Militancy in Virginia,” 184; “The Spring Elections,” *Woodstock Virginian*, June 1, 1883; “The True Inwardness of the Mahone Failure in May,” *Staunton Vindicator*, June 8, 1883; *New York World* quoted in “Mahone’s Defeat,” *Lynchburg Virginian*, June 1, 1883.

⁶⁸ C.S.H. to editor of the *Norfolk Landmark* quoted in “The Color Line,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, June 26, 1883; *Fairfax Herald* quoted in *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, July 9, 1883.

propose resolutions defending the railroads, denouncing the debt settlement, “and also the negro.” It is not clear if Mahone acted on this suggestion, but infiltrating and attempting to sabotage conventions was politics as usual, and Mahone knew it better than anyone. The point, though, was not to have these “firebrand” resolutions succeed but to agitate the weak points in the Conservative coalition. As a matter of fact, the judge anticipated that an anti-Black resolution in particular would be voted down. Conservatives could certainly be riled up to the point of indiscretion, the judge implied, but they were not stupid.⁶⁹

The proceedings of the convention, then, were surprising to few. Rebranding themselves Democrats hardly concealed the hodge-podge nature of the congregation assembled under the reorganized party’s enormous tent. Beneath a banner reading “This Way Freemen,” a former Readjuster served as temporary chairman, only to quickly give way to a staunch Funder as permanent chairman, who himself was finally succeeded by the new, unanimously elected party chairman, Virginia Midland President John Barbour. Control of the party machinery, ostensibly more democratic, rested completely in the hands of Barbour, who declared that he did not believe in losing and expected the full cooperation of the party to avoid it. Up till now, Barbour declared, “our great mistake has always been in underestimating the strength of our enemy.” Brass bands and flowy speechifying would no longer do. Organization was crucial, and Barbour’s deft hand would guide it. As for the platform, it was a slightly modified knock-off of the Readjusters’ appended with lengthy condemnations of “ring rule” and the Republican Party.

⁶⁹ Robert F. Mays to William Mahone, July 4, 1883, Box 74, WMP. Regarding packing conventions with “false friends,” many believed Mahone was responsible for the nomination of a Black man for lieutenant governor at the 1869 Republican convention in order to further contrast his “True Republican” movement from the extremism of the Conservatives and Republicans. See Blake, *William Mahone*, 104. Another example of political machinations was the 1881 Colored Convention in Petersburg, where the Readjusters and Straightouts exerted their influence. See William E. Cameron to H.H. Riddleberger, March 15, 1881, Box 1, Folder 8, Riddleberger Papers.

Special thanks were given to the Big Four and, notably, the historically forgotten famous fifth, Straightout Joseph Wingfield, for defeating the Readjusters' caucus measures a year earlier. Conspicuously absent from the platform – and further indicating the shift of power – was the color line.⁷⁰ The delegation from Richmond stubbornly insisted on drawing it to no avail, and the ousted chairman A.M. Keiley was unanimously outvoted by the rest of the platform committee.⁷¹ Abram Fulkerson, the disgruntled former Congressman that Readjusters had overwhelmingly repudiated at the polls was likewise overruled. “The party,” Fulkerson recalled, “thought it would be possibly unwise to do so, and the measure did not prevail.”⁷²

The presence of white and Black Straightouts in Lynchburg, however, indicated precisely why Democrats considered drawing the color line to be unwise. John W. Woltz and R.D. Beckley hoped to remind Democrats about their “bargain with the Straightouts.” If the Democrats drew the color line, it would hinder Straightout efforts to persuade Black voters to abandon the Readjusters. But, mocked the *Whig*, Woltz and Beckley had wasted a trip because “the white Funders from the ‘Black Belt’ had already won the day.”⁷³ Still, the shared interest in ousting the Readjusters from power was clear. Straightouts resented being kicked to the curb by the Arthur administration. Former Congressmen were discarded and officeholders relieved of their sinecures, all because they refused to cooperate with the Readjusters. Woltz, a white

⁷⁰ “Democratic State Convention,” *Lynchburg Virginian*, July 26, 1883; “‘This Way, Freeman!’,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 26, 1883; James T. Quinn, “John S. Barbour, Jr. and the Restoration of the Virginia Democracy, 1883-1892,” M.A. Thesis (University of Virginia, 1966), 34-60; Moger, *Virginia*, 50-55.

⁷¹ “The Convention,” *Richmond Dispatch*, July 25, 1883. Although the platform committee consisted of 30 people, the actual composition of the platform was done by a subcommittee of three – A.M. Keiley, John W. Daniel, and John E. Massey. In his autobiography, Massey said that he and Keiley differed on three unspecified points, with Keiley yielding on two but standing firm on the third. This issue was taken to the full committee, which unanimously sided with Massey. All things considered, the disagreement was most certainly regarding the color line. Hancock, *Autobiography*, 248-249.

⁷² US Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, *Report on the Danville Riot*, 48th Congress, 1st Session, 1884, no. 579, 1229-1230 (hereinafter cited as *Danville Report*).

⁷³ *Danville Report*, 423; “The Mongrel Convention,” *Richmond Whig*, July 15, 1883.

Straightout from Fredericksburg, for instance, lost his job in the Interior Department at Mahone's request.⁷⁴ And Beckley, a Black postal clerk in Alexandria, also got the boot.⁷⁵ Both men subsequently denounced Mahone as a "tyrant" and vociferously announced their refusal to wear Mahone's "collar."⁷⁶ Meanwhile, the Straightout Republican chairman invited all Republicans to assert their manhood, "throw off the yoke" of coalition, and once more return to "the proud old banner under which freedom was first delivered to the Nation."⁷⁷ The Democratic press immediately heaped praise on the bold and courageous statement of the Straightout leader. Let "these utterances of an honest Republican," hoped the *Lynchburg Virginian*, "go forth with those of the Democratic Convention, as corroborative evidence of the enormities of Mahoneism."⁷⁸ In the fight against the Readjusters, Democrats and Straightouts were united. Two weeks later, the Democrats of Hanover and Caroline Counties unanimously nominated Williams Wickham for the state senate.

According to one historian (forgetting the role of Wickham and the C&O), the 1883 campaign was in many ways "the Mahone-Barbour consolidation struggle all over again."⁷⁹ As we have seen, that struggle never really ended. Although the circumstances and combatants had changed, the battle lines were essentially the same. Mahone and the Readjusters stood as the defenders of Virginia against the "new invasion" of "foreign" corporations represented by Barbour and "his associate railroad bosses."⁸⁰ And even though Mahone had lost his road years

⁷⁴ "John W. Woltz's Open Letter to Senator Mahone," *Staunton Vindicator*, August 25, 1882.

⁷⁵ "The Coloured Man Must Go," *Fredericksburg News*, August 14, 1882.

⁷⁶ "Political Speaking at Brentsville," *Alexandria Gazette*, September 5, 1882.

⁷⁷ "Mr. Dezendorf Accepts the Republican Leadership," July 27, 1883; "Boom For Blaine," *Lynchburg Virginian*, July 21, 1883.

⁷⁸ "Mr. Dezendorf's Letter," *Lynchburg Virginian*, July 27, 1883.

⁷⁹ Quinn, "John S. Barbour," 38.

⁸⁰ *Richmond Whig*, May 23, 1883; "Barbour as a Leader," *Woodstock Virginian*, August 17, 1883.

earlier, his tenure as president remained a recurring topic of the campaign. Likewise did the Readjusters' close relationship with William Clyde and the R&D. Ironically, the road that had been one of Mahone's staunchest enemies in the original struggle was now, under Clyde's ownership, the Readjusters' primary ally. Equally ironic, this road that was fast becoming one of the most powerful corporations in the South actively aided the Readjusters in their war against corporate power in Virginia. Ultimately, the anti-Readjuster coalition's counterrevolution of property was more than the overly simplified clash of unified capital against inevitably divided labor that historians like to imagine. The struggle of coalition against coalition was just as much a contest between the so-called "haves" as one between the haves and have-nots.⁸¹ Borrowing W.E.B Du Bois's description of Reconstruction, the contest for control of Virginia was "a fight of [capitalist] rivals to control property and through that to control the labor vote."⁸²

By this point, Mahone's railroad record had become a staple of Virginia politics. For anyone reading the Democratic press, Mahone was the most powerfully successful failure to ever exist. Charging Mahone as a corrupt and incompetent railroad wrecker, Democrats confusingly transformed Mahone's successes into further evidence of his failure and corruption. The disgruntled former Readjuster Abram Fulkerson, who had been a director in the AM&O and maintained a close connection with its successor, the N&W, is a case in point. Fulkerson pointed disapprovingly to Mahone's whopping \$25,000 salary as exemplifying his extortionate greed. Conveniently, Fulkerson left out that Mahone's salary was set by the directors, of which he had been one. Even more egregious, Fulkerson complained, was that Mahone audaciously took credit

⁸¹ Corporations were never singularly opposed to reform movements, instead viewing them as additional weapons to use against corporate rivals. See Richard White, *Railroaded: Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011).

⁸² Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 626.

for compelling the N&W to go beyond what was legally required of it. Mahone's "ultimatum" that the N&W honor the state's second mortgage claim as well as the claims of unpaid workers cost the company an extra \$1.5 million *over* what it paid for the road at auction. This was practically unheard of in the history of railroad reorganizations, especially considering that Judge Bond (of B&O coupon fame) ruled that these claimants had no standing. Yet Fulkerson, who himself was a beneficiary of Mahone's ultimatum, contended that it was the N&W that deserved credit for "this princely liberality," not Mahone. Readjuster Congressman John S. Wise, who had drafted the contract with the N&W, vehemently disagreed. The N&W willingly submitted to Mahone's terms because they knew all too well the value "of his influence and importance as their friend and ally."⁸³

Perhaps it was only a coincidence that Fulkerson and the N&W took issue with Mahone's railroad record *after* his friendship had ceased to serve their interests. But the perpetual back and forth about his record exposed deep-seated anxieties held by both the recalcitrant railroads and their political allies. By conjuring the bogeyman of "Boss Mahone," the unscrupulously corrupt railroad wrecker, the anti-Readjusters hoped to sow doubt about the Readjusters' abundantly clear intention to break these corporations that had "become fat and saucy upon the indulgences given them."⁸⁴ The debate over who was responsible for paying legally worthless claims, particularly those of workers was equally telling. Having apparently swallowed his opposition to a railroad boss running the Democratic Party, Frank Ruffin reminded voters that Mahone "wants the votes the railroads control."⁸⁵

⁸³ "Fulkerson vs. Mahone," *Lynchburg Democratic Campaign*, October 15, 1883; "Conrad Crushed and Cornered," *Richmond Whig*, October 9, 1883. See also C.W. Statham to Mahone, October 25, 1883 Box 80, WMP.

⁸⁴ *Culpeper Exponent* quoted in "The Irrepressible Conflict," *Richmond Whig*, April 5, 1883.

⁸⁵ Frank G. Ruffin, "An Appeal to the 31,527 Re-Adjuster Democrats of Virginia," September 13, 1883, Library of Virginia, Closed Stacks, F231.M25 R88.

This, of course, was something the railroads would not abide. In September, the Seaboard & Roanoke fired a Black man and his mother-in-law “because he was suspected to be a Readjuster.”⁸⁶ Whether this was the real cause remains uncertain, but there is reason to believe it. The president of the S&R, John Moncure Robinson, had earlier been an ally of Mahone in opposing the incursions of the B&O and Pennsylvania railroads. And when Mahone sought the gubernatorial nomination in 1877, Robinson exerted his influence over employees on Mahone’s behalf.⁸⁷ He similarly aided the Readjusters in 1881, hoping to curry support for legislation beneficial to his road.⁸⁸ However, at Mahone’s suggestion, the Readjusters dropped Robinson’s bills. The reason was unreconciled “antagonisms” between Robinson’s Seaboard system and William Clyde’s R&D-Richmond Terminal system.⁸⁹ Watching Mahone and the Readjusters aid one of his primary competitors while letting his measures die certainly stuck in Robinson’s craw. Like the other previously suppliant roads who sought favor without restraint, Robinson bucked. At the same time the Readjusters pushed for their “obnoxious” caucus measures, Clyde wired Mahone that “John Robinson proposes following the example of his Norfolk & Western friends

⁸⁶ “A Specimen of Bourbonism,” *Richmond Whig*, September 10, 1883.

⁸⁷ R.F. Walker to William Mahone, February 25, 1877, Box 9; John M. Robinson to William Mahone, June 4, 1877, Box 10; John M. Robinson to Mahone, June 16, 1877, Box 10, WMP. Robinson’s father, Moncure, had been a close ally of Mahone during Mahone’s consolidation fight against “foreign railroads” in the late 1860s and early 1870s. See Nelson, *Iron Confederacies*, Chapter 4.

⁸⁸ Stith Bolling to William Mahone, February 28, 1882, Box 42, WMP. The bills involved a terminal company as well as authorization of the Seaboard & Roanoke to increase its capital stock and acquire interests in other railroads. See *Journal of the House of Delegates of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent Public Printing, 1881), 286; *Journal of the Senate of the State of Virginia, 1881-1882* (Richmond: R.F. Walker, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1881), 134

⁸⁹ John S. Wise, a prominent Readjuster and at-large Readjuster Congressman, was the attorney for Robinson’s road, and he lobbied for Robinson’s bills in the General Assembly. But Mahone expressed his dissatisfaction with Wise’s efforts, after which Wise wrote to Robinson that he regarded “the matter as dropped henceforth.” Wise mentions “R & C’s opposition,” referring to Robinson and Clyde. See John S. Wise to William Mahone, March 4, 1882 and copy of letter from John S. Wise to John M. Robinson, March 4, 1882, Box 43, WMP.

and [is] striving to push his seaboard bill through regardless of anybody's wishes or consent."⁹⁰ Old railroad allies unwilling to defer to Readjuster rule became new railroad foes.

But it was John Barbour's Virginia Midland that proved the most frustrating. Barbour made no attempt to conceal his hostility to Mahone and the Readjusters. Nor did he hide his continued disappointment in the R&D's refusal to send northbound traffic over the Midland in proportion to what the Midland sent in return.⁹¹ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Clyde's Richmond Terminal owned the Virginia Midland and was siphoning the flow of goods away from the road, presumably to undermine Barbour's power in the still technically independent company. Barbour exploited this independence to the fullest of his ability.⁹² Mahone wrote to Clyde in October that "You have no idea to what extent the Midland road is used against us." He hoped that Clyde could help counteract Barbour's influence, particularly over employees.⁹³ Nine days later, Mahone again wrote that Midland employees had been led to believe that voting the Democratic ticket was the only way to keep their jobs. Even some employees of the R&D, he added suggestively, "are left to believe that they are expected as heretofore to support the Bourbons as the will and interests of the Corporation."⁹⁴ The same day, one of Clyde's agents wrote to Mahone that it was not possible to fully subvert Barbour's influence "without doing more harm than good." Still, he sent word to Virginia Midland headquarters that "every man

⁹⁰ William P. Clyde, using codename Bonsacks, to William Mahone, March 14, 1882, Box 43, WMP. Further indicating Clyde's willingness to work with Mahone and the Readjusters, he concluded by saying he could "get along without further legislation if necessary and leave the field free for such policy as you may think best to meet the situation."

⁹¹ *Third Annual Report of the Virginia Midland Railway Company* (Alexandria: Gazette Book and Job Office, 1883), 19-20.

⁹² Shortly after the Richmond Terminal acquired control of the Virginia Midland in late 1881, Barbour forcefully expressed in an interview that the Midland would maintain its independence and that it would continue to serve both Baltimore and the B&O. "Virginia Midland Road," September 22, 1881.

⁹³ Mahone to William Clyde, October 5, 1883, Letterbook Volume 46, WMP.

⁹⁴ Mahone to William Clyde, October 14, 1883, Letterbook Volume 46, WMP.

shall be free to vote & act as he sees fit, & can do so without fear of jeopardy to his position in or employment by the Co[mpany], present or future.”⁹⁵ For obvious reasons, this word against the job lash went unheeded. As Democratic Party chairman, Barbour had already ordered local party bosses to “use all legitimate measures to induce your opponents to vote with you” or “keep them from the polls.”⁹⁶

It was an all-out war. Senator-elect H.H. Riddleberger held no punches in a public letter filling twelve columns of the *Woodstock Virginian*. Detailing the railroad-building origins of the public debt, Riddleberger said it only made sense that railroads were now in open rebellion against the state. Readjusters had removed their specially privileged tax status and put them on par with everyone else. Moreover, they intended to make them serve the interests of the Virginians who gave the arrogant corporations life. The concerted efforts of railroads and bondholders to undermine the debt settlement bearing Riddleberger’s name made “additional legislation” necessary. “It must be another force bill designed to operate directly on the railroads,” Riddleberger insisted. “Without egotism,” he promised, “I can draft bills enough in one day to stop locomotives and trains every week in every county on the line of road and keep the [Judge] Bonds in perpetual session.” The first duty of voters, he implored, was to make the railroads know their place. For the cherry on top, Riddleberger not so subtly threatened the Virginia Midland specifically with state ownership.⁹⁷

Breaking with precedent, Governor Cameron also took to the stump. His intention to wage “a war on the Rail Roads” was so apparent that even a Clyde representative anxiously

⁹⁵ James W. McCarrick to William Mahone, October 14, 1883, Box 79, WMP.

⁹⁶ Democratic Plan of Organization circular, Scrapbook 31, 13, WMP.

⁹⁷ “Letter from Hon. H.H. Riddleberger,” *Woodstock Virginian*, August 10, 1883.

feared the governor had become “hostile to [the] R&D.”⁹⁸ Like Riddleberger, though, Cameron focused his attacks on Barbour and the Virginia Midland. At Alexandria, Barbour’s corporate and Democratic Party headquarters, Cameron recounted the numerous fulfilled promises of the Readjusters. Cameron then denied reports that he had earlier claimed that Barbour was being forced to resign the Virginia Midland presidency against his will. Yet, having heard the rumor, Cameron wished it were true because no man should be the chairman of a political party “and president of a railway at the same time.” Pointing to the once great but now “rotting wharves and empty warehouses” of Alexandria, Cameron blamed Barbour for sending the trade rightfully meant for Alexandria “through to Lady Baltimore.” While freight rates increased and trade decreased, “Barbour was getting more control of the community he was killing by his railway schemes.” Next, Cameron addressed the Democrats’ revival of year-old charges that the Readjusters had corrupt dealings with the R&D. The owners of the R&D, Cameron reminded the audience, owned the Virginia Midland. If Democratic Chairman Barbour sincerely thought the owners of the R&D – his railroad employers – had acted improperly and wronged the state, Cameron asked, “would he not resign one position or the other?” The “railway kings” had gotten more than enough from Virginians. “They must keep out of politics. If they don’t,” the governor promised, “we will bring them down.”⁹⁹

At the same time, Mahone and Williams Wickham reportedly engaged themselves in a political pissing contest. The longstanding personal enmity between the two men was only made hotter by the amount of money involved. Mahone had promised to beat Wickham if it cost \$50,000. In response, Wickham boasted that “he can’t do it if he spends \$100,000.”¹⁰⁰ The battle

⁹⁸ James W. McCarrick to William Mahone, October 8, 1883, Box79, WMP.

⁹⁹ “Cameron’s Defiance,” *Richmond Whig*, October 31, 1883.

¹⁰⁰ *Baltimore Sun* quoted in “Campaign Notes,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, October 16, 1883.

of the coalitions was closer than ever, and money was essential. Wickham, one of the wealthiest men in the state had plenty. And as Americans would soon learn in vivid detail, his boss, C&O President C.P. Huntington, spent lavishly to buy both elections and politicians.¹⁰¹ Barbour, named Democratic Party chairman due to his corporate and financial connections, instituted a system to match all funds raised by local Democratic committees.¹⁰² And the Corporation of Foreign Bondholders had earlier raised £12,000 (about \$60,000) to “vindicate” their rights against the Readjusters.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, Clyde donated to the Readjusters and solicited other industrialists to do the same.¹⁰⁴ In short, an ungodly amount of money flooded every corner of the state. While some was certainly used to purchase votes, most of these funds kept the respective propaganda machines running at full steam.

For their part, Democrats and Straightouts launched “an organized system of duplicity” against the Readjusters.¹⁰⁵ At the same time Democrats denounced the Readjusters as the “Negro Party,” Straightouts painted the Readjusters as wolves in sheep’s clothing. White and Black Readjusters, they alleged, violently “mobbed” Black men who refused to be the political slaves of Boss Mahone.¹⁰⁶ Reverend John Dawson, the Straightout candidate for Congressman-at-large in 1882 now running for state senate, called Mahone the “greatest demoralizer the colored race”

¹⁰¹ By the end of the year, the so-called Colton-Huntington letters had been published. This correspondence between Huntington and his then associate David Colton left no doubt about how railroads corrupted politics and, more importantly, politicians to promote their corporate interests. See “The Huntington Letters,” *Richmond Whig*, January 11, 1884. For a lengthier study of Huntington’s methods more generally, see White, *Railroaded*.

¹⁰² Quinn, “John S. Barbour,” 56-57.

¹⁰³ “Foreign Holders of Virginia Bonds,” *Richmond Whig*, March 13, 1883; *Eleventh Annual General Report of the Council of the Corporation of the Corporation of Foreign Bondholders, 1883* (London, 1884), 9.

¹⁰⁴ Mahone to William Clyde, October 5, 1883, Letterbook Volume 46, 3-6, WMP; William Clyde to Mahone, November 5, 1883, Box 81, WMP.

¹⁰⁵ “Gen Mahone Rises,” *Richmond Whig*, November 20, 1883.

¹⁰⁶ “Straightouts Mobbed,” *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, October 6, 1883. In the spring elections, Straightouts argued that Mahone ordered the assassination of John L. Newsom by “one of Mahone’s white Democratic-Readjusters.” See “Infamous!,” [*Richmond Whig*, June, 1883 ?], in Scrapbook 1B, 21, WMP; Thomas H. Cross to Mahone, May 26, 1883, Box 72, WMP; William A. Bond to Mahone, June 2, 1883, Box 73, WMP.

had ever known. At the same time Democrats insisted that Readjusters were Republicans, the Democratic press applauded the reverend Dawson's "effective" assertions that "Mahone Republicanism" was not "true Republicanism."¹⁰⁷ At the same time Democrats in majority white districts contended that Black school trustees posed the gravest of all threats to white supremacy, Democrats in Petersburg argued that white Readjusters kept all the "fat" offices for themselves, leaving only the "empty honors" of "school trustees and such like" for Black men and women.¹⁰⁸ And at the same time Democratic Congressman and railroad attorney John W. Daniel said he was a Democrat because he was "a white man and a Virginian," his close ally T.W. Scott "knocked out the bull's-eye of the 'Black Belt'" by organizing Black Democratic clubs.¹⁰⁹

In short, the color line in politics was never intended to be a simple bar to Black participation. Nor was it intended to array whites solidly against that participation. Democrats and Straightouts always intended the color line to cut both ways, to chip away at the edges of the Readjuster coalition by making it *appear* that the interracial coalition was weaker than it actually was. According to future governor Charles T. O'Ferrall, the Democrats made it their policy to avoid joint discussions with Readjusters. "The purpose," he said, was to give the impression "that the colored voters of the State were welded together in a solid mass...against the great body

¹⁰⁷ "The James City Cauldron," *Richmond Dispatch*, October 10, 1883.

¹⁰⁸ "To Colored Voters Not Officeholders nor Office Seekers," *Petersburg Index-Appeal*, October 31, 1883.

¹⁰⁹ "The Gibraltar of Virginia Democracy," *Richmond Dispatch*, October 26, 1883; "The Drake's Branch Club," *Richmond Dispatch*, November 21, 1883. It must also be remembered that Daniel, as a member of the Democratic platform committee, insisted that the color line *not* be officially drawn. In 1879, Daniel famously clasped hands with two Black preachers and proclaimed, "When the best men of both races unite in a cause it must prevail." And after his failed campaign for governor in 1881, Daniel further encouraged courting Black voters as "painful" but "necessary." See Hancock, *Autobiography*, 248; Pendleton, *Political History of Appalachian Virginia*, 345; Moore, *Two Paths*, 110. Regarding T.W. Scott's political ties with Barbour, see "Washington," *Richmond Whig*, April 10, 1885.

of the white voters.”¹¹⁰ Of course, this policy also prevented Readjusters from directly contradicting Democratic lies and misrepresentations, which they regularly and forcefully did.¹¹¹ More importantly, it exposed a deeper anxiety about the general popularity of the Readjusters’ interracial, working-class message. “The Readjuster party is what they want to destroy,” insisted the *Tazewell Times*, “and the means by which they would accomplish this end will be as diversified as the Funder political creed is full of inconsistencies, deceptions and frauds.”¹¹² When asked if the ban on joint discussions was intended to keep Democrats from hearing Readjuster speakers, Danville Democrat B.B. Munford responded, “Well, yes; of course, we did not want our people changed.”¹¹³ The campaign was not simply anti-Black; it was anti-Readjuster.

It was for this reason that the Democrats of Danville chose to keep the circular depicting the humiliating and horrific conditions they allegedly suffered under “Coalition Rule” out of Black-majority Danville.¹¹⁴ Upon seeing that Pittsylvania County Readjuster chairman William E. Sims had obtained a leaked copy of the Danville Circular, W.N. Ruffin, who wrote the first draft, remarked slyly that “we intended to spring that on you before you had a chance to answer it.”¹¹⁵ Printed near the end of October, the circular’s fabricated tale of non-tax-paying Black

¹¹⁰ O’Ferrall cited this as Democratic policy during the 1885 campaign, but Democrats also used it in 1883. See Charles T. O’Ferrall, *Forty Years of Active Service* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1904), 224-225; Quinn, “John S. Barbour,” 46-47; *Danville Report*, 675, 707, 1167-1168, 1183.

¹¹¹ To counter the lie that Readjusters favored mixed marriages, for instance, white and Black Readjusters said that it was those men “forever prating about mixed marriages, mixed schools and social equality” who were most responsible for the “different species of the Negro race.” They talked of the “Miscegenational Democracy,” “Funders Hugging Negroes,” and the “Political Cohabitation of White Bourbon-Funders with Colored Funder-Straightouts.” See “Funders Hugging Negroes!,” in Scrapbook 31, WMP; “Miscegenational Democracy,” *Richmond Whig*, September 26, 1883; *Petersburg Lancet*, May 19, 1883; “Social Equality,” *Richmond Whig*, September 17, 1883.

¹¹² Quoted in “Anything to Beat Mahone and the Readjuster Party,” *Richmond Whig*, October 1, 1883.

¹¹³ *Danville Report*, 1183. Munford’s testimony is mistakenly listed as “D.D. Munford.”

¹¹⁴ *Danville Report*, x, xii, 357, *passim*.

¹¹⁵ *Danville Report*, 701-702. Ruffin recalled the conversation with Sims slightly differently

citizens seizing control of Danville's government and market, aggressively pushing white ladies into the streets, and being generally impudent with their white employers was never intended for circulation in places like Danville with Black majorities. It was addressed solely to the majority-white "Citizens of the Southwest and Valley."¹¹⁶ The pitiful plea for salvation spread quickly and quietly into these districts, where it was met by skepticism even from Democrats. To address these doubts, the authors and signers of the original circular quickly penned another circular confirming that their charges were, in fact, true, despite how unbelievable they appeared. Like the original, the so-called "Ruffin Circular" went uncirculated in Danville.¹¹⁷ By this point, however, the cat was out of the bag, and Danville Readjusters were refuting the charges contained in the Danville Circular one by one.¹¹⁸ On Friday night, November 2, William Sims spoke at the courthouse and expressed his regret that "white men, rich men, intelligent men" would spread such "cowardly" slanders against Danville's Black citizens for partisan effect.¹¹⁹ The next day, the signers of the Danville Circular and other leading Democrats, "much aggrieved" that their lies had been exposed, held a whites-only meeting at the Danville opera house. Only now did they attempt to gain the assent and confirmation of their claims from anyone besides themselves. With any and all discussion prohibited, they read the Danville Circular to the 400 or so men assembled and asked them to sign and affirm that the charges it contained were true. But before signatures could be added, the perfunctory meeting was cut short

¹¹⁶ "Coalition Rule in Danville," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, accessed September 21, 2017, <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/coalition-rule-in-danville-october-1883/>.

¹¹⁷ Known as the "Ruffin Circular," it consisted of two replies to an unnamed citizen of Harrisonburg and a sworn affidavit of the signers. *Danville Report*, ix-xi.

¹¹⁸ "Danville Defended!," *Richmond Whig*, November 2, 1883; "The Ruling Passion Strong in Death," *Richmond Whig*, November 2, 1883; "Judge Blackwell, of Danville," *Richmond Whig*, November 2, 1883; "The Wreck of Bourbonism," *Richmond Whig*, November 2, 1883. See also "To the People of Virginia," "Nailed to the Wall!," in Scrapbook 31, WMP.

¹¹⁹ *Danville Report*, 701-704.

by the cracks of pistol fire in the street.¹²⁰ The massacre in Danville removed any need for signatures.

It was no longer necessary to attest to old lies when new ones more potent could be spread in a similar manner. Rumors of the violence spread northward over telegraph lines running along the Virginia Midland toward Democratic headquarters in Alexandria. It reached Lynchburg and broke westward along the N&W into the Southwest and branched again northward from Roanoke along the Shenandoah Valley Railroad. From Charlottesville stories spread along the C&O toward Staunton. The rumors flashed northward to Harrisonburg along the B&O lines until they once again met the Midland. Democratic papers in Alexandria, Staunton, and Lynchburg ran non-stop to print extras detailing the “Negro Riot in Danville,” the “legitimate result” of Readjuster rule. Riders carried throughout the countryside Danville’s plea that “we are standing in our doors, shot-gun in hand, *trying to protect our families.*” The message heard by those in the Valley and Southwest was that Danville’s salvation could only be secured by a Democratic ballot.¹²¹ Meanwhile, in the largely Black eastern counties, John Barbour’s Democratic Executive Committee took a different tack. Flyers reading “Don’t be Deceived!” denounced the claim that Democrats had killed Black men in Danville as an “infamous lie.” Here, Democrats called for interracial cooperation and solidarity against the Readjusters, the true drawers of the color line. “We call upon good men, white and colored, to rebuke, by their ballots,

¹²⁰ There are several descriptions of the opera house meeting, its attendance, and its purpose throughout the *Danville Report*. But the clearest and perhaps most unimpeachable account that the meeting was a direct response to the Readjusters’ contradictions and that the resolutions and proceedings were pre-determined was provided by J.D. Blair. A business partner of W.N. Ruffin and signer of the Danville Circular, Blair said that immediately after Sims’s speech “up to about 1 o’clock we [the signers] were agreeing on a set of resolutions to be passed, no speaking to be allowed, no excitement; we were to meet and pass resolutions stating that the facts set forth in ‘Coalition Rule’ were substantially true, the statement of Judge Blackwell and Mayor Johnston to the contrary notwithstanding.” *Danville Report*, 1190.

¹²¹ See *Danville Report*; Scrapbook 31, WMP; W.O. Wesson to Mahone, November 9, 1883, Box 81, WMP; W.O. Austin, to Mahone, December 26, 1883, Box 83, WMP.

this disgraceful attempt to stir up passion in our midst.”¹²² The system of organized duplicity adapted to the massacre in Danville.

Still, the threat of further violence hung heavy on election day, for Democrats and Straightouts did not fully trust the effectiveness of their lies and misinformation. William Royall, attorney for the Corporation of Foreign Bondholders, arrived in Richmond to cast his ballot and announced to a room of 40 men that he was armed before pulling out his Colt revolver. The men all smiled and pulled out weapons of their own.¹²³ Armed Democrats patrolled the streets of Danville and surrounding areas, purportedly to prevent more bloodshed.¹²⁴ After an alleged dispute over a Black man voting the Democratic ticket in Petersburg, one man struck Mahone in the face. He claimed that he did not intend to hit Mahone, but the rushing crowd “struck him violently on the right hand which caused it to strike Gen. Mahone.”¹²⁵ The leader of a Black Readjuster club in Hanover County reported that Straightout Williams Wickham ordered them to disperse and go home as they marched to the polls. When they refused, Wickham allegedly charged at them with his horse.¹²⁶ On the other hand, “the Wickham negroes,” read one approving report, “were at all times surrounded by armed whites, who had promised to protect them.”¹²⁷ Outspoken white Readjusters in Richmond and elsewhere succumbed to the terrorism

¹²² “Don’t be Deceived!,” Scrapbook 31, 29, WMP. Written on the top of this copy is “From Nansemond Co Va.”

¹²³ Royall, *Some Reminiscences*, 201.

¹²⁴ W.E. Sims to Mahone, November 8, 1883, Box 81, WMP; “The South Carolina Policy,” *Richmond Whig*, November [8?], 1883;

¹²⁵ “The Man Who Struck William Mahone,” *Alexandria Gazette*, November 8, 1883; “Mahone in a Row,” *Alexandria Gazette*, November 7, 1883; S. Bassett French to Mahone, November 7, 1883, Box 81, WMP.

¹²⁶ Affidavit of Peter Ellis, November 13, 1883, Box 192, WMP.

¹²⁷ Virginia,” *Philadelphia Times* [November, 1883], in H.T. Wickham Scrapbook Volume I (1867-1932), 56-57, Series 7, Box 32, Wickham Papers.

and cast Democratic ballots “with trembling hands.”¹²⁸ As the results rolled in, it was clear the anti-Readjusters had “redeemed” Virginia from “Coalition Rule.”¹²⁹

Readjusters from across the state flooded Mahone with updates from their districts and precincts. The tone was one of loss, disappointment, and even anger as all attempted to determine what went wrong. Of course, many stressed the demoralizing effects of the Danville Circular and massacre. Some referred to Democrats’ continued cries of “mixed schools and mixed marriages.” And nearly all mentioned threats, intimidation, bulldozing, and bribery of white and Black voters alike.¹³⁰

Yet historians’ unwillingness to challenge the propaganda of history has led them to misinterpret and misrepresent these letters as well as the meaning of the election, even its results. Although the Readjusters *gained* votes in most counties, the diagnostic nature of the Readjusters’ correspondence, when read out of context, makes them appear to tell a dire story of mass defections and devastating losses. In reality, the Democrats simply gained more votes than the Readjusters gained. According to future governor Charles O’Ferrall, “We had very few accessions from the Readjuster party...Our gains were from the reserve vote” – meaning those previously disfranchised by the poll tax.¹³¹ Further mischaracterizing the extent of the Democratic victory, some historians have inexplicably repeated the claim that the Democrats gained enough votes to secure a two-thirds majority in the legislature. However, the Democrats only secured this supermajority *after* unseating fourteen Readjusters, or ten percent of the entire

¹²⁸ “The Significance of Blood,” *Richmond Whig*, November 13, 1883.

¹²⁹ The *Richmond State*, for instance, proclaimed the day after the election that “The rule of [the] ignorant misled by the vicious has been overthrown.” Quoted in Pulley, *Old Virginia Restored*, 44.

¹³⁰ Boxes 61-63 of the William Mahone papers are filled with these letters.

¹³¹ *Danville Report*, 1244-1245.

General Assembly!¹³² At the bottom of these mistaken conclusions rests the very cornerstone of history's propaganda – that the election of 1883 was above all else a war of races, and the result was the undoubtable will of Virginia's white majority.

Exemplifying what historian Barbara Fields and sociologist Karen Fields call “racecraft” – a circular reasoning that treats race as both cause and effect – scholars of the Readjusters have consistently offered several slightly altered narratives about how the Readjuster coalition was ultimately and inevitably undone by race.¹³³ Readjusters, as the story goes, challenged white supremacy, which made white Virginians anxious. So when Democrats drew the color line, white Virginians of course answered the call, as demonstrated by the fact that the Democrats received most of their majorities in the predominantly white Valley and Southwest. Whether white supremacist rhetoric about “Negro Rule,” “mixed schools and mixed marriages,” or lies about Black uprisings in Danville were actually effective is immaterial. The presumption of its effectiveness becomes the evidence. Consequently, when the oft-quoted Readjuster senator concluded “that every issue was absorbed in the one issue, [the] Race issue,” it makes no difference that each of the three counties comprising his district still went Readjuster!¹³⁴ Moreover, the self-confirming logic of “racecraft” obscures power by portraying it as something exerted primarily if not solely over Black people. Violence and coercion, for instance, fully explain defections by Black Readjusters. On the other hand, scholars dismiss similar complaints

¹³² Ironically, Charles Chilton Pearson, a student of chief historical propagandist William A. Dunning, acknowledged that the Democrats achieved their two-thirds majority “by prompt and vigorous efforts” *after* the legislature convened. Other historians either state that the Democrats won the supermajority without qualification, or they mention very little about what happened after the 1883 election, apart from brief notes about disfranchisement and vague allusions to a persistently strong yet powerless Republican Party. See Pearson, *Readjuster Movement*, 166; Moger, *Virginia*, 55; Wynes, *Race Relations*, 31; Moger, *Two Paths*, 117; Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 156-159; Hahn, *Nation Under our Feet*, 406-7.

¹³³ Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*.

¹³⁴ J.L. Powell to Mahone, December 12, 1883, Box 82, WMP. Powell represented Stafford, Spotsylvania, and Louisa Counties, which had Readjuster majorities of 51%, 52%, and 53%, respectively.

about the coercion of white Readjusters as exaggerating “Democratic repression in order to jump the patronage line.”¹³⁵ Again, this is not to say that white supremacist anxieties had no effect on white voters. Rather, it is an argument against presuming the existence of these anxieties as well as their determinative power. By taking other consistently mentioned factors and anxieties just as seriously, we can see quite clearly the powers obscured by racecraft and the propaganda of history. As one Readjuster from Montgomery County wrote, the Danville Massacre took a toll on white Readjuster turnout, but “threats of bloodshed and dismissal from work beat us.” Notably, he contended that his was “the only county along the line from Lynchburg to Bristol that came near holding its own.” The line to which he referred was the N&W railroad.¹³⁶

Two years earlier, Mahone, deeply familiar with the political power of railroads, predicted just “how easily they might combine, if they chose, and take the State from us.”¹³⁷ Since then, the Readjusters attempted to create a railroad commission with extensive powers, tripled railroads’ taxes, confiscated their property when they refused or took too long to pay those taxes, and brazenly threatened the defiant corporations on the stump and in the press. Railroads faced one choice: submit or take the state from the Readjusters. They chose the latter. One Readjuster from Culpeper wired succinctly, “County gone Bourbon[.] Couldn’t stand

¹³⁵ Dailey says that “Not all Virginia blacks supported the Readjusters,” as tens of thousands voted the Democratic ticket, “probably either because they were coerced or because the Democrats had allied with Straight-Out Republicans in some sections of the state.” Just prior to her comment about “exaggerated Democratic repression,” Dailey cites a laundry list of evidence of economic intimidation. See Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 143-144, 230n.75. Denise Ferreira Da Silva argues that this kind of scholarship places non-white people in a position of “affectability.” Even when scholarship is sympathetic, it reproduces the very strategies of power that assumes that whites are capable of full self-determination while non-whites are not; their fate and actions are entirely outer-determined. See *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

¹³⁶ Stewart M. Lewis to Mahone, November 8, 1883, Box 81, WMP.

¹³⁷ “Colonel Frank G. Ruffin’s Letter: A Terrible Arraignment. Mahoneism Unveiled!...,” 1882, 5-6, F231.M25, Library of Virginia. This pamphlet was revised and republished during the 1883 campaign as “An Appeal to the 31,527 Re-Adjuster Democrats...”

railroad pressure.”¹³⁸ The Virginia Midland ran directly through the heart of Culpeper County. An anonymous employee wrote from the C&O shops in Richmond just before the election that they did not have “the liberty to vote as we wish.” Political parties printed their own ballots with different colors, shapes, and textures to make them distinguishable by sight and touch. “They will find out how we vote,” wrote the man. “Heaven & earth has been move[d] this time to beat you.”¹³⁹ With railroad candidates running throughout the state and railroad lawyers speaking on stumps and distributing funds, their interest in the canvass was clear.¹⁴⁰ Just as clear was what they expected from the men they employed. Before the Congressional committee investigating the Danville Massacre, Williams Wickham boasted with certainty, “I had a large number of

¹³⁸ Eggbert to Mahone, November 6, 1883, Box 81, WMP. This was likely Jacob S. Eggborn, who represented Culpeper in the House of Delegates as a Readjuster.

¹³⁹ Anonymous to Mahone, November 3, 1883, Box 81. At the top of the letter, the man wrote that “It is not safe for a white man to vote for you here.” As mentioned above, this should not be misinterpreted as indicating that this worker’s concern was motivated by anxieties about his “whiteness.” While I agree with Dailey’s contention that the meaning of “whiteness” was uncertain, I disagree with her conclusion that “whiteness” is something that can be claimed or asserted by essentially acting white, i.e. voting the Democratic ticket. In short, the tautology of racecraft simultaneously obscures power and paradoxically reifies race (“whiteness” is *both* uncertain *and* “customary”; “whiteness” can be claimed, but only by white people). Instead, the worker’s claim suggests that “whiteness,” rather than an identity to be claimed or proven, was a sumptuary code that had lost its ability to indicate how and on whom power was to be exerted. What bosses and election judges could not determine from his white skin alone, they could gather when they “feel the paper” of the ballot. The writer’s mention of his race had little to do with any belief that he was no longer white (actually or metaphorically) and more to do with the presumptions that racecraft engenders. In fact, it was a repudiation of the Democrat’s contention that the Readjuster Party was the “Negro Party.” Far from fearing the Readjuster coalition, white men *wanted* to vote for it. “You would get hundreds of votes more if we had the liberty to vote as we wish.” The absence of liberty and the threat to safety (whether socially, economically, or physically) is the operative factor. It is the power to compel. “Every body,” the man wrote, “*has been made to contribute* this time for the city [Richmond] and Chesterfield county.” See Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, particularly Chapter 5; Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*.

¹⁴⁰ Among others, there were Williams Wickham (C&O vice president), Edward Echols (son of John Echols, a director of the C&O), William A. Anderson (a director of the B&O-owned Valley Railroad), William A. Glasgow (whose son would later be known as “the chief dispenser of [N&W] funds in Southwest Virginia”), H.S. Trout (a Roanoke booster with strong ties to the N&W and SVRR), J. Marshall McCormick (eventually N&W general counsel), and Dr. James Fenton Bryant (a surgeon for the Seaboard & Roanoke). For Wickham, Echols, and Anderson, see *Eighth Annual Report of the Railroad Commissioner of the State of Virginia* (Richmond: Rush U. Derr, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1884), 76, 318. For Glasgow, see Moger, *Virginia*, 112. For H.S. Trout, see Rand Dotson, *Roanoke, Virginia, 1882-1912: Magic City of the New South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 65-67. For McCormick and Bryant, see Lyon G. Tyler, *Men of Mark in Virginia*, Volume III (Washington, DC: Men of Mark Publishing Company, 1907), 242; Tyler, *Men of Mark*, Volume IV (Washington, DC: Men of Mark Publishing Company, 1908), 40.

employés to whom I never opened my mouth upon the subject, but every single one of them voted for me.”¹⁴¹ Control of property meant control of the labor vote.

And the testimony of Wickham and other Straightout Republicans on behalf of the Democrats about the fairness of the election – “the fairest we have ever had,” said Wickham – further demonstrates that the railroad combination was always intended to be bipartisan.¹⁴² Even more, it is the strongest evidence that while the Danville Circular was planned, the massacre was not.¹⁴³ While news of the massacre could be and was manipulated for political effect, it put at risk the entire strategy of the Democratic-Straightout coalition. Referring to the absence of the color line in the Democratic platform, ex-Readjuster Frank Ruffin insisted that rather than attempting to array white against Black, “our effort was to divide the colored vote.”¹⁴⁴ A Williamsburg Democrat likewise explained that “we did all we could to induce [Black voters] to vote with us.” If they would not vote Democratic, he added, “we regarded every vote for [Straightouts] would be a help for us.”¹⁴⁵ Speaking specifically about the massacre, future governor Charles O’Ferrall argued that many Democrats feared that it had “a tendency to drive off the colored people from what was called the straight-out Republican movement.” Clarifying the coalitional strategy beyond any doubt, O’Ferrall concluded that “the Democratic party suffered by reason of the straightout movement getting so small a vote.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ *Danville Report*, 1096.

¹⁴² *Danville Report*, 1098. Besides Wickham, the most notable Straightout was John F. Dezendorf, who had succeeded Wickham as Straightout Republican Chairman. They sustained the Democrats’ claim that they did not draw the color line, saying that it was actually drawn by the Readjusters, and charged any and all fraud, intimidation, and violence to the Readjusters. *Danville Report*, 1201-1215.

¹⁴³ Contemporaries and historians have debated whether the massacre was planned. There is just as much evidence indicating that it was planned as there is evidence that it was not. I, myself, long believed it was planned and that Democratic denials were simply lies because it seemed to “fit.” However, the evidence as I read it has convinced me that my presumption was wrong.

¹⁴⁴ *Danville Report*, 1091-1092.

¹⁴⁵ *Danville Report*, 1128, 1132.

¹⁴⁶ *Danville Report*, 1243, 1245.

The “redemption” of Virginia was meant to be statewide, bipartisan, and interracial, but the murder of Black men in Danville made the coup incomplete, seemingly partisan, and seemingly racial. In the Southwest and Valley counties closest to Danville by rail, the murders could be quickly transformed into a “Negro Riot,” an “uprising.” But in the eastern counties, where Straightouts and Democrats formed a tenuous alliance, there was no escaping the fact that white Democrats left a whites-only Democratic meeting and murdered Black men in the streets. Although the anti-Readjuster coalition chipped away at Readjuster majorities in these counties, it was not enough. Consequently, and to the frustration of those who had attempted to make the campaign *appear* to be color blind, the election results, paired with the murders, painted a decidedly racial picture.¹⁴⁷ Predominantly white districts went Democratic, while predominantly Black districts remained Readjuster. But as the Democrats and Straightouts knew, appearances are deceiving. Undergirding Democratic majorities in the Valley and Southwest were the wooden ties and iron rails of corporations that chafed under Readjuster rule (Map 1). The weakened influence of those same corporations can be seen in decreased Readjuster majorities in the east and Southside (Map 2). To paraphrase Du Bois’s conclusion about Reconstruction, these facts and similar ones show that the overthrow of the Readjusters was in essence a revolution inspired by property, and not a race war.¹⁴⁸

As the so-called “Funderometer” – what Readjusters called the Richmond stock exchange – rose following the election, it was clear that capital took confidence from the Readjusters’

¹⁴⁷ Congressman George D. Wise, for instance, adamantly insisted that the Democratic Platform be admitted to the record of the Congressional investigation into the election. When it was intimated that admitting the platform as evidence might “encumber the record more than necessary,” Wise declared, “It is the Virginia Democratic platform. I was present in the meeting of the committee which discussed that platform...I heard the discussion, and our people not only did not draw the color line, but were very decided against it, and that position deliberately taken by our party at Lynchburg caused our opponents to be very much alarmed.” *Danville Report*, 1140-1141.

¹⁴⁸ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 622.

defeat.¹⁴⁹ The *New York Globe*, edited by noted civil rights activist T. Thomas Fortune, concluded that Mahone and the Readjusters were hated because they had “taken up the cause of the poor man.” It was “for these things the Bourbons in every country hate the leaders of the proletariat.” According to Fortune, force was the only thing Bourbons respected.¹⁵⁰ Readjusters agreed on both counts. Shortly before taking his seat in the US Senate, H.H. Riddleberger opined that his party had been beaten by money, particularly from the railroads. Readjusters had raised their taxes, and thus “had not a positive friend among these corporations.” The one sure lesson the election taught, he asserted, was that “states must whip, aye, even cowhide, corporations that contest for sovereignty with them.”¹⁵¹ Similarly, the *Richmond Whig* drew a broader conclusion about the overwhelming and stubborn power of Bourbonism. “It took a war to free the colored people of the South. It may take another war to fully free the Southern white people. If need be – let it come. We repeat it, let it come. Give us liberty, or give us death.”¹⁵² The Readjusters had been beaten, but they were not finished.

While Readjusters called for a new war of liberation, Democrats in the newly assembled legislature began paying their debts to Straightouts. Democrats would need them, particularly the new senator for Hanover and Caroline, Williams Wickham. According to the *Alexandria Gazette*, the recognized organ of John Barbour, Wickham demanded recognition for “services rendered” in overthrowing the Readjusters. Wisdom required that the Democrats accede to these

¹⁴⁹ “The Funderometer,” *Richmond Whig*, November 24, 1883.

¹⁵⁰ “The Race War – Must We Fight?” *New York Globe*, November 10, 1883.

¹⁵¹ “Riddleberger,” *Woodstock Virginian*,

¹⁵² *Richmond Whig*, December 19, 1883. US Attorney General Benjamin Brewster wrote to Mahone a few days after the election that “this Danville matter may be another John Brown execution to Virginia. It teaches, in conjunction with the loss of the State, and its redelivery to these powers of darkness, and the recent decision of the Supreme Court upon the civil rights law, that the mission of the old Republican party is not dead and done...It will rouse the North and West to come to the rescue, the practical and political rescue of the South and its persecuted freemen, black and white.” Benjamin Brewster to Mahone, November 11, 1883, Box 81, WMP.

demands, if not out of gratitude, then to maintain “the support of effective allies in possible *future straits*.”¹⁵³ With only a simple majority in the legislature, Governor Cameron’s veto could smother the Democrats’ reactionary agenda in its crib. The counterrevolution remained incomplete. Support from Straightouts would be necessary to oust enough Readjusters from the legislature to override the Governor’s vetoes and strip him of his patronage power. Thus, Joseph A. Wingfield, a member of the historically forgotten “famous five,” was appointed to the Register of Land Office.¹⁵⁴ And Wickham received the biggest plum of all, becoming chair of the senate finance committee, the most powerful committee in the legislature.¹⁵⁵ Of course, this was only fitting. For as revealed by the recently publicized letters detailing how C.P. Huntington – Wickham’s boss – corrupted Congress, the trick was in “The fixing of committees – not the bribing of committees, but influencing the composition of them.”¹⁵⁶

Perhaps it is a telling irony that the only white man shot in Danville – accidentally hit in the head by friendly fire – was the son of a director of the Virginia Midland Railroad.¹⁵⁷ The progeny of a railroad combination, the Democratic-Straightout coalition was nearly killed by the violence arising from their duplicitous drawing of the color line. Although the Democrats and Straightouts had technically won, their victory was not as complete as historians have concluded. Not only did they have to defend their ill-gotten electoral success, but they left the Readjusters

¹⁵³ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 17, 1883. Emphasis added.

¹⁵⁴ “Ex-Senator Wingfield Elected,” *Richmond Dispatch*, December 19, 1883. While the propaganda of history has erased Wingfield from the narrative, he could not be forgotten just yet. The article’s subtitle refers to Wingfield specifically as a “Member of the Famous Five.” Senator William A. Glasgow seconded Wingfield’s nomination, comparing him to Leonidas of Sparta at the Battle of Thermopylae. Like Leonidas, Winfield took a position “with a strength and patriotism which makes him a proper subject to be remembered by us and those who come after us.”

¹⁵⁵ “Legislative,” *Alexandria Gazette*, December 7, 1883.

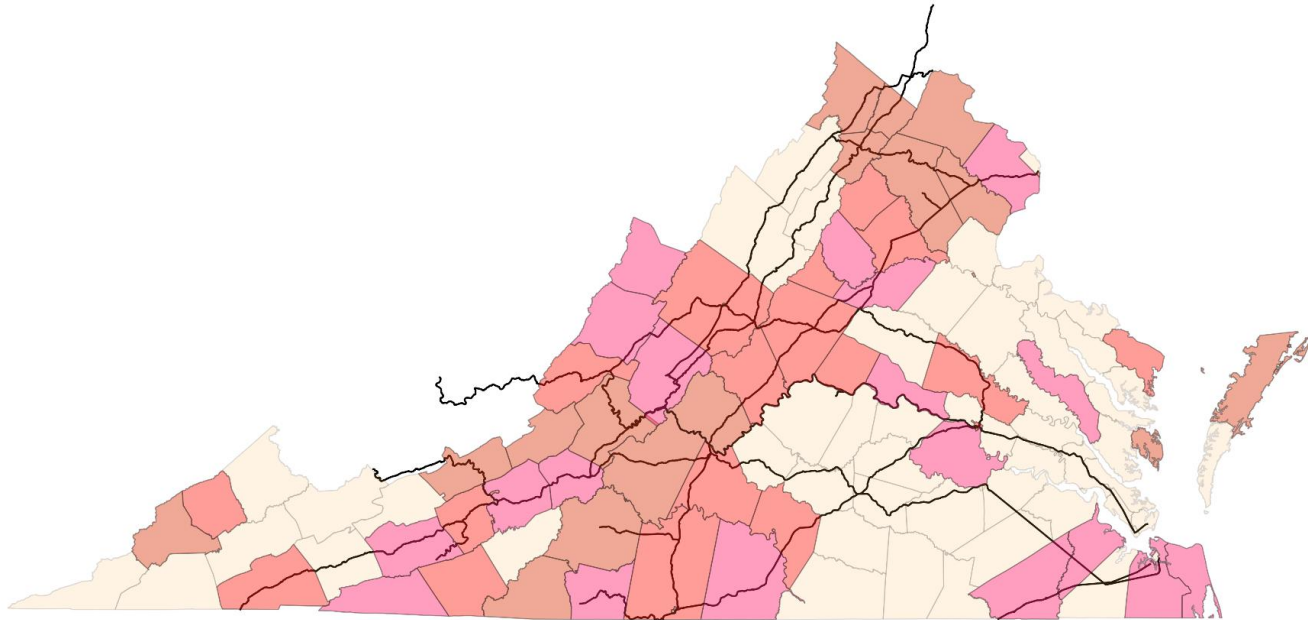
¹⁵⁶ “Huntington’s Letters,” *Lynchburg Democratic Campaign*, January 5, 1884.

¹⁵⁷ Walter Holland was the son of C.G. Holland. See “Negro Riot in Danville!” *Alexandria Gazette*, November 4, 1883, and *Report of the Railroad Commissioner* (1884), 307. Although Holland survived and later testified before Congress, Dailey mistakenly says that “all testimony agrees that he died on the street that day.” See *Danville Report*, 930-933; Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*, 220n.80.

alive to fight another day and more determined than ever. The contest for control of Virginia would move to the national stage and expose deep cracks in the new railroad-powered coalition. More importantly, the cause of interracialism was far from a lost one.

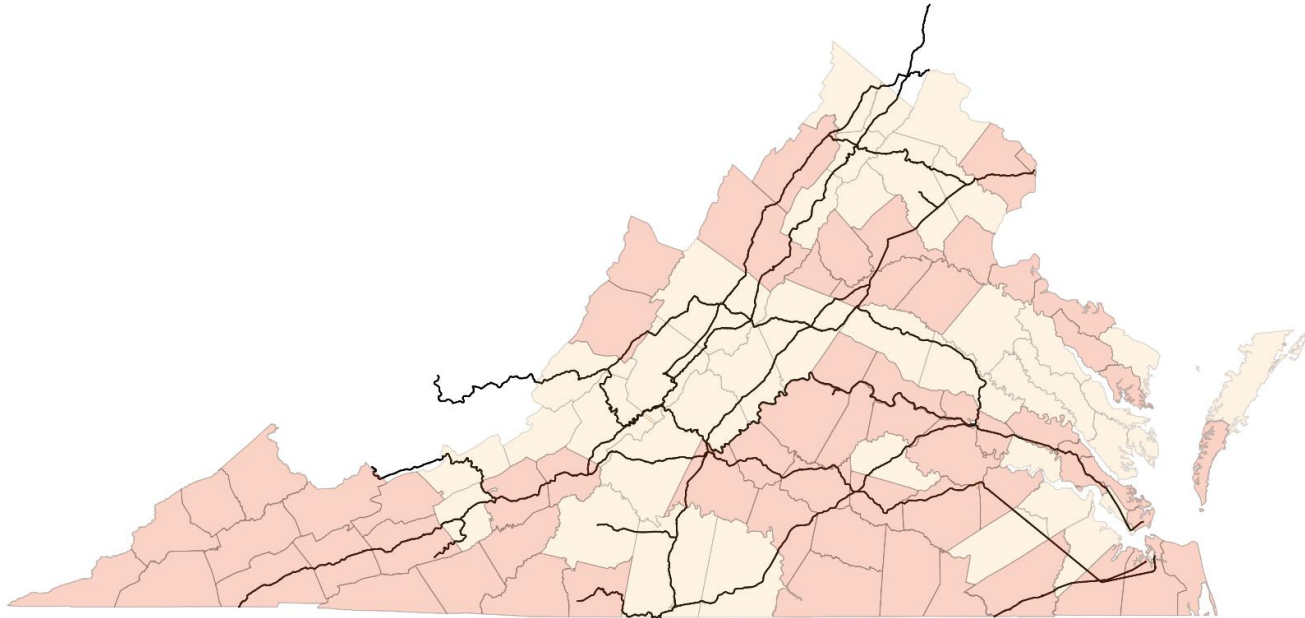
Map 1: Counties receiving Democratic Majorities, 1883

Associated Argument: Counties went Democratic not simply because they were white but because they were dominated by railroads. The eastern-most North-South line is the Virginia Midland, which I refer to as Virginia's "literal color line."



Map 2: Counties with decreased Readjuster majorities (including those they lost)

Associated Argument: In “Black Belt” counties, Readjusters saw their majorities decreased or lost largely in counties through which the C&O, R&A, N&W, and S&R ran.



CONCLUSION

After Williams Wickham nominated his fellow Straightout Republican Joseph A. Wingfield to head the Register of Land Office in December 1883, Democrat William A. Glasgow felt compelled to justify supporting the nomination. Glasgow had served with Wingfield in the previous legislature and was convinced of his “devotion to Virginia.” Like Leonidas, who had valiantly stood against the Persian invaders at Thermopylae, Glasgow proclaimed, Wingfield, as a member of the “Famous Five,” stood solidly in defense of “the public liberty of the Virginia people.” For Wingfield’s “strength and patriotism,” Glasgow concluded, he should “be remembered by us and those who come after us.”¹

Nearly fifty years later, at the old Senate Chamber in March 1931, people gathered for the unveiling of a new portrait honoring the Virginia heroes who overthrew “Mahoneism.” Joseph A. Wingfield was nowhere to be found in the portrait of the “Big Four and John E. Massey.” At the unveiling, historian C.C. Pearson made only the slightest allusion to Virginia’s Leonidas – the four were “sometimes joined by Wingfield.”² The famous fifth was forgotten, warranting not even a first name.

By that point, the propaganda had become history. Rather than a counterrevolutionary coup, the Readjuster Party had been defeated by the heroes within, heroes representing an undoubted popular opposition to the malevolent designs of Boss Mahone, designs that would have dragged Virginia against its will towards Republicanism, towards “mixed schools and

¹ “Ex-Senator Wingfield Elected,” *Richmond Dispatch*, December 19, 1883.

² “Report of the ‘Big Four’ Commission,” *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, 1932 (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, 1932), Document No. 7.

mixed marriages,” and towards “Negro Rule.” There was no room in the portrait of Democratic “redemption” for Straightout Republicans.

Although historians have come to view the Readjuster coalition more favorably – as one of history’s “might-have-beens” – they have nevertheless maintained the belief that the coalition succumbed to a widespread anti-Republican, anti-Black hostility. Agreeing that Democrats resorted to legalized corruption *after* taking power, they contend that the initial Democratic victory was itself a true reflection of the white popular will. In the standard narrative, Straightout Republicans played no role in Democratic success or the subsequent legal rigging of the state’s election machinery. The portrait still has no room. The tautology of “racecraft” only allows for the inevitable “failure” of interracialism. What Du Bois referred to as the “the convenient fairy tale” crafted by “the masters of men” remains essentially unchallenged.³ Political economic power disappears; the oppressed – through their alleged ignorance, incompetence, and presumed willingness to be duped – are always already responsible for their own oppression. The counterrevolution of property has consequently become nothing more than an imagined war of white versus Black.

Yet in the immediate aftermath, as Glasgow’s plea for patriotic remembrance implies, the reality was quite different. There were certainly some Democrats who disliked repaying their political debts to Straightouts, but they ultimately fell in line.⁴ When some Democratic legislators spoke ill of Black Virginians during a debate about schools in early January 1884,

³ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1998 [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935]), 725-726.

⁴ The nomination of Wingfield was met by opposition in the Democratic caucus, causing delays and lengthy debate before his official nomination in the legislature. Readjuster papers mocked the Democratic dissonance. “More Nominations,” *Alexandria Gazette*, December 13, 1883; “Legislative,” *Alexandria Gazette*, December 18, 1883; “Register of Land Office,” *Alexandria Gazette*, December 19, 1883; *Valley Virginian*, December 20, 1883; *Richmond Whig*, December 19, 1883; “What Have they Done? – What are they Doing?” *Richmond Whig*, December 25, 1883.

Readjuster A.W. Harris reminded them “that you owe your ascendancy, not to the Democratic party, pure and simple, but to recalcitrant Republicans and to the Republican black men who were and are known in this State as Straightout Republicans.”⁵ The Democratic press did not publish Harris’s speech, which it referred to as simply “the filibustering efforts of the Coalitionists.”⁶ But again, despite their reluctance to proclaim their debts too loudly, Democrats made sure to repay them. One Black Straightout, W.R. Laws, who had campaigned for Wickham received an appointment in the US House of Representatives.⁷ R.D. Beckley, the Black Straightout who had gone to the Democratic convention in July 1883 to safeguard the “bargain with the Straightouts,” likewise received an appointment as doorkeeper for the “colored gallery” of that body.⁸ Reporting on such appointments, the *Alexandria Gazette* concluded that “The Straightouts are being provided for quite liberally,” adding later that it was only right and fair. As with Wingfield, “they worked well and effectively, and should not be forgotten in the distribution of the prizes of victory.”⁹ Interracialism was alive and well, even within Democratic ranks.

To be clear, white supremacy was a crucial issue in the rise and fall of the Readjuster Party, but not simply as a matter of anti-Blackness. As C. Vann Woodward wrote, “The real question was *which whites* should be supreme.”¹⁰ In the aftermath of the 1883 elections, the *Richmond Whig* exclaimed that “It was and is the white Readjusters whom these Bourbon-Funders fear and hate. It is the rule of these that they fight against.” Referring to the abolition of

⁵ “Speech of Hon. A.W. Harris,” *Richmond Whig*, January 12, 1884.

⁶ “The Portsmouth Charter,” *Richmond Dispatch*, January 11, 1884.

⁷ “From Washington,” *Alexandria Gazette*, February 12, 1884.

⁸ “From Washington,” *Alexandria Gazette*, February 4, 1884; *Petersburg Lancet*, January 19, 1884. For Beckley’s presence at the Democratic Convention, see “The Mongrel Convention,” *Richmond Whig*, July 15, 1883.

⁹ “From Washington,” *Alexandria Gazette*, January 3, 1884; *Alexandria Gazette*, January 4, 1884.

¹⁰ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 328. See also, Barbara J. Fields, “Origins of the New South and the Negro Question,” *Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 4 (Nov. 2001): 811-826.

the poll tax within the context of Virginia's white majority, it concluded that "*Free suffrage* made the Danville massacre necessary.... Not because it enfranchised so many negroes, but because it enfranchised so many more whites."¹¹ Again, "The real contest" was "between white men representing the masses of the people, and an oligarchy."¹² But in order for the violence against Black men in Danville, and throughout the South, to be effective, whites must "first be more or less subdued" by the job lash, to feel the extent of their powerlessness, their unfreedom. Even still, "Employers must be bulldozed before *employes* can be reached. At Danville," added the *Whig*, "the tobacco manufacturers were terrorized before the negroes were attacked."¹³ Only a select few possessed the power to bulldoze the powerful. Bankers tightening credit and railroads threatening to send tobacco to other towns was enough to subdue the employers who in turn subdued their employees.¹⁴ Perhaps more terrifying than "the viper of negroism" to the merchants and manufacturers who signed the Danville Circular was the constrictive power of concentrated capital and the railroad octopus.¹⁵

Revealed by this dynamic, however, is the messy reality of the unsolid South, an idea to which scholars pay lip service but have failed to take seriously in practice. It has never been a simple matter of white and Black, employers and employees, Democrats and Readjusters. The have-nots were divided (as we are all too eager to point out), but so too were the presumably self-conscious haves. As Du Bois showed, Reconstruction was a "fight of rivals to control property and through that to control the labor vote."¹⁶ More important and informative than class position, party membership, or phenotypical characteristics, according to Barbara Fields, is the

¹¹ "Whom They Fear," *Richmond Whig*, November 20, 1883.

¹² "A False Issue," *Richmond Whig*, November 26, 1883.

¹³ *Richmond Whig*, December 20, 1884.

¹⁴ US Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, *Report on the Danville Riot*, 48th Congress, 1st Session, 1884, no. 579, 430 (hereinafter cited as *Danville Report*).

¹⁵ *Danville Report*, vii-ix.

¹⁶ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 626.

question of “power and the contest over it.” This contest, she contends, is “grotesquely unequal.”¹⁷ Efforts to balance and overcome this inequality fostered the seemingly contradictory alliances people made *across* historically imagined boundaries. Interests only needed to be *close enough*.

Rather than given, interests are formed within and shaped by specific contexts. Shifting corporate-financial alliances can open the door to new political alliances and vice versa. A long-smothered popular revolt against the power of concentrated capital can become the most successful interracial movement in the post-Reconstruction South by aligning itself with a corporation fast-becoming the exemplar of concentrated capital in the very same region. Meanwhile, the contest for power continues, and new politico-corporate coalitions take shape to meet the new reality. Power, even if temporarily deposed, lingers; the contest maintains its grotesque inequality. “Agency,” no matter how real, has its limits. The growling stomachs that gave meaning to one Readjuster’s assertion in 1879 that “Honor won’t buy a breakfast” still needed to be fed.¹⁸ Consequently, when Abram Smith of Hanover County asked Abner Terrell in 1883 why he voted for Williams C. Wickham in exchange for two dollars, Terrell replied simply that “I have made my breakfast and that is more than you will do.”¹⁹ Electoral defeat and “failure” are not always synonymous. For the “failures” both white and Black, breakfast was rarely guaranteed, and those wielding the job lash or even simple cash knew it all too well.²⁰

¹⁷ Fields, “*Origins*,” 813.

¹⁸ Quoted in “The Blair Letters Genuine,” *Staunton Spectator*, September 27, 1881.

¹⁹ Abram Smith Affidavit, November 13, 1883, Box 192, WMP.

²⁰ Alan Draper offers an excellent argument that “Historians taking a bottom-up perspective need to look another level down – not to activists but to the base they sought to organize – to assess the success of the social movements they describe.... Rather we should measure the success of the labor and civil rights movements not against the impossible standards that radicalized activists applied but against the more sober benchmarks that workers and blacks used to assess their lives.” Historians sympathetic to labor and civil rights movements have, in effect, placed these movements in comparison to abstract ideals (“impossible standards”), not only downplaying meaningful successes but also eliding the very real *systemic* challenges their subjects faced. All revolutions, Draper argues, are unfinished. But this fact tells us nothing about why such movements “so often failed.” See “The Historiographies of

In short, the rise and fall of the Readjuster Party was, at its core, a struggle for the control of railroad property and through it, the labor vote. Public-debt-financed railroad construction before the Civil War placed railway control in the hands of the state. Following the war, control of the state and thus its railways rested in the hands of military authorities. Companies desiring to consolidate their lines to increase efficiency and tap into the South's yet-to-be-developed hinterlands competed for their favor. Reconstruction, with its contentious debates about Black enfranchisement and Confederate disfranchisement, became entangled with the struggle for railway control. Instead of military appointees, voters would ultimately decide the future of the Virginia System of railways. The uncertainties of a new, enlarged, and untested electorate led various financial interests within and without Virginia to maneuver for new political friendships that could help bring their steam-powered dreams to life. William Mahone, whose road traversed the Black Southside and white Southwest, stood as the defender of Virginia-controlled railways and engineered a political compromise based on "universal suffrage and universal amnesty."

Upon restoration, and to Mahone's chagrin, the state divested itself of its railroads, and better-capitalized "foreign" interests quickly swooped in. At the same time, though, the decision to honor the state debt despite selling the assets for which it was incurred troubled the political waters. Increased taxes and shuttering public schools made the labor vote restless. When Mahone lost control of his road following the Panic of 1873, his efforts to save it led him to become the de facto leader of the increasingly popular movement to readjust the state debt. Nevertheless, Mahone was not the only one impacted by the reshuffling of railroad interests in the wake of the panic. The contest for railway control continued but with new players in need of new political

the Labor and Civil Rights Movements: At the Intersection of Parallel Lines," in *Reconsidering Southern Labor History: Race, Class, and Power*, eds. Matthew Hild and Keri Leigh Merritt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018), 273-284.

allies. Readjusters won control of the state, and even though the state no longer possessed a controlling interest in its railways, it still possessed the power to grant and withhold certain rights and privileges. Railroad corporations with new masters anxiously provided aid to the Readjuster Party in the hopes of winning favor and support for their expansionist projects. Only Mahone and the Readjusters demanded railroads' subservience to the state and the interests of its people. When some railroads bucked, Mahone and the Readjusters retaliated and attempted to create a political machine that would weaken the power and influence of "foreign" railroad corporations over their Virginia employees. Thanks to the engineered rebellion of a few state senators, the Readjusters could not overcome the increasing power of corporate control of the labor vote. As a former ally turned foe contended, Mahone "want[ed] the votes the railroads control."²¹ In response, a coalition of Democrats and Straightout Republicans, respectively headed by a president and vice president of railroad corporations antagonistic to the Readjusters, used that control to "redeem" the state from "coalition rule."

Perhaps the true reason friends and foes alike viewed Mahone as a "boss" was not because of his unbending will to dominate but rather his deft ability to understand and guide the labor vote. One Democrat later admitted that "The so-called Boss is, as a rule, more the follower of popular movements...than the dictator and tyrant he is generally represented to be."²² Mahone's voluminous correspondence reveals that he was constantly accessible to *and* responsive to Virginians of every stripe. This correspondence was also information. Each letter was numbered and annotated with correspondent names, locations, and brief notes, all indexed in dated volumes for ease of recall and relocation. Mahone could determine popular sentiment and

²¹ Frank G. Ruffin, "An Appeal to the 31,527 Re-Adjuster Democrats of Virginia," September 13, 1883, Library of Virginia, Closed Stacks, F231.M25 R88.

²² Beverley B. Munford, *Random Recollections* (n.p.: 1905), 160.

the status of political affairs anywhere in the state within a matter of minutes. Yet as a necessarily political railroad president, he knew that information was useless without being able to move men to action. Scholars have discussed the effectiveness of preachers and social leaders, particularly in mobilizing Black voters, but they have missed the crucial *workplace* influencers.²³ Mahone knew that the fulcrums on which railroads leveraged their power over employees were the roadmasters and master mechanics with direct influence over scores of men all along the lines. It was on these men that Seaboard & Roanoke president John Moncure Robinson leaned to aid Mahone's 1877 gubernatorial candidacy.²⁴ When these men exerted their influence against the Readjusters in 1881, Mahone insisted on their removal, and railroad corporations "meekly obeyed" in the hopes of securing legislative favor.²⁵ When corporations "resumed their ancient airs of insolence and mastery" in 1882, the Readjusters attempted to create a railroad commission with the power to remove "any officer, agent or employee."²⁶ A month before the 1883 elections, it was about "the great influence of the Railroad Master Mechanic" for the Virginia Midland in Alexandria that Mahone complained to William Clyde.²⁷ And again before the elections in 1885, Mahone suggested that if a "Mr. Adams" of the R&D shops at West Point were "put under restraint – better, removed – it would give us certainly two Delegates from that

²³ Among others, see Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Harold S. Forsythe, "'But My Friends Are Poor': Ross Hamilton and Freedpeople's Politics in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, 1869-1901," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 105, no. 4 (Autumn, 1997): 409-438; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003).

²⁴ John M. Robinson to Mahone, June 4, 1877 and June 16, 1877, WMP.

²⁵ "Bossism in Virginia," *Staunton Spectator*, October 17, 1882.

²⁶ "Legislature? Or Lobby?" *Richmond Whig*, April 1, 1882; Elizabeth H. Hancock, ed., *Autobiography of John E. Massey* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1909), 232-233.

²⁷ Mahone to William Clyde, October 5, 1883 and Mahone to James W. McCarrick, October 8, 1883, Letterbook Volume 46, WMP.

locality.”²⁸ Politics was patronage, but the most powerful patronage was not necessarily political on its surface.

And as long as railroads continued competing, railroad patronage and the labor vote remained contested. This was the reason for the overwhelming success of the Readjusters-turned-Republicans in the 1886 elections. Earlier that year, A.W. Harris mocked the Democrats for their contentious deliberations over a strengthened railroad commission. While Republicans were solid, Democrats were hopelessly divided. Several days of lengthy debate combined with whispers in the lobbies, Harris taunted, exposed the unease with which Democrats now trod “the same dangerous grounds which, it is said, drove us from place and power.”²⁹ Virginia was again in the midst of a drawn-out and complicated railroad reorganization, and corporations were looking for new friends. The presumed finality of interracialism’s “failure” has not only obscured these deep Democratic divisions, but it has also fostered a shortsighted impression of the relationship between railroads and the Democratic machine that ruled the Old Dominion into the twentieth century. Though railroads dominated that machine, it was never a matter of simple partisan ideology. In turn, scholars have largely mistaken the purpose of increasing restrictions on the franchise in the final decades of the nineteenth century. More than a means of erasing Black electoral power, assuring Democratic supremacy, or even simply sustaining “elite” rule, disfranchisement in Virginia was meant to eliminate the political uncertainties of the labor vote and thereby remove a powerful lever from already-unpredictable corporate competition.

When William Clyde and the Richmond Terminal acquired a controlling interest in the Virginia Midland in 1883 – thanks to the Readjusters’ bargain allowing the Terminal to increase

²⁸ Mahone to Warner Miller, October 10, 1885 and Mahone to R.A. Elmer, October 16, 1885, Letterbook Volume 61, WMP. Clyde informed James D. Brady when he was fundraising in the North that he “will write to Adams at West Point, and says he must do right.” James D. Brady to Mahone, October 6, 1885, WMP.

²⁹ “The End Nearing,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1886.

its capitalization indefinitely – it was the beginning of the end for John S. Barbour as a railroad president. At the same time the Democrat-Straightout coalition was removing Readjuster legislators (some multiple times), gerrymandering the state, and seizing the election machinery, railroad interests were duking it out in the legislature.³⁰ Most significant was the heated debate over bills to consolidate the Virginia Midland with the R&D. Ironically, considering that Barbour had long operated the Midland in the interests of the B&O and recently complained about the R&D's diversion of traffic away from Baltimore, Barbour's legislative allies, including Williams Wickham, now charged that the "foreign" owned R&D was in cahoots with Baltimore to siphon trade rightfully meant for Richmond. Even though R&D officials *refused* Baltimore's demand for preferential rates, Barbour's men kept up the claim. Nevertheless, the charade of defending Virginia against "Wall-street operators" could only conceal their true fears for so long. The consolidation bill, exclaimed the *Richmond Dispatch* "is calculated to injure Richmond and the Democratic party." Speaker of the House and long-time Barbour associate Charles Stuart made the case even clearer during debate about a similar bill later in the year: "the management of the Richmond and Danville railroad were trying to oust the resident management of the Virginia Midland."³¹ Democrats ultimately defeated the consolidation bills, but it did not prevent

³⁰ Further indicating the alliance between the Democrats and Straightouts was the seating in the Senate of Straightout John Callahan over Readjuster M.P. Rue, who was defeated Callahan in two back-to-back special elections. The majority of the election committee concluded that Rue was entitled to his seat, but the minority report was accepted by the general body and Callahan was seated. Summaries of the removals can be found in "Resume," *Richmond Whig*, March 24, 1884 and "27-67," *Richmond Whig*, September 17, 1884. The reapportionment bill was passed over Governor Cameron's veto. Likewise with the Anderson-McCormick electoral law, which was deemed unconstitutional by the state supreme court and again passed over the governor's veto with slight revisions. See Allen W. Moger, "The Origin of the Democratic Machine in Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 8, no. 2 (May, 1942): 192-193. Wickham was instrumental in the likely illegal override of the governor's veto of the reapportionment bill. Stating that he considered the apportionment bill to be unconstitutional, he asked to be excused from voting. Had he voted no, the senate would not have had the required 2/3 vote to override. Readjusters charged that despite Wickham's abstention, he was clearly present, and the consequent vote was not legally 2/3 of present legislators. See "General Assembly," *Richmond Whig*, February 23, 1884 and "General Assembly of Virginia," *Richmond Whig*, August 16, 1884.

³¹ See "Conference Between the Committees of the Senate and Chamber of Commerce," *Richmond Dispatch*, February 23, 1884; "Richmond and Danville and Virginia Midland Railways," *Alexandria Gazette*, February 24,

their fears from becoming reality. In December of 1884, John Barbour stepped down as Virginia Midland president, stating that he “had recognized from the beginning” that the R&D desired a “single management” of its system, “and that it was only a question of time when it would be established.”³²

Readjusters, now officially Republicans, immediately realized their fortune. The day after Barbour resigned, a Culpeper man expressed to Mahone his “trust that this change will be to the interest of yourself and the Repb. Party of Virginia.”³³ As the next year’s state elections began ramping up, the *Richmond Whig* boastfully exclaimed that “Boss Barbour has been shouldered off the road” and was no longer able to “wield the appliances, materials and funds of a great corporation for his faction.”³⁴ The governorship and the legislature were up for grabs, and whichever party controlled the latter would decide whether Mahone would remain in the US Senate or be ousted. Much was at stake, and Barbour’s fall could prove pivotal. Nevertheless, it was not the only thing lightening the Republicans’ spirits.

The coalition that overthrew the Readjusters in 1883 was riven with divisions in 1885. Readjuster rebels were particularly displeased, both with their insufficient share of the spoils and

1884; “Richmond and Danville and Virginia Midland,” *Richmond Dispatch*, March 1, 1884; “Senate Bill No. 135” and untitled editorial (first quote), *Richmond Dispatch*, March 2, 1884; “The General Assembly,” *Richmond Dispatch*, November 27, 1884 (second quote). On the rejection of Baltimore’s demand for preferential rates, see “Richmond & Danville,” *Railroad Gazette*, February 8, 1884, 120. Maury Klein briefly discusses the negotiations between the R&D-Terminal and Baltimore, pointing to the “local opposition plus continued inability to agree upon the rate differential” as the reason for the abandonment of the deal. He discusses the negotiations in terms of divisions within the Terminal as well as William Clyde’s seemingly quixotic devotion to his steamer business at West Point. While Klein is largely correct, I contend the primary reason for the preference for West Point and the consequent unwillingness to give preferential rates to Baltimore arose from the R&D’s (particularly Clyde’s) continued alliance with Mahone, the Readjusters’ insistence that Virginia railroads serve Virginians, and the effort to weaken Barbour. Maury Klein, *The Great Richmond Terminal: A Study in Businessmen and Business Strategy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970), 103-105.

³² *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the Virginia Midland Railway Company*, 1884, 5-8.

³³ A.M. Allen to William Mahone, December 21, 1884, in WMP.

³⁴ *Richmond Whig*, March 5, 1885.

the Democrats' botching of the debt settlement.³⁵ Abram Fulkerson engaged in "confidential talks" with Republicans about his souring relationship with the Democrats and suggested "calling out and calling together the 'Old Guard.'"³⁶ In turn, Mahone and other leading Republicans debated joining forces with Fulkerson against machine Democrats in Washington County.³⁷ Even Parson Massey, as was his wont, grumbled that his greatness was not being properly recognized. An agent of the Shenandoah Valley Railroad reported his conversation with Massey, who said that he had declined the Democrats' offer to nominate him for lieutenant governor. In Massey's words, "he did not believe 'in the tail wagging the dog'" and wanted the top spot for himself.³⁸ A.M. Lybrook, who first "unveiled" Mahoneism, now unveiled the rotting Bourbonism of the Democratic Party. The Democrats had not kept their promises to the rogue Readjusters, as evidenced by the "cold shoulder" given to Massey, the two-time refusal to nominate Sam Newberry for Congress, the placement of Frank Ruffin in the second auditor's office "when he asked for the easy and dignified office of Secretary of the Commonwealth," and finally, "the name of poor Ben F. Williams was never mentioned or even thought of!"³⁹ In October, Lybrook declared in a public speech that he would vote for the Republicans.⁴⁰ Perhaps there was a reason it took fifty years to commission a portrait memorializing these so-called heroes of Virginia.

The most monumental rift in the Democracy, however, was the contest for mastery between John S. Barbour and John W. Daniel. Like Barbour, Daniel had been a longtime

³⁵ For more on the Democrats' (mis)handling of the debt settlement, see Brent Tarter, *A Saga of the New South: Race, Law, and Public Debt in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).

³⁶ M.B. Wood to Mahone, November 10, 1884, WMP; Abram Fulkerson to R.F. Walker, April 21, 1885, WMP.

³⁷ Mahone to M.B. Wood, January 12, 1885, Letterbook 55, WMP; M.B. Wood to Mahone, March 19, 1885, WMP, F.S. Blair to Mahone, May 2, 1885, WMP; S. Brown Allen to Mahone, May 15, 1885, WMP.

³⁸ E.E. Portlock to Mahone, June 12, 1885, WMP. See also Hancock, *Autobiography of John E. Massey*, 257-259. Massey did eventually accept the second spot.

³⁹ "Letter from Judge Lybrook," *Richmond Dispatch*, June 7, 1885.

⁴⁰ *Valley Virginian*, October 8, 1885.

opponent of Mahone's railroad and political maneuverings. He was the primary contender against Mahone for the 1877 gubernatorial nomination and went down to humiliating defeat against Cameron in 1881. To nurse his wounded pride, Daniel dove into his work as attorney for the N&W and the recently incorporated Richmond & Alleghany railroad, both of which had been opposed by the Readjusters. But Daniel's ambition still burned, and he wanted more. When the Democrats won the 1884 presidential election, Daniel and Barbour competed over the distribution of the new federal patronage. Quietly, Daniel maneuvered to secure the nomination to take Mahone's place in the Senate, though many believed it should go to Barbour. Daniel's first victory was in the nomination of Fitz Lee for governor over Barbour's preferred candidate. Since Lee and Barbour lived in the same congressional district and Democrats from other sections already felt they were not getting their fair share of the spoils, Lee's nomination was an intentional blow to Barbour. Regardless of how rightful a claim Barbour may have had, the more practical matter of keeping the tenuous Democratic coalition banded together made his election uncertain.⁴¹

Yet before anything could be determined, the Democrats had to win the elections first. Given the new election law, Democratic victory was practically guaranteed, at least as far as the count was concerned. In the words of one Democrat, if "the results should miscarry, and the worse comes to the worse, we still hold three to two on the final Returning Board. Three whose official heads will pay the penalty of an adverse decision."⁴² Still, there had to be at least a

⁴¹ See Richard B. Doss, "John Warwick Daniel: A Study in the Virginia Democracy," (PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 1955), 21-98; James T. Quinn, "John S. Barbour, Jr. and the Restoration of the Virginia Democracy, 1883-1892," (MA thesis, University of Virginia, 1966), 63-65. Doss mistakenly refers to the N&W as the "Northern and Western." For Readjuster opposition to the N&W, see Chapter 3. For opposition to the R&A, see Roscoe Conkling to Mahone, January 6, 1882; P.B. Plumb to Mahone, January 12, 1882; Tom Cross to Mahone, February 6, 1882; James A. Frazier to Mahone, February [undated], 1882.

⁴² J.D. Pendleton to B.J. Barbour, October 26, 1885, Box 2, Barbour Family Papers, 1793-1941, MSS 1486, University of Virginia Special Collections.

semblance of legitimacy, so the Democrats called once again on their historically forgotten allies. As early as February, Wickham was writing to leading Black men in Suffolk County hoping “to stir up sedition and trouble.”⁴³ Later, Wickham and other leading Straightouts proclaimed their support for Lee and predicted enormous majorities.⁴⁴ Together, Democrats and Straightouts made an open and strenuous fight to woo Black voters to their cause, or at least to create the impression of a popular, interracial revolt against Boss Mahone. In interestingly similar language, pastors and other leading Black men denounced the Republicans as “renegade Democrats” attempting to deceive Black voters. “Pure and simple” Democrats were consequently “the least of the two evils,” and Black men should follow the examples of Wickham “and other prominent leaders of the [Straightout] Republican party” in support of Lee.⁴⁵ As in 1883, the goal was not to rally the white vote against the Black vote but to divide them both.

So it was not surprising when a convention of about ninety-six Black Virginians assembled in Lynchburg to declare their political independence from the Republican Party. It was also not surprising that the meeting featured several Straightouts and was chaired by R.D. Beckley, the “original anti-Mahoneite” now serving as doorkeeper in the US House of Representatives. Yet the convention was only partially successful. John Mitchell, editor of the *Richmond Planet*, managed to gain admittance to the caucus that met before the convention. Mistakenly believing he was a delegate, some of the actual delegates “let the ‘cat out of the bag’” and shared with him the original pre-prepared resolutions that denounced Mahone and declared

⁴³ Thomas H. Cross to Mahone, February 11, 1885, WMP.

⁴⁴ “Gen. Wickham for Gen. Lee,” *Alexandria Gazette*, August 27, 1885; “More Recruits for Lee,” *Woodstock Virginian*, October 2, 1885.

⁴⁵ “A Colored Man Speaks,” *Woodstock Virginian*, September 11, 1885; “A Colored Democrat,” *Petersburg Lancet*, October 24, 1885.

openly for the Democrats. Instead, the convention put out a mild declaration of political independence with no specific references to the campaign or candidates. Some of the delegates admitted that they had been deceived while others took advantage of a free holiday paid for by the Democratic State Committee. These men, at least, had no intention of endorsing the Democrats.⁴⁶ Of course, this was only a trifling matter to the Democratic press, which reported that chairman Beckley “boldly proclaimed his intention to support the democratic ticket with all his might.”⁴⁷

Underlying this struggle for the interracial labor vote – as well as the battle for supremacy within the Democratic Party – was railroad competition. As mentioned above, Mahone called on William Clyde and others within the Richmond Terminal to counteract the influence of certain men within their system.⁴⁸ In turn, Democrats charged that Mahone planned “to hand the Virginia Legislature over to Clyde...and was to give his vote as United States Senator to certain of [C.P.] Huntington’s schemes affecting the Pacific road.” Only Wickham “blocked this game by showing Mr. Huntington that Mahone had no chance of reelection to the Senate.”⁴⁹ Indicating the chaotic complexities of railroad competition, though, it seems that Huntington may have been hedging his bets. One former Straightout now allied with Mahone euphemistically told him not to hesitate in asking the general manager of the C&O “to give you

⁴⁶ “Mr. Fortune in the South,” *New York Freeman*, October 10, 1885; John Mitchell to Mahone, September 31, 1885, WMP; C.C. Clarke to Mahone, September 29, 1885; “Barbour’s Break-Down,” *Richmond Whig*, October 2, 1885; “A Laughable Fizzle,” *Richmond Whig*, October 5, 1885; *Richmond Planet* quoted in *Cleveland Gazette*, October 10, 1885; *Richmond Planet* quoted in “Virginia Politics,” *Cleveland Gazette*, October 17, 1885.

⁴⁷ Significantly, and deliberately, the Democratic *Alexandria Gazette* referred to the meeting as a “colored republican convention.” See “The Colored Republicans,” *Alexandria Gazette*, October 1, 1885. For different interpretations of the Lynchburg convention, see Stephen Robinson, “‘To Think, Act, Vote, and Speak for Ourselves’: Black Democrats and Black ‘Agency’ in the American South after Reconstruction,” *Journal of Southern History* 48, no. 2 (2014): 363-382; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003), 407-408.

⁴⁸ Mahone to Warner Miller, October 10, 1885 and Mahone to R.A. Elmer, October 16, 1885, Letterbook Volume 61, WMP; James D. Brady to Mahone, October 6, 1885, WMP.

⁴⁹ *New York Sun* quoted in “Thoroughly Explained,” *Woodstock Virginian*, October 30, 1885; “From Washington,” *Alexandria Gazette*, October 26, 1885.

any privilege or courtesy that Gen. Wickham has extended to the Democrats.”⁵⁰ Although it is not entirely clear, Clyde or others within the Terminal system may have also been exploiting the rift between Barbour and Daniel. As divided Democrats were nominating legislative candidates, an Alexandria Republican learned of Daniel’s plan “to knife” Barbour “in the highest Democratic quarters” by throwing “the influence of the Virginia Midland Railway shops against him because he opposed the Danville consolidation.”⁵¹ Interests only needed to be *close enough*. If the electoral law worked as intended, and Democrats counted themselves in, it might as well be Democrats with intraparty axes to grind and in need of powerful friends.

Shocking few, the Democrats won by a narrow majority of five percent, receiving their largest gains in Black-majority counties.⁵² Everyone acknowledged the prevalence of fraud, but there was nevertheless some legitimacy in the returns. George Bragg, the editor of the *Petersburg Lancet* who briefly split with Mahone, later wrote that Lee “was extremely popular and beloved by thousands of the colored race; and a number of them, despite their allegiance to the Republican party, voted for him.”⁵³ Whether fraudulent or legitimate, the results reveal that interracialism had hardly reached the end of its supposed tether. Again, with turnout over eighty percent, the campaign was more than anything a struggle between well-organized political machines to win, by means fair and foul, the largest share of the labor vote.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ H.C. Parsons to Mahone, October 27, 1885. A day before, Parsons wrote Mahone to “advise me confidentially and in detail what you would like to have the C&O R.R. do, and I will secure it.” H.C. Parsons to Mahone, October 26, 1885.

⁵¹ Edmund Burke to Mahone, September [no date], 1885.

⁵² “Elections in Other States,” *New York Times*, November 5, 1885; “An Issue Vanishing,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1885; *Petersburg Index-Appeal* quoted in “A Famous Victory,” *Petersburg Lancet*, November 7, 1885; “Tuesday’s Elections,” *New York Freeman*, November 7, 1885; John S. Wise, *The Lion’s Skin: A Historical Novel and a Novel History* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co, 1905), 364-366; Jennings C. Wise to Nelson M. Blake, July 17, 1930, quoted in Nelson Morehouse Blake, *William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent* (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, Publishers, 1935), 232n190; Moger, *Virginia*, 60-61; Tarter, *Saga*, 81.

⁵³ George F. Bragg, *The Hero of Jerusalem: In Honor of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of General William Mahone of Virginia* (n.p., 1926), 16-17.

⁵⁴ For total vote, see *Journal of the House of Delegates of the State of Virginia, 1885-1886* (Richmond: Rush U. Derr, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1885), 21. For voting age population, see 1880 census data copied in US

Daniel made his move against Barbour for the senatorship immediately after the elections. To aid him, Daniel called on a young lawyer from Scottsville by the name of Thomas S. Martin. The man who would eventually come to dominate Virginia's Democratic machine was, at the moment, a local attorney working under Daniel for the Richmond & Alleghany Railroad. Before and after the legislature assembled, Martin adeptly lined up legislators behind Daniel's candidacy. Despite the dilatory efforts of Barbour's supporters, Daniel's men controlled the Democratic caucus, which overwhelmingly voted to send him to the US Senate. Upset by the betrayal, Barbour resigned the Democratic chairmanship and went to Europe. The Democrats, whom he had led to victory in three consecutive elections, could fend for themselves in the Congressional elections of 1886.⁵⁵

When the Readjusters-turned-Republicans whipped the Democrats on "that bright November morning" prophesized by A.W. Harris, Virginia and the country were undergoing a railroad reorganization.⁵⁶ At the same time, the hosting of the Knights of Labor General Assembly in Richmond indicated that, once again, labor would be the primary battleground.⁵⁷ Mahone earnestly protested fielding a Republican candidate in the third congressional district, preferring instead to quietly aid the Knights' candidate in an otherwise Democratic district. When the district's Republican congressional committee fielded a candidate anyway, Mahone

Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, *Report on the Danville Riot*, 48th Congress, 1st Session, 1884, no. 579, 1176.

⁵⁵ James A. Bear, Jr., "Thomas Staples Martin: A Study in Virginia Politics," MA thesis, University of Virginia, 1952), 75-84; Doss, "John Warwick Daniel," 85-93; Quinn, "John S. Barbour," 65-67; Paschal Reeves, "Thomas S. Martin: Committee Statesman," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 68, no. 3 (July, 1960): 344-364.

⁵⁶ "The End Nearing," *Richmond Dispatch*, February 10, 1886.

⁵⁷ For more on the Knights of Labor and their particular efforts in Virginia, see Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 149-77. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South*, 109-201; Joseph Gerteis, *Class and the Color Line: Interracial Class Coalition in the Knights of Labor and the Populist Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). Also see Matthew Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor & Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007); Matthew E. Stanley, *Grand Army of Labor: Workers, Veterans, and the Meaning of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 67-94.

presciently warned that it risked turning “a new, vigorous and growing power” into “our enemy.”⁵⁸ The Knights’ candidate, directly responding to the Republican campaign, withdrew in favor of the Democrats, who carried the district. But new railroad friendships nevertheless helped the Republicans win six districts overall. In the first district, for instance, Mahone confirmed that the nominee was “agreeable to the Railroad corporations.”⁵⁹ Many companies hoped to rein in destructive competition by guiding federal regulatory legislation pending in Congress, and they needed friends of their own.⁶⁰ Republican relations with Virginia roads also seem to have improved. Earlier in the year, the Seaboard & Roanoke, which had cooperated with and then turned against the Readjusters, helped to defeat the nomination of a Virginia Democrat for US Solicitor General.⁶¹ The N&W likewise changed its tune. Although only a year earlier Mahone pointed to the N&W’s continued “disregard [of] the high public purposes for which our railways were created” as the reason for his lack of influence with management, he now recommended attorneys for the company to hire and discussed pending interstate commerce bills with the road’s president!⁶² Railroad competition had made the impossible possible.

Ultimately, this on again, off again relationship between railroads and Readjusters-turned-Republicans must not be mistaken as simple expedience or ideological insincerity. It was

⁵⁸ Mahone to Edmund Waddill, September 15, 1886, Letterbook 67, WMP; Mahone to John S. Wise, September 24, 1886, Letterbook 67, WMP; Mahone to Republican Third Congressional District Committee, September 24, 1886, Letterbook 67, WMP; Mahone to R.F. Walker, December 2, 1886, Letterbook 70, WMP. Interestingly, this correspondence challenges the largely unquestioned notion that Mahone was unbendingly dictatorial. There are other pieces written by Mahone that similarly call into question his alleged authoritarian tendencies. Scholars’ almost complete non-use of Mahone’s letterbooks is most likely based on the difficulty of reading his handwriting, which Kevin Levin opined is “like reading an EKG scan.” Kevin M. Levin, “Why I Will Never Write a Biography of William Mahone,” July 10, 2008, <https://cwmemory.com/2008/07/10/why-i-will-never-write-a-biography-of-william-mahone/>.

⁵⁹ Mahone to J. Donald Cameron, August 6, 1886, Letterbook 66, WMP.

⁶⁰ See Gabriel Kolko, *Railroads and Regulation, 1877-1916* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1970), 34-44; Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 355-365.

⁶¹ “The Fight Against Mr. Goode,” *Norfolk Landmark*, March 28, 1886

⁶² Mahone to F.S. Blair, November 24, 1885, Letterbook 63, WMP; Mahone to F.J. Kimball, November 30, 1886, December 19, 1886, and December 22, 1886, Letterbook 70, WMP.

politics, a politics that the propaganda of history has simplified and corrupted into a story more imagined than real. Coalitions both political and corporate were continuously changing in strategy and composition. Disagreements, divisions, and factional squabbles were a feature, not a bug leading inevitably to collapse and failure. And just as electoral defeat must not be read as evidence of insurmountable divisions, electoral success cannot be seen as indicating harmonious solidity. Interracialism and working-class politics, though troubled and imperfect, remained viable in the post-Reconstruction South because it was a crucial battleground of capitalist competition. What made the Readjusters both successful and so dangerously revolutionary was their ability to recognize and exploit the contest of property for the benefit of labor and democracy. Recounting in 1885 why he first ran for governor eight years earlier, Mahone wrote that he wanted to settle the debt controversy and, at the same time, “polarize a public policy in respect to the Railways, which would have responded fully to the proper interests of the people and have pushed the development of the State’s vast resources and growth of her cities.”⁶³ Virginia, its finances, and its railways were to serve Virginians. The Readjusters were overthrown not because interracialism had “failed,” but because it had *very nearly* seized the lever of power from bondholders and corporations and placed it in the toiling hands from which the power arose.

In 1911, anti-machine Democrats dropped a bombshell confirming widely believed rumors that had circulated for decades. Thomas S. Martin, the young railroad attorney who had secured the election of John W. Daniel to the US Senate in 1885, was now the boss of the Democratic machine seeking his own reelection to that prestigious body. Bringing forward old

⁶³ Mahone to M.B. Wood, January 5, 1885, Letterbook 55, WMP.

correspondence from the tumultuous and politically uncertain 1890s, Martin's anti-machine opponent painted a picture of unabashed railroad corruption in the Old Dominion. The letters talked of men, measures, and most importantly, money. In addition to exposing the role railroads played in first electing Martin to the Senate, the correspondence showed that railroads operated outside formal Democratic Party channels. Referring to frequent comments about certain candidates being friendly to "us," Martin's opponent asked, "Who is 'US'?" The list of correspondents offered an irrefutable answer. They were such men as W.H. Green (R&D general manager, about whom Mahone complained in 1883), E.T.D. Myers (Atlantic Coast Line general superintendent), W.H. Ijams (B&O treasurer, who had refused to pay taxes according to the Riddleberger debt law in 1883), C.G. Holland (Virginia Midland director whose son was non-fatally shot in the head at Danville in 1883), T.M. Logan (Richmond Terminal director who helped to push out William Clyde in 1886), John H. Bogart (Seaboard & Roanoke agent with on-again, off-again relationship to Readjusters-Republicans), Decatur Axtell (C&O vice president after its merger with the Richmond & Alleghany), J.S.B. Thompson (R&D assistant general manager, nephew and namesake of John S. Barbour), H.T. Wickham (C&O attorney and son of Williams Wickham) and finally William A. Glasgow, Jr. (N&W attorney whose father urged the patriotic remembrance of Straightout Joseph Wingfield for his role in the Famous Five). Every major railroad in the state, it seemed, had combined to stifle the popular will and manipulate Democratic Party machinery for their own interests. The machine, according to the anti-machine men, belonged to the railroads.

Martin and the machine responded that the railroads of the 1890s were not acting corruptly in their own interests but rather in defense of Democratic supremacy and, through it, "Anglo-Saxon civilization." The anti-machine Democrats, however, knew that the oft-cited

specter of “Negro Rule” was an explanation “that does not fully explain.” Though Martin only referred to Black voters as the “constant menace,” the crux of his argument was that Populists were in revolt, the ballot was still technically free, and both meant that “our campaigns were exceedingly difficult and expensive.” By focusing on the pretense of white supremacy against “negro ascendancy” meant to conceal the “real” contest between railroads and the people, the anti-machine men, and historians after them, have missed the forest for the trees. Even with the election machinery rigged in the Democrats’ favor, the labor vote had once again grown restless. This popular unrest not only provided leverage for the Populists and their quiet Republican partners, but also for factions and interests *presumably* within the Democratic Party.⁶⁴ More than simply stifling regulation, these railroad men were trying to hold together the fragile coalition composed of politicians and corporations who saw opportunity in political uncertainty.

Most telling was an 1895 letter from Martin to N&W attorney William Glasgow, Jr. Something needed to be done in the “close districts,” Martin wrote, and the N&W was inexplicably holding back. Referring to a “friend” running against “one of the most extreme Populists in the State,” Martin forebodingly asked Glasgow what might happen “if he is deserted now.” Another “friend,” according to Martin, was opposed by a man whose “business for the past ten years has been demagoging [sic] against railroads.” Although Martin described these men as Populists, they were actually Readjusters-turned-Republicans. He acknowledged their political prowess and predicted that they could easily turn Democratic legislators, especially if those Democrats “feel that they have been abandoned.” If Glasgow and the N&W did not pony

⁶⁴ The original letters, read on the stump between July and August 1911 by William A. Jones, as well as Martin’s and others’ responses to them were published in most of the daily papers as well as in pamphlets circulated during the campaign. The best (though flawed) analyses of these letters and the machine in the contexts of both the 1890s and the regular anti-machine rebellions can be found in Moger, *Virginia*, 95-121, 165-180, 203-230; Raymond H. Pulley, *Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), 48-170. Also see Bear, “Thomas Staples Martin,” 90-210, 215-223; Reeves, “Thomas S. Martin,” 348-356; Harold E. Cox, “The Jones-Martin Senatorial Campaign,” *Essays in History* 1 (1954): 38-56.

up, the legislature would surely become one of the most revolutionary ever assembled in Virginia. Facing a seemingly clear and present danger, Martin frustratingly exclaimed that “it is really unnecessary to have said this much to you” in the first place.⁶⁵ Clearly, though, not all railroad men saw the situation in as dire a light. By that point, the country was experiencing yet another economic depression. Stock prices slumped, dividends shrank to nothing, and interest went unpaid. Hundreds of railroads, including the N&W, had either defaulted or were on the brink of default. Bonded by debt and competing for increasingly smaller revenues and tightening credit, railroads were once again reorganizing and consolidating.⁶⁶ More importantly, they were looking for new friends.

⁶⁵ Thomas S. Martin to William A. Glasgow, Jr., October 23, 1895 quoted in “Answers Martin by Reading More Railroad Letters,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 30, 1911. The N&W apparently had frequent disagreements with Martin and his machine. In 1905, for instance, the N&W president instructed its then solicitor, Joseph Doran to impress local attorneys “with the fact that we are not supporting Mr. Martin” in his second reelection bid to the US Senate. Quoted in William G. Thomas, *Lawyering for the Railroad: Business, Law, and Power in the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 183-184.

⁶⁶ John F. Stover, *The Railroads of the South, 1865-1900: A Study in Finance and Control* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 254-274.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Archival and Manuscript Collections

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville,
Virginia

Barbour Family Papers
Harrison Southworth Scrapbooks
Papers of the Gilliam Family
Papers of the Williams Family
Wickham Family Papers

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, North
Carolina

William Mahone Papers

E. Claiborne Robins, Jr. Research Library, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond
Virginia

Allen Family Papers
James Lawson Kemper Papers
Guy Family Papers
Harvie Family Papers
Wickham Family Papers

Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta Georgia

Southern Railway Records

Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

David Schenk Papers
Samuel Spencer Papers
William T. Sutherlin Papers

Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York

Collis Potter Huntington Papers (Microfilm)

Special Collections Research Center, William & Mary University, Williamsburg, Virginia

Austin-Twyman Papers
Harrison Holt Riddleberger Papers

State Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia

Abram Fulkerson Papers, 1879
Atlantic, Mississippi, and Ohio Railroad Correspondence and Records, 1870-1887
Executive Letter Books (microfilm)
 Frederick M. W. Holliday, 1878-1881 (reel 6192)
 James L. Kemper, 1874-1877 (reel 6193)
Executive Papers
 Fitzhugh Lee, 1885-1889
 Frederick M.W. Holliday, 1878-1881
 James L. Kemper, 1874-1877
 William E. Cameron, 1882-1885
Frank G. Ruffin Scrapbooks and Papers, 1874-1892
General Correspondence of the Railroad Commissioner, 1879-1902
Norfolk & Western Railroad Company Records, 1880-1903
Orange and Alexandria Railroad Company Records, 1836-1885
Richmond and Alleghany Railroad Company Records, 1880-1888
Richmond and Danville Railroad Company Records, 1847-1894
Virginia Railroads Collection, 1828-1890 (microfilm reels 4580-4581)

Newspapers and Periodicals

Alexandria Gazette
American Railroad Journal
Commercial and Financial Chronical
Democratic Campaign
Fredericksburg News
Lynchburg Virginian
New York Freeman
New York Times
Norfolk Landmark
Page Courier
People's Advocate
Petersburg Index-Appeal
Petersburg Lancet
Poor's Manual of the Railroads of the United States
Railroad Gazette
Railway World

Richmond State Journal
Richmond Dispatch
Richmond Whig
Shenandoah Herald
Staunton Spectator
Staunton Vindicator
Valley Virginian
Virginia Star
Washington Evening Star
Washington Post
Winchester News
Woodstock Virginian

Government Documents

Digest of All the Contested Election Cases in the House of Representatives of the United States from the First to the Fifty-Sixth Congress, 1789-1901. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901.

General Assembly of Virginia. *Acts and Joint Resolutions.* 1866-1888.

Imboden, J.D. "Virginia." In *Report of the Internal Commerce of the United States*, Wm. F.

Switzler, Chief of the Bureau of Statistics, US Treasury Department. Washington DC:

Government Printing Office, 1886.

U.S. Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. *Report on the Alleged Outrages in Virginia* 48th Congress, 1st Session, 1884. No. 579, Serial 2178.

Virginia Legislature. *House Journal.* 1866-1888.

———. *Senate Journal.* 1866-1888.

Virginia Railroad Commissioner. *Annual Reports.* 1877-1902.

Printed Primary Sources

Adams, Charles Francis. *Railroads: Their Origin and Problems.* New York: Putnam, 1878.

- Adams, Charles Francis and Henry Adams. *Chapters of Erie and Other Essays*. New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1886.
- Adams, Henry C. *Public Debts: An Essay in the Science of Finance*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1890.
- “Agreement of the Southern Railway & Steamship Association.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 5, no. 1 (Oct 1890): 115-135.
- Alexander, E. Porter. *Railway Practice: Its Principles and Suggested Reforms Reviewed*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1887.
- Blackford, Charles M. *Legal History of the Virginia Midland Railway Co., and of the companies which Built its Lines of Road*. Lynchburg, VA: J.P. Bell & Co, 1881.
- Blair, Lewis H., and C. Vann Woodward, editor. *A Southern Prophecy: The Prosperity of the South Dependent upon the Elevation of the Negro*. 1889. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964.
- Bonbright, James C. *Railroad Capitalization: A Study of the Principles of Regulation of Railroad Securities*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1920.
- Bonbright, James C. and Gardiner C. Means. *The Holding Company: Its Public Significance and its Regulation*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1932.
- Bragg, Jr., George F. *The Hero of Jerusalem*. N.p, n.d. [1926].
- Bruce, Philip Alexander. *The Rise of the New South*. Philadelphia: George Barrie’s Sons, 1905.
- Bryan, John Stewart. *Joseph Bryan: His Times, His Family, His Friends*. Richmond: n.p., 1935.
- Candler, Charles Murphey. “Taxation in the Southern States.” *State and Local Taxation: International Conference under the Auspices of the International Tax Association: Addresses and Proceedings* 3 (Sept., 21-24, 1909): 53-70.

- Chamberlain, D.H. and John S. Wise. "The Constitutionality of Repudiation." *The North American Review* 138, no. 328 (March, 1884): 294-311.
- Cleveland, Frederick A. and Fred Wilbur Powell. *Railroad Promotion and Capitalization in the United States*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1909.
- . *Railroad Finance*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1920.
- Coalition Rule in Danville: To the Citizens of the Southwest and Valley of Virginia* (Danville Circular). N.p., n.d. [1883].
- "Communications." *Journal of Negro History* 11, no. 4 (Oct., 1926): 669-682.
- Cooper, Thomas V. and Hector T. Fenton. *American Politics (Non-Partisan) From the Beginning to Date*. New York: C.R. Blackall & Co., 1882.
- Daniel, John W. *A Treatise on the Law of Negotiable Instruments*. New York: Baker, Voorhis & Co., Publishers, 1884.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*. 1920. Reprint, New York: Verso, 2016.
- . *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward and Autobiography of a Race Concept*. 1940. Reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- . *The Ordeal of Mansart*. New York: Mainstream Publishers, 1957.
- . *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Reprint, New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003.
- Dunn, Samuel O. "Railway Efficiency in its Relation to an Advance in Freight Rates." *The Journal of Political Economy* 23, no. 2 (Feb., 1915): 128-143.
- Emery, Sarah E.V. *Seven Financial Conspiracies which have Enslaved the American People*. Lansing, MI: R. Smith & Co., 1894.

- Felton, Rebecca Latimer. *"My Memoirs of Georgia Politics."* Atlanta: Index Printing Company, 1911.
- Fink, Henry. *Regulation of Railway Rates on Interstate Freight Traffic.* New York: The Evening Post Job Printing Office, 1905.
- Finley, W.W. "Southern Railroads and Industrial Development." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 35, no. 1 (Jan., 1910): 99-104.
- Fortune, T. Thomas. *Black and White: Land, Labor, and Politics in the South.* New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1884.
- Giffen, Robert. *American Railways as Investments.* London: E. Stanford, 1872.
- Goode, John. *Recollections of a Lifetime.* New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1906.
- Grady, Henry W. *The New South: Writings and Speeches of Henry Grady.* Savannah, GA: Beehive Press, 1971.
- Green, George Walton. *Repudiation.* New York: The Society for Political Education, 1883.
- Hadley, Arthur T. *Railroad Transportation: Its History and Its Laws.* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1885.
- Hancock, Elizabeth H., ed. *Autobiography of John E. Massey.* New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1909.
- Harrison, Fairfax. *A History of the Legal Development of the Railroad System of Southern Railway Company.* Washington, DC, 1901.
- Hudson, Henry. "The Southern Railway & Steamship Association." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 5, no. 1 (Oct., 1890): 70-94.
- Huebner, Grover G. "Five Years of Railroad Regulation by the States." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 32 (July, 1908): 138-156.

- Hunton, Eppa. *Autobiography of Eppa Hunton*. Richmond: The Willian Byrd Press, 1933.
- Johnson, Bradley T. "Can States Be Compelled to Pay their Debts?" *The American Law Review* 12, no. 4 (July 1878): 625-659.
- Johnston, James Hugo. "The Participation of Negroes in the Government of Virginia from 1877-1888." *The Journal of Negro History* 14, no. 3 (July, 1929): 251-271.
- Johnston, John W. "Repudiation in Virginia." *The North American Review* 134, no. 303 (Feb., 1882): 149-160.
- Langston, John Mercer. *Freedom and Citizenship: Selected Lectures and Addresses*. Washington, DC: Rufus H. Darby, 1883.
- . *From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol, or The First and Only Negro Representative in Congress from the Old Dominion*. Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Company, 1894.
- Larrabee, William. *The Railroad Question: A Historical and Practical Treatise on Railroads, and Remedies for Their Abuses*. Chicago: The Schulte Publishing Company, 1893.
- McCulloch, Hugh. *Men and Measures of Half a Century: Sketches and Comments*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900.
- McLean, Simon J. "Federal Regulation of Railways in the United States." *The Economic Journal* 10, no. 8 (June, 1900): 151-171.
- . "State Regulation of Railways in the United States." *The Economic Journal* (Sep., 1900): 349-369.
- Meyer, Balthasar Henry. *Railway Legislation in the United States*. 1903. Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1973.

- Meyer, H.R. "The Settlements with the Pacific Railways." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 13, no. 4 (July, 1899): 427-444.
- Morgan, Appleton. *The People and the Railways: A Popular Discussion of the Railway Problem in the United States*. New York: Belford, Clarke & Company, 1888.
- Munford, Beverley B. Munford. *Random Recollections*. N.p, 1905.
- Newcomb, H.T. "The Present Railway Situation." *The North American Review* 165, no. 492 (Nov., 1897): 591-599.
- Newlands, Francis G. "Common Sense of the Railroad Question." *The North American Review* 180, no. 581 (April, 1905): 576-585.
- O'Ferrall, Charles T. *Forty Years of Active Service*. New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1904.
- Page, Thomas Nelson. *The Negro: The Southerner's Problem*. New York: Scribner's, 1904.
- Peck, John B. *The Railways and the Public*. Atlanta, 1880.
- Penn, I. Garland. *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors*. Springfield, MA: Willey & Co, Publishers, 1891.
- Pollock, *Illustrated Sketch Book of Danville, Virginia: Its Manufactures and Commerce*. Petersburg: N.p., 1885.
- Ramage, B.J. "The Railroad Question." *The Sewanee Review* 3, no. 2 (Feb., 1895): 189-208.
- Riddleberger, H.H. "Bourbonism in Virginia." *North American Review* 134, No. 305 (April, 1882): 416-430.
- Royall, William L. *History of the Virginia Debt Controversy: The Negro's Vicious Influence in Politics*. Richmond: 1897.
- . *Some Reminiscences*. New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1909.

Ruffin, Frank G. *The Negro as a Political and Social Factor*. Richmond, VA: J.W. Randolph & English, 1888.

Savage, Charles Chauncey. "State Legislation Regulating Railroad Traffic." *The American Law Register* 32, no. 2 (Feb., 1884): 81-93.

Scott, William A. *The Repudiation of State Debts: A Study in the Financial History of Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Minnesota, Michigan, and Virginia*. New York: Thomas V. Crowell & Co., 1893.

Smalley, Harrison Standish. "Railroad Rate Control in Its Legal Aspects: A Study of the Effect of Judicial Decisions Upon Public Regulation of Railroad Rates." *American Economic Association* 7, no. 2 (May, 1906): 4-147.

Snyder, Carl. *American Railways as Investments*. New York: The Moody Corporation, 1907.

Stickney, A.B. *The Railway Problem*. St. Paul, MN: D.D. Merrill Company, 1891.

Stuart, Alexander A.A. *A Narrative of the Leading Incidents of the Organization of the First Popular Movement in Virginia...and of the Subsequent Efforts of the "Committee of Nine."* Richmond: W.E. Jones, 1888.

Turner, A.P. and Co. *American Railways as Investments*. London [?], 1885.

Washington, Booker T. "The Negro's Part in Southern Development." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 35, no. 1 (Jan., 1910): 124-133.

Williams, D.B. *A Sketch of the Life and Times of Captain R.A. Paul*. Richmond: Johns and Goolsby, Printers, 1885.

Williams, John Skelton. *Railroad Progress in the South*. Richmond: Richmond Press, Inc., 1909.

- Wise, John S. *The Lion's Skin: A Historical Novel and a Novel History*. New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1905.
- Withers, Robert Enoch. *Autobiography of an Octogenarian*. Roanoke: Stone Printing & MFG, Co. Press. 1907.
- Wolfe, J.P. *Reminiscences of a Surveyor and Civil Engineer*. N.p., 1931.

Secondary Sources

Published Works

- Adams, Sean Patrick. *Old Dominion, Industrial Commonwealth: Coal, Politics, and Economy in Antebellum America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- . “Old Dominions and Industrial Commonwealths: The Political Economy of Coal in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1810-1875.” *Enterprise & Society* 1, no. 4 (Dec., 2000): 675-682.
- Ali, Omar H. *In the Lion's Mouth: Black Populism in the New South, 1886-1900*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010.
- Allen, Theodore W. *The Invention of the White Race, Volume 1: Racial Oppression and Social Control*. New York: Verso, 1994.
- . *The Invention of the White Race, Volume 2: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America*. New York: Verso, 1997.
- Armitage, Laura E. “Richmond and Alleghany Railroad.” *The Railway and Locomotive Historical Society Bulletin* 88 (May, 1953): 59-68.

- Ayers, Edward L. *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Balibar, Etienne and Immanuel Wallerstein. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. New York: Verso, 2010.
- Barnes, Brooks Miles. "The Congressional Elections of 1882 on the Eastern Shore of Virginia." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 89, no 4 (Oct., 1981): 467-486.
- Barnes, Bryant K. "'Are Not Our Interests the Same?': Black Protest, the Lost Cause, and Coalition Building in Readjuster Virginia." In "Why Race Matters: The Legacies and Presentation of Race Relations in American History," edited by Brandon T. Jett and Timothy Fritz, *Genealogy* 7, no. 12 (February, 2023). <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy7010012>.
- . "Intimidation Was the Program: The Alleged Attempt to Lynch H. Seb Doyle, the 'Rhetoric of Corruption,' and Disfranchisement." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 18, no. 2 (2019): 174–98.
- . "Fresh Fruit and Rotten Railroads: Interracial Politics, Railroads, and Capitalism in the Gilded Age South." *Agricultural History* 96, no. 1-2 (May, 2022): 54-90.
- Barreyre, Nicholas. *Gold and Freedom: The Political Economy of Reconstruction*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015.
- . "The Politics of Economic Crises: The Panic of 1873, the End of Reconstruction, and the Realignment of American Politics." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 10, no. 4 (Oct., 2011): 403-423.
- Bayliss, Garland E. "Post-Reconstruction Repudiation: Evil Blot or Financial Necessity?" *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (Autumn, 1964): 243-259.

- Bear, Jr., James A. "Henry A. Wise and the Campaign of 1873: Some Letters from the Papers of James Lawson Kemper." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 62, no. 3 (July, 1954): 320-342.
- Beckert, Jens. *Imagined Futures: Fictional Expectations and Capitalist Dynamics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Vintage Books, 2013.
- . *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Bederman, Gail. *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Bensel, Richard F. *The Political Economy of American Industrialization, 1877–1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Berk, Gerald. *Alternative Tracks: The Constitution of American Industrial Order, 1865–1917*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.
- Bigham, Truman C. "I. The Taxation of Railroads in the Southeast." *Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics* 11, no. 1 (February, 1935): 59-75.
- . "II. The Taxation of Railroads in the Southeast." *Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics* 11, No. 2 (May, 1935): 164-172.
- Blackmon, Douglas A. *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.
- Blake, Nelson Morehouse. *William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent*. Richmond: Garret & Massie, 1935.

- Blight, David W. *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018.
- . *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2001.
- Bodenhamer, David J. and James W. Ely, Jr. *Ambivalent Legacy: A Legal History of the South*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984.
- Bogart, Dan. “A Global Perspective on Railway Inefficiency and the Rise of State Ownership, 1880–1912.” *Explorations in Economic History* 47, no. 2 (2010): 158–78.
- Borchard, Edwin. *State Insolvency and Foreign Bondholders*, 2 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951.
- Bridges, Mary. “The Infrastructural Turn in Historical Scholarship.” *Modern American History* 6 (2023): 103-120.
- Brown, Elsa Barkley. “Polyrhythms and Improvization: Lessons for Women’s History.” *History Workshop* 31 (Spring, 1991): 85-90.
- Brown, Fraser. *Municipal Bonds: A Statement of the Principles of Law and Custom Governing the Issue of American Municipal Bonds....* New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1922.
- Buni, Andrew. *The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1902-1965*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967.
- Buschendorf, Christa. “‘Race’ as a Function of Capitalism and Imperialism: W.E.B. Du Bois’s Appropriation of Marxian Ideas in *The Black Flame*.” *American Studies* 62, no. 4 (2017): 567-584.
- Caldemeyer, Dana. *Union Renegades: Miners, Capitalism, and Organizing in the Gilded Age*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021.

- Calhoun, Craig. *The Roots of Radicalism: Tradition, The Public Sphere, and Early Nineteenth-Century Social Movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Calhoun, Walter T. "The Danville Riot and Its Repercussions on the Virginia Election of 1883." In *Studies in the History of the South, 1875-1922*. Ed. Joseph F. Steelman et al., 25-51. Greenville, NC: East Carolina College, 1966
- Campbell, E.G. "Indebted Railroads: A Problem of Reconstruction." *Journal of Southern History* 6, no. 2 (May, 1940): 167-188.
- Cappon, Lester J. *Virginia Newspapers 1821-1935: A Bibliography with Historical Introduction and Notes*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936.
- Cell, John W. *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Chandler, Alfred D., editor. *The Railroads: The Nation's First Big Business*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965.
- . *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977).
- Cheek, William F. "A Negro Runs for Congress: John Mercer Langston and the Virginia Campaign of 1888." *Journal of Negro History* 52 (1967), 14-34.
- Chernow, Ron. *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.* New York: Vintage Books, 2004.
- Clark, Kathleen. *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Cobb, James C. "Beyond Planters and Industrialists: A New Perspective on the New South." *Journal of Southern History* 54, no. 1 (February, 1988): 45-68.

- Cohen, Jim. "Divergent Paths, United States and France: Capital Markets, the State, and Differentiation in Transportation Systems, 1840-1940." *Enterprise & Society* 10, no. 3 (Sept., 2009): 449-497.
- Cohen, William. "Negro Involuntary Servitude in the South, 1865-1940: A Preliminary Analysis." *Journal of Southern History* 42, no. 1 (Feb., 1976): 31-60.
- Costaguta, Lorenzo. "'Geographies of Peoples': Scientific Racism and Labor Internationalism in Gilded Age American Socialism." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 18 (2019): 199-220.
- Crane, Daniel A. and William J. Novak, editors. *Antimonopoly and American Democracy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2023.
- Cronon, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: Norton, 1991.
- Currarino, Rosanne. *The Labor Question in America: Economic Democracy in the Gilded Age*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011.
- Dagbovie, Pero Gaglo. "Reflections on Conventional Portrayals of the African American Experience during the Progressive Era or 'the Nadir'." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 13, no. 1 (Jan., 2014): 4-27.
- Dailey, Jane. *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- . "Deference and Violence in the Postbellum Urban South: Manners and Massacres in Danville, Virginia." *The Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 3 (Aug., 1997): 553-590.
- Dailey, Jane, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore and Bryant Simon, editors. *Jumpin' Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Davis, Curtis Carroll. "Very Well-Rounded Republican: The Several Lives of John S. Wise."

Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 71, no. 4 Oct., 1963): 461-487.

Deglar, *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century*. 1974. Reprint,

Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000.

De Santis, Vincent. "American Politics in the Gilded Age." *Review of Politics* 25, no. 4 (Oct., 1963): 551-561.

———. "Negro Dissatisfaction with Republican Policy in the South, 1882-1884." *Journal of Negro History* 36, no. 2 (April, 1951): 148-159.

———. "President Arthur and the Independent Movements in the South in 1882." *Journal of Southern History* 19, no. 3 (Aug., 1953): 346-363.

———. "President Garfield and the Solid South." *North Carolina Historical Review* 36, no. 4 (Oct., 1959): 442-465.

———. "President Hayes's Southern Policy." *Journal of Southern History* 21, no. 4, (Nov., 1955): 476-494.

———. *Republicans Face the Southern Question: The New Departure Years, 1877-1897*.

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959.

Dinan, John J. *The Virginia State Constitution: A Reference Guide*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger

Publishers, 2006.

Dinnella-Borrego, Luis-Alejandro. "From the Ashes of the Old Dominion: Accommodation,

Immediacy, and Progressive Pragmatism in John Mercer Langston's Virginia." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 117, no. 3 (2009): 214-249.

Doherty, Jr., Herbert J. "Voices of Protest from the New South, 1875-1910." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 42, no 1 (June, 1955): 45-66.

- Domby, Adam H. *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020.
- Donald, David Herbert. "A Generation of Defeat." In *From the Old South to the New: Essays on the Transitional South*, 3-20. Eds. Walter J. Fraser and Winfred B. Moore (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).
- Doolittle, William. "Virginia's Readjuster Coup and *Thornburg v. Gingles*' Majority-Minority District Requirement." *Journal of Law and Politics* 25, no. 211 (2009): 211-255.
- Dotson, Rand. "New South Boomtown: Roanoke, Virginia, 1882-1884." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 116, no. 2 (2008): 150-190.
- . *Roanoke, Virginia, 1882-1912: Magic City of the New South*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*. 1935. Reprint, New York: The Free Press, 1998.
- Dunlavy, Colleen A. *Politics and Industrialization: Early Railroads in the United States and Prussia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Eckenrode, Hamilton James. *The Political History of Virginia During Reconstruction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1904.
- Edwards, Laura F. "The Problem of Dependency: African Americans, Labor Relations, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South." *Agricultural History* 72, no. 2 (Spring, 1998): 313-340.
- Einhorn, Robin L. *American Taxation, American Slavery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

- Ely, Jr., James W. *Railroads and American Law*. Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2001.
- Emberton, Carole. *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South after the Civil War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- English, William B. "Understanding the Costs of Sovereign Default: American State Debts in the 1840s." *The American Economic Review* 86, no. 1 (March, 1996): 259-275.
- Ferguson, Maxwell. *State Regulation of Railroads in the South*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1916.
- Ferrell, Jr., Henry C. *Claude A. Swanson of Virginia: A Political Biography*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985.
- Fields, Barbara J. "'Origins of the New South' and the Negro Question." *Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 4 (Nov., 2001): 811-826.
- . "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America." *New Left Review* 181 (May-June 1990): 95-118.
- . "Whiteness, Racism, and Identity." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (Fall, 2001): 48-56.
- Fields, Karen E. and Barbara J. Fields. *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*. New York: Verso, 2012.
- Fink, Leon. *The Long Gilded Age: American Capitalism and the Lessons of a New World Order*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
- Fish, Peter G. "From Virginia Readjuster to United States Senior Circuit Judge: The Ascent of Edmund Waddill, Jr. (1855-1931)." *American Journal of Legal History* 30, no. 3 (July, 1986): 198-240.

- Flynn, Charles L. *White Land, Black Labor: Caste and Class in Late Nineteenth-Century Georgia*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983.
- Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. 1988. Reprint, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2014.
- Foreman-Peck, J.S. "Natural Monopoly and Railway Policy in the Nineteenth Century." *Oxford Economic Papers* 39, no. 4 (Dec., 1987): 699-718.
- Forret, Jeff and Bruce E. Baker, editors. *Southern Scoundrels: Grifters and Graft in the Nineteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2021.
- Forsythe, Harold S. "African American Churches, Fusion Politics in Virginia, and the Republican Gubernatorial Campaign in 1889." In *Afro-Virginian History and Culture*, edited by John Saillant. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- . "'But My Friends are Poor': Ross Hamilton and Freedpeople's Politics in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, 1869-1901." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 105, no. 4 (Autumn, 1997): 409-438.
- Frymer, Paul. *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Furner, Mary O. "Defining the Public Good in the U.S. Gilded Age, 1883-1898: 'Freedom of Contract' versus 'Internal Police' in the Tortured History of Employment Law and Regulation." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17 (2018): 241-275.
- Gerteis, Joseph. *Class and the Color Line: Interracial Class Coalition in the Knights of Labor and the Populist Movement*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- . "Populism, Race, and Political Interest in Virginia." *Social Science History* 27, no. 2 (Summer, 2003): 197-227.

- Gilchrest, D.T. "Albert Fink and the Pooling System." *Business History Review* 34, no 1 (Spring, 1960): 24-49.
- Gilliam, George Harrison. "Making Virginia Progressive: Courts and Parties, Railroads and Regulators, 1890-1910." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 107, no. 2 (Spring, 1999): 189-222.
- Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth. *Gender & Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*. Chapel Hill: The University of Chapel Hill Press, 1996.
- . "Gender and 'Origins of the New South.'" *Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 4 (Nov., 2001): 769-788.
- Glymph, Thavolia and John J. Kushma, eds. *Essays on the Postbellum Southern Economy*. College Station: Published for the University of Texas at Arlington by Texas A&M University Press, 1985.
- Goodrich, Carter. *Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads, 1800-1890*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.
- . "Public Aid to Railroads in the Reconstruction South." *Political Science Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (1956): 407-42.
- . "The Virginia System of Mixed Enterprise." *Political Science Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (Sep., 1949): 355-387.
- Gordon, John Steele. *The Great Game: The Emergence of Wall Street as a World Power, 1653-2000*. New York: Scribner, 1999.
- Graeber, David. *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. Brooklyn: Melville House Publishing, 2011.
- Grant, H. Roger. "Railroading through Receivership." *Railroad History* 194 (Spring-Summer, 2006): 6-17).

- Green, Hilary. *Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865-1890*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.
- Guild, June Purcell. *Black Laws of Virginia: A Summary of the Legislative Acts of Virginia Concerning Negroes from the Earliest Times to the Present*. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969.
- Guinnane, Timothy, Ron Harris, Naomi R. Lamoreaux, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal. "Putting the Corporation in its Place." *Enterprise & Society* 8, no. 3 (Sept., 2007):687-729.
- Hager, Sandy Brian. *Public Debt, Inequality, and Power: The Making of Modern Debt State*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016.
- Hahamovitch, Cindy. *The Fruits of Their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farmworkers and the Making of Migrant Poverty, 1870-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Hahn, Steven. *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003.
- Hahn, Steven and Jonathan prude, editors. *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Haley, Sarah. *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.
- Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher B. Daly. *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987.
- Halsell, Miss Willie D. "James R. Chalmers and 'Mahoneism' in Mississippi." *Journal of Southern History* 10, no. 1 (Feb., 1944): 37-58.

- Hamilton, J.G. de Roulhac. "Those Southern Repudiated Bonds." *Virginia Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (Oct., 1927): 490-506.
- Hamilton, Shane. "Theory and Theorizing in Agricultural History." *Agricultural History* 93, no. 3 (Summer 2019): 502-519.
- Hamm, Richard F. "The Killing of John R. Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark: Race, Prohibition, and Politics in Danville, 1887-1893." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 101, no. 3 (July, 1993): 375-404.
- Hanson, Bradley. "The People's Welfare and the Origins of Corporate Reorganization: The Wabash Receivership Reconsidered." *Business History Review* 74, no. 3 (Autumn, 2000): 377-405.
- Hartman, Saidiya V. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Harvey, David. *The Limits to Capital*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Healy, Kent T. *The Economics of Transportation in America: The Dynamic Forces in Development, Organization, Functioning and Regulation*. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1940.
- Heins, James A. *Constitutional Restrictions Against State Debt*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963.
- Henderson, George L. *California and the Fictions of Capital*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Henderson, William D. *Gilded Age City: Politics, Life and Labor in Petersburg, Virginia, 1874-1889*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1980.

- Herron, Paul E. *Framing the Solid South: The State Constitutional Conventions of Secession, Reconstruction, and Redemption, 1860-1902*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2017.
- Hiers, Wesley. "Party Matters: Racial Closure in the Nineteenth-Century United States." *Social Science Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 255-308.
- Higgs, Robert. "Railroad Rates and the Populist Uprising." *Agricultural History* 44, no. 3 (July, 1970): 291-298.
- Hild, Matthew. *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007.
- . "Organizing Across the Color Line: The Knights of Labor and Black Recruitment Efforts in Small-Town Georgia." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (Summer, 1997): 287-310.
- Hild, Matthew and Keri Leigh Merritt, editors. *Reconsidering Southern Labor History: Race, Class, and Power*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2018.
- Hildebrand, John R. *Iron Horses in the Valley: The Valley and Shenandoah Valley Railroads, 1866-1882*. Shippensburg, PA: Burd Street Press, 2001.
- Hillhouse, A.M. *Municipal Bonds: A Century of Experience*. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1936.
- Hixon, William F. *Triumph of the Bankers: Money and Banking in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993.
- Holloway, Pippa. "'A Chicken-Stealer Shall Lose His Vote': Disfranchisement for Larceny in the South, 1874-1890." *Journal of Southern History* 75, no. 4 (Nov., 2009): 931-962.

- Holt, Jr., Wythe W. "Constitutional Revision in Virginia, 1902 and 1928: Some Lessons on Roadblocks to Institutional Reform." *Virginia Law Review* 54 (1968), 903-927.
- . "The Senator from Virginia and the Democratic Floor Leadership: Thomas S. Martin and Conservatism in the Progressive Era." *VMHB* 83 (1975), 3-21.
- . "The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902: A Reform Movement Which Lacked Substance." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 76, no. 1 (Jan., 1968): 67-102.
- . *Virginia's Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1990.
- Howard, Josh. "Defending Person and Reputation: Efforts to End Extralegal Violence in Western Virginia, 1890-1900." *American Journal of Legal History* 58, no. 2 (June, 2018): 167-187.
- Howland, Charles P. "Our Repudiated State Debts." *Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 3 (April, 1928): 395-407.
- Hudson, Peter James. *Bankers and Empire: How Wall Street Colonized the Caribbean*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Huffard, R. Scott. *Engines of Redemption: Railroads and the Reconstruction of Capitalism in the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019.
- . "Ghosts, Wreckers, and Rotten Ties." *Southern Cultures* 20, no. 2 (Summer, 2014): 25-39.
- Hunt, James L. "Populism, Law, and the Corporation: The 1897 Kansas Supreme Court." *Agricultural History* 66, no. 4 (Autumn, 1992): 28-54.

- Hunter, Tera W. *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Hyman, Michael R. *The Anti-redeemers: Hill-Country Political Dissenters in the Lower South from Redemption to Populism*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990.
- . "Taxation, Public Policy, and Political Dissent: Yeoman Disaffection in the Post-Reconstruction Lower South." *Journal of Southern History* 55, no. 1 (Feb., 1989): 49-76.
- Jackson, Luther Porter. *Negro Office-Holders in Virginia, 1865-1895*. Norfolk, VA: Guide Quality Press, 1945.
- Jaynes, Gerald David. "Production and Distribution in Agrarian Economies." *Oxford Economic Papers* 34, no. 2 (July, 1982): 346-367.
- Jenkins, Benjamin Thomas. *Octopus's Garden: How Railroads and Citrus Transformed Southern California*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2023.
- . "Steel, Steam, and Citrus: The Economic Transformation of Southern California." *Journal of the West* 51, no. 1 (Dec., 2012): 36-49.
- Jenkins, Destin. *The Bonds of Inequality: Debt and the Making of the American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021.
- Jenkins, Destin and Justin Leroy, editors. *Histories of Racial Capitalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2021.
- John, Richard R. *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.
- . *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

- Johnson, Walter. *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*.
Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2013.
- . *The Broken Heart of America: St. Louis and the Violent History of the United States*.
New York: Basic Books, 2020.
- Johnston II, Angus J. “Disloyalty on Confederate Railroads in Virginia.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 63, no. 4 (Oct., 1955): 410-426.
- . “Virginia Railroads in April 1861.” *Journal of Southern History* 23, no. 3 (Aug., 1957): 307-330.
- Jones, Robert B. *Tennessee at the Crossroads: The State Debt Controversy, 1870-1883*.
Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977.
- Jones, Robert R. “James L. Kemper and the Virginia Redeemers Face the Race Question: A Reconsideration.” *Journal of Southern History* 38, no. 3 (Aug., 1972): 393-414.
- Joubert, William H. *Southern Freight Rates in Transition*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1949.
- Kalmoe, Nathan P. *With Ballots and Bullets: Partisanship and Violence in the American Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Kamerling, Henry. *Capital and Convict: Race, Region, and Punishment in Post-Civil War America*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017.
- Kantrowitz, Stephen. “Ben Tillman and Hendrix McLane, Agrarian Rebels: White Manhood, ‘The Farmers,’ and the Limits of Southern Populism.” *The Journal of Southern History* 66, no. 3 (Aug., 2000): 497-524.
- . *More than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829-1889*.
New York: Penguin Books, 2012.

- . “One Man’s Mob is Another Man’s Militia: Violence, Manhood, and Authority in Reconstruction South Carolina.” In *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*, eds. Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon, 67-87. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Kean, J. Randolph. “The Development of the ‘Valley Line’ of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 60, no. 4 (October, 1952): 537-550.
- Kelley, Blair L.M. *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of Plessy v. Ferguson*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
- Keve, Paul W. *The History of Corrections in Virginia*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986.
- Kevles, Daniel J. “Protections, Privileges, and Patents: Intellectual Property in American Horticulture, the Late Nineteenth Century to 1930.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 152, no. 2 (June, 2008): 207-213.
- Kim, Namsuk and John Joseph Wallis. “The Market for American State Government Bonds in Britain and the United States, 1830-43.” *Economic History Review* 58, no. 4 (Nov., 2005): 736-764.
- Kirby, Jack Temple. *Darkness at the Dawning: Race and Reform in the Progressive South*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972.
- Klein, Maury. “Competition and Regulation: The Railroad Model.” *Business History Review* 64, no. 2 (1990): 311-25.
- . *The Great Richmond Terminal: A Study in Businessmen and Business Strategy*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970.

———. “The Strategy of Southern Railroads.” *American Historical Review* 73, no. 4 (1968): 1052–62.

Klein, Maury and Kozo Yamamura. “The Growth Strategy of Southern Railroads, 1865-1893.” *Business History Review* 41, no. 4 (Winter, 1967): 358-377.

Kolko, Gabriel. *Railroads and Regulation, 1877-1916*. New York: Norton, 1965.

Kornweibel, Jr., Theodore. “Railroads and Slavery.” *Railroad History* 189 (Fall-Winter, 2003): 34-59.

Kousser, J. Morgan. *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.

Kramer, Paul. “Embedding Capital: Political-Economic History, The United States, and the World.” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 15 (2016): 331-362.

Larson, John Lauritz. *Internal Improvements: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

LeFlouria, Talitha L. *Chained In Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Lester, V. Markham. “The Effect of Southern State Bond Repudiation and British Debt Collection Efforts on Anglo-American Relations, 1840–1940.” *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 2 (2013): 415–40.

Letwin, Daniel. *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism: Alabama Coal Miners, 1878-1921*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

- Levin, Kevin M. *Remembering the Battle of the Crater: War as Murder*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2012.
- . “William Mahone, the Lost Cause, and Civil War History.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 113, no. 4 (2005): 378-412.
- Levy, Jonathan. *Ages of American Capitalism: A History of the United States*. New York: Random House, 2021.
- . *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- . “The Freaks of Fortune: Moral Responsibility for Booms and Busts in Nineteenth-Century America.” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 10, no. 4 (Oct., 2011): 435-446.
- Licht, Walter. *Working for the Railroad: The Organization of Work in the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Lichtenstein, Alex. *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South*. New York: Verso, 1996.
- Lienau, Odette. *Rethinking Sovereign Debt: Politics, Reputation, and Legitimacy in Modern Finance*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Link, Arthur S. “The Progressive Movement in the South, 1870-1914.” *North Carolina Historical Review* 23, no. 2 (April, 1946): 172-195.
- Litwack, Leon F. *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*. New York: Vintage, 1980.
- . *Trouble In Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.

- Litwack, Leon F. and August Meier. *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Logan, Rayford W. *The Betrayal of the Negro: From Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1997.
- Loving, Robert S. *Double Destiny: The Story of Bristo, Tennessee-Virginia*. Bristol, TN: King Printing Company, 1955.
- Lowe, Richard G. *Republicans and Reconstruction in Virginia, 1865-70*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991.
- . “Virginia’s Reconstruction Convention: General Schofield Rates the Delegates.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 80, no. 3 (July, 1972): 341-360.
- Lustig, R. Jeffrey. *Corporate Liberalism: The Origins of Modern American Political Theory, 1890-1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.
- Maddex, Jack P. *The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879: A Study in Reconstruction Politics*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970.
- Maggor, Noam. *Brahmin Capitalism: Frontiers of Wealth and Populism in America’s First Gilded Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- . “The Great Inequalizer: American Capitalism in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era.” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 15 (2016): 241-245.
- Majewski, John D. *Modernizing a Slave Economy: The Economic Vision of the Confederate Nation*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- . “Who Financed the Transportation Revolution? Regional Divergence and Internal Improvements in Antebellum Pennsylvania and Virginia.” *Journal of Economic History* 56, no. 4 (December, 1966): 763-788.

- Mancini, Matthew J. *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996.
- Marrs, Aaron W. *Railroads in the Old South: Pursuing Progress in a Slave Society*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.
- . “The Iron Horse Turns South: A History of Antebellum Southern Railroads.” *Enterprise & Society* 8, no. 4 (Dec., 2007): 784-789.
- Martin, Albro. *Railroads Triumphant: The Growth, Rejection, and Rebirth of a Vital American Force*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Martin, James W. “Industrial Changes and Taxation Problems in the Southern States.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 153 (Jan., 1931): 224-237.
- Mauro, Paolo and Yishay Yafeh. “The Corporation of Foreign Bondholders,” International Monetary Fund Working Paper, May 2003.
- McDanel, Ralph Clipman. *The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1928.
- McFarland, Henry. “Did Railroad Deregulation Lead to Monopoly Pricing? An Application of q.” *Journal of Business* 60, no. 3 (July, 1987): 385-400.
- McGrane, Reginald C. *Foreign Bondholders and American State Debts*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935.
- McGuire, Peter S. “The Seaboard Air Line.” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 11, no. 2 (April, 1934): 94-115.
- McKinney, Gordon C. “Racism and the Electorate: To Late Nineteenth Century Mountain Elections.” *Appalachian Journal* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1973): 98-110.

- . “Southern Mountain Republicans and the Negro, 1865-1900.” *Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 4 (Nov., 1975): 493-516.
- . “The Mountain Republican Party-Army.” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (Summer 1973): 124-139.
- Merritt, Keri Leigh. *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Mihm, Stephen. *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Miller, Floyd J. “Black Protest and White Leadership: A Note on the Colored Farmers’ Alliance.” *Phylon* 33, no. 2 (2nd Quarter, 1972): 169-174.
- Miller, George H. *Railroads and the Grander Laws*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971.
- Moger, Allen W. “Industrial and Urban Progress in Virginia from 1880-1900.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 66, no. 3 (July, 1958): 307-336.
- . “Railroad Practices and Policies in Virginia after the Civil War.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 59, no. 4 (Oct., 1951): 423-457.
- . “The Origin of the Democratic Machine in Virginia.” *Journal of Southern History* 8 (1942), 183-209.
- . “The Rift in the Virginia Democracy in 1896.” *Journal of Southern History* 4 (1938), 295-317.
- . *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968.

- . “Virginia’s Conservative Political Heritage.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 50 (1951): 318-329.
- Moore, James T. “Black Militancy in Readjuster Virginia, 1879-1883.” *Journal of Southern History* 41 (1975), 167-186.
- . “From Dynasty to Disfranchisement: Some Reflections about Virginia History, 1820-1902.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 104, no. 1 (Winter, 1996): 137-148.
- . “Gunfire on the Chesapeake: Governor Cameron and the Oyster Pirates, 1882-1885.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 90, no. 3 (July, 1982): 367-377.
- . “Redeemers Reconsidered: Change and Continuity in the Democratic South, 1870-1900.” *Journal of Southern History* 44, no. 3 (Aug., 1978): 357-378.
- . “The Death of the Duel: The Code Duello in Readjuster Virginia, 1879-1883.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 83, no. 3 (July, 1975): 259-276.
- . “The University and the Readjusters.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 78, no. 1 (Jan., 1970): 87-101.
- . *Two Paths to the New South: The Virginia Debt Controversy, 1870-1883*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1974.
- Moore, James T. and Edward Younger, editors. *The Governors of Virginia, 1860-1978*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1982.
- Myers, Martha A. *Race, Labor, and Punishment in the New South*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1998.
- Nelson, Scott Reynolds. *A Nation of Deadbeats: An Uncommon History of America’s Financial Disasters*. New York: Vintage, 2012.

- . *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- . *Oceans of Grain: How American Wheat Remade the World*. New York: Basic Books, 2022.
- . *Steel Drivin' Man: John Henry, the Untold Story of an American Legend*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- . "A Storm of Cheap Goods: New American Commodities and the Panic of 1873." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 10, no 4 (Oct., 2011): 447-453.
- Newman, Katherine S. and Rourke L. O'Brien. *Taxing the Poor: Doing Damage to the Truly Disadvantaged*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2011.
- Nichols, H.E. "The Norfolk and Western Railway." *Railway and Locomotive Historical Society Bulletin* 52 (May, 1940): 29-35.
- Nieman, Donald G, editor. *African Americans and the Emergence of Segregation, 1865-1900*. New York: Garland Pub., 1994.
- Nitschke, Christophe. "Theory and History of Financial Crises: Explaining the Panic of 1873." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17 (2018): 221-240.
- Noe, Kenneth W. *Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- Nokken, Timothy P. and Keith T. Pool. "Congressional Party Defection in American History." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (Nov., 2004): 545-568.
- Nugent, Walter. "Comments on Wyatt Wells, 'Rhetoric of the Standards: The Debate Over Gold and Silver in the 1890s.'" *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 14 (2015): 69-76.

- . *Money and American Society, 1865-1880*. New York: The Free Press, 1968.
- . *The Money Question During Reconstruction*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967.
- O'Grady, Joseph P. "Anthony M. Keiley (1832-1905): Virginia's Catholic Politician." *Catholic Historical Review* 54, no. 4 (Jan., 1969): 613-635.
- . "Immigrants and the Politics of Reconstruction in Richmond, Virginia." *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* 83, no. 2 (June, 1972): 87-101.
- . "Politics and Diplomacy: The Appointment of Anthony M. Keiley to Rome in 1885." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 76, no. 2 (April, 1968): 191-209.
- Okayama, Hiroshi. "The Interstate Commerce Commission and the Genesis of America's Judicialized Administrative State." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 15 (2016): 129-148.
- Oldfield, John. "State Politics, Railroads, and Civil Rights in South Carolina, 1883-89." *American Nineteenth Century History* 5, no. 2 (Summer, 2004): 71-91.
- Orsi, Richard J. "'The Octopus' Reconsidered: The Southern Pacific and Agricultural Modernization in California, 1865-1915." *California Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (1975): 197-220.
- Orsi, Richard J. *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Ostler, Jeffrey. "The Rhetoric of Conspiracy and the Formation of Kansas Populism." *Agricultural History* 69, no. 1 (Winter, 1995): 1-27.
- O'Sullivan, Mary A. *Dividends of Development: Securities Markets in the History of US Capitalism, 1866-1922*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Painter, Nell Irvin. "Thinking about the Languages of Money and Race: A Response to Michael O'Malley, 'Specie and Species.'" *American Historical Review* 99, no. 2 (April, 1994): 396-404.

Palmer, Bruce. "*Man Over Money*:" *The Southern Populist Critique of American Capitalism*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980.

Pawley, Emily. *The Nature of the Future: Agriculture, Science, and Capitalism in the Antebellum North*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.

Pearson, Charles Chilton. *The Readjuster Movement in Virginia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917.

———. "The Readjuster Movement in Virginia." *American Historical Review* 21, no. 4 (July 1916): 734-749.

Pendleton, William C. *Political History of Appalachian Virginia, 1776-1927*. Dayton, Va: Shenandoah Press, 1927.

Perrow, Charles. *Organizing America: Wealth, Power, and the Origins of Corporate Capitalism*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002.

Petty, Adrienne Monteith. *Standing Their Ground: Small Farmers in North Carolina since the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Phillips Sawyer, Laura. *American Fair Trade: Proprietary Capitalism, Corporatism, and the 'New Competition,' 1890-1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Poole, Keith T., and Howard Rosenthal. "The Enduring Nineteenth-Century Battle for Economic Regulation: The Interstate Commerce Act Revisited." *Journal of Law and Economics* 36, no. 2 (1993): 837-60.

- Postel, Charles. *Equality: An American Dilemma, 1866-1896*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019.
- . *The Populist Vision*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Potter, David M. “The Historical Development of Eastern-Southern Freight Relationships.” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 12, no. 3 (1947): 416–48.
- Prager, Robin A. “Using Stock Price Data to Measure the Effects of Regulation: The Interstate Commerce Act and the Railroad Industry.” *RAND Journal of Economics* 20, no. 2 (Summer, 1989): 280-290.
- Prescott, E.J. *The Story of the Virginia Coal and Iron Company, 1882-1945*. N.p., 1946.
- Prince, K. Stephen. *Stories of the South: Race and Reconstruction of Southern Identity, 1865-1915*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
- Pulley, Raymond H. *Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968.
- Quinn, Sarah L. *American Bonds: How Credit Markets Shaped a Nation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.
- Rabinowitz, Howard, N. *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- . *The First New South, 1865-1920*. Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1992.
- Rachleff, Peter J. *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984.
- Randall, James G. “The Virginia Debt Controversy.” *Political Science Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (Dec., 1915): 553-577.

- Randolph, Bessie C. "Foreign Bondholders and the Repudiated Debts of Southern States." *American Journal of International Law* 25, no. 1 (Jan., 1931): 63-82.
- Ransom, Roger L. and Richard Sutch. *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Ratchford, B.U. *American State Debts*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1941.
- Reeves, Paschal. "Thomas S. Martin: Committee Statesman." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 68, no. 3 (July, 1960): 344-364.
- Rex, Millicent B. "A Transplanted Yankee in Mecklenburg County, 1880." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 52, no. 3 (July, 1944): 197-202.
- Richardson, Heather Cox. *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Ring, Natalie J. "The 'New Race Question': The Problem of Poor Whites and the Color Line." In Tephania Cole and Natalie J. Ring. *Folly of Jim Crow: Rethinking the Segregated South*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012.
- . *The Problem South: Region, Empire, and the New Liberal State, 1880-1930*. Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2012.
- Ripley, William Z. "Railroad Valuation." *Political Science Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (December 1907): 577-610.
- . *Railroads: Finance and Organization*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1915.
- . *Railroads: Rates, and Regulations*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913.
- . Editor. *Railway Problems*. Boston: Ginn & Company, 1907.
- Robinson, Cedric J. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. 1983. Reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020.

- Robinson, Stephen Robert. "African American Citizenship, the 1883 *Civil Rights Cases* and the Creation of the Jim Crow South." *History* (2017): 225-241.
- . "'To Think, Act, Vote, and Speak for Ourselves': Black Democrats and Black 'Agency' in the American South after Reconstruction." *Journal of Social History* 48, no. 2 (2014): 363-382.
- Roediger, David R. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. New York: Verso, 1991.
- Ron, Ariel. "Farmers, Capitalism, and Government in the Late Nineteenth Century." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 15 (2016): 294-309.
- Rothman, David J. *Politics and Power: The United States Senate, 1869-1901*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966.
- Roy, William G. *Socializing Capital: The Rise of the Large Industrial Corporation in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Sandage, Scott A. *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Schewel, Michael J. "Local Politics in Lynchburg, Virginia, in the 1880s." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 89, no. 2 (April, 1981): 170-180.
- Scheiroy, Richard. "Thoughts on Periodizing the Gilded Age: Capital Accumulation, Society, and Politics, 1873-1898." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 5, no. 3 (July, 2006): 189-224.
- Schultz, Mark. *The Rural Face of White Supremacy: Beyond Jim Crow*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

- Sheldon, Rachel A. and Erik B. Alexander. "Dismantling the Party System: Party Fluidity and the Mechanisms of Nineteenth-Century U.S. Politics." *Journal of American History* 110, no. 3 (December, 2023):
- Sheldon, William Du Bose. *Populism in the Old Dominion: Virginia Farm Politics, 1885-1900*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935.
- Sklansky, Jeffrey. *Sovereign of the Market: The Money Question in Early America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Sklar, Martin J. *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890-1916: The Market, The Law, and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Smith, Robert H. *General William Mahone, Frederick J. Kimball, and others: A Short History of the Norfolk & Western Railway*. New York: The Newcomen Society in North America, 1949.
- Snaveley, Tipton Ray. *The Taxation of Negroes in Virginia*. Charlottesville: The Michie Company, Printers, 1916.
- Specht, Joshua. *Red Meat Republic: A Hoof-to-Table History of How Beef Changed America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019.
- Spriggs, William Edward. "The Virginia Colored Farmers' Alliance: A Case Study of Race and Class Identity." *Journal of Negro History* 64, no. 3 (Summer, 1979): 191-204.
- Stover, John F. "Georgia Railroads During the Reconstruction Years." *Railroad History* 134 (Spring, 1976): 56-65.
- . *History of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1987.

- . “Northern Financial Interests in Southern Railroads, 1865-1900.” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (Sept., 1955): 205-220.
- . *Railroads of the South 1865–1900: A Study in Finance and Control*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955.
- . “Southern Railroad Receivership in the 1870s.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 63, no. 1 (Jan., 1955): 40-52.
- Sobel, Robert. *Panic on Wall Street: A Classic History of America’s Financial Disasters with a New Exploration of the Crash of 1987*. New York: Truman Talley Books/Dutton, 1988.
- Squires, W.H.T. *The Land of Decision*. Portsmouth: Printcraft Press, Inc., 1931.
- Stanley, Matthew E. *Grand Army of Labor: Workers, Veterans, and the Meaning of the Civil War*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021.
- . “Remembering War, Constructing Race Pride, Promoting Uplift: Joseph T. Wilson and the Black Politics of Reconstruction and Retreat.” In *Freedoms Gained and Lost: Reconstruction and its Meanings 150 Years Later*, edited by Adam H. Domby and Simon Lewis. New York: Fordham University Press, 2022.
- Summers, Mark W. *Party Games: Getting, Keeping, and Using Power in Gilded Age Politics*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- . *Railroads, Reconstruction, and the Gospel of Prosperity: Aid under the Radical Republicans, 1865–1877*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Sydenstricker, Edgar. *A Brief History of Taxation in Virginia*. Richmond: Davis Bottom, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1915.
- Tarter, Brent. *A Saga of the New South: Race, Law, and Public Debt in Virginia*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016.

- . *Constitutional History of Virginia*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2023.
- Taylor, George Rogers and Irene D. Neu. *The American Railroad Network, 1861-1890*. 1956. Reprint, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003.
- Teitelman, Emma. “The Properties of Capitalism: Industrial Enclosures in the South and the West after the American Civil War.” *Journal of American History* 106, no. 4 (March 2020): 879-900.
- Thomas, Jerry B. “Jedediah Hotchkiss, Gilded-Age Propagandist of Industrialism.” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 84, no. 2 (April 1976): 189-202.
- Thomas, William G. *The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.
- . *Lawyering for the Railroad: Business, Law, and Power in the New South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999.
- Thomson, David K. *Bonds of War: How Civil War Financial Agents Sold the World on the Union*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022.
- . “‘The National Debt May Be a National Blessing’: Debt as an Instrument of Character in the Civil War Era.” In *Buying & Selling Civil War Memory in Gilded Age America*, edited by James Marten and Caroline E. Janney. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2021.
- Tufano, Peter. “Business Failure, Judicial Intervention, and Financial Innovation: Restructuring U.S. Railroads in the Nineteenth Century.” *Business History Review* 71, no. 1 (Spring, 1997): 1-40.

- Tyler, Lyon G. *Men of Mark in Virginia: Ideals of American Life, A Collection of Biographies of the Leading Men in the State*, Volumes 1-5. Washington, DC: Men of Mark Publishing Company, 1906-1909.
- Ulen, Thomas S. "The Market for Regulation: The ICC from 1887 to 1920." *American Economic Review* 70, no. 2 (May, 1980): 306-310.
- Usselman, Steven W. *Regulating Railroad Innovation: Business, Technology, and Politics in America, 1840-1920*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Van Zelm, Antoinette G. "Orra Gray Langhorne: A Voice for Reform in Postbellum Virginia." In *Virginia Women: Their Lives and Times*, eds. Cynthia A Kierner and Sandra Gioia Treadway, 94-114. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016.
- Weller, Leonardo. "Rothschilds' 'Delicate and Difficult Task': Reputation, Political Instability, and the Brazilian Rescue Loans of the 1890s." *Business History* (2015): 381-412.
- White, Richard. "Information, Markets, and Corruption: Transcontinental Railroads in the Gilded Age." *Journal of American History* 90, no. 1 (June, 2003): 19-43.
- . *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011.
- . "Utopian Capitalism." In *American Capitalism: New Histories*, edited by Sven Beckert and Christine Desan, 119–39. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.
- Wiebe, Robert H. *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement*. 1962. Reprint, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968.
- . *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1967.
- Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. New York: Random House, 2020.

- Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. 1944. Reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.
- Wolfe, Patrick. *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*. New York: Verso, 2006.
- Woodward, C. Vann. "Bourbonism in Georgia." *North Carolina Historical Review* 16, no. 1 (Jan., 1939): 23-35.
- . *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971.
- . *Reunion & Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction*. 1951. Reprint, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956.
- . *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- . *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*. 1938. Reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Wright, Gavin. *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War*. 1986. Reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996.
- Wynes, Charles E. "Charles T. O'Ferrall and the Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1893." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 64, no. 4 (Oct., 1956): 437-453.
- . "Lewis Harvie Blair, Virginia Reformer: The Uplift of the Negro and Southern Prosperity." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 72, no. 1 (January, 1964): 3-18.
- . *Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1961.
- Yellin, Eric S. *Racism in the Nation's Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson's America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.
- Zackin, Emily and Chloe N. Thurston. *The Political Development of American Debt Relief*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2024.

Zakim, Michael and Gary J. Kornblith, editors. *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Zallen, Jeremy. *American Lucifers: The Dark History of Artificial Light*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019.

Theses and Dissertations

Barnes, Brooks Miles. "Triumph of the New South: Independent Movements in Post-Reconstruction Politics." Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1991.

Barthurst, Lynwood Clair. "Virginia's Restive Rebel: Colonel Frank G. Ruffin, His Life and Times, 1816-1892." Thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1997.

Bear, Jr., James A. "Thomas Staples Martin : A Study in Virginia Politics." Thesis, University of Virginia, 1952.

Beatty, Elizabeth Caldwell. "The Political Response of Black Americans, 1876-1896." Dissertation, Florida State University, 1976.

Burton, Robert Clinton. "The History of Taxation in Virginia: 1870-1901." Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1962.

Brown, Elsa Barkley. "Uncle Ned's Children: Negotiating Community and Freedom in Postemancipation Richmond, Virginia." Dissertation, Kent State University, 1994.

Carey, Hampton D. "New Voices in the Old Dominion: Black Politics in the Virginia Southside Region and the City of Richmond, 1867-1902." Dissertation, Columbia University, 2000.

Chappo, John Fabian. "William H. Mahone of Virginia: An Intellectual Biography, 1830-1890." Dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi, 2007.

- Chase, Hal Scripps. “‘Honey for Friends, Stings for Enemies:’ William Calvin Chase and *The Washington Bee*, 1882-1921. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1973.
- Cheek, William F. “Forgotten Prophet: The Life of John Mercer Langston.” Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1961.
- Cole III, Howson White. “Harrison Holt Riddleberger, Readjuster.” Thesis, University of Virginia, 1952.
- Cohn-Postar, Gideon. “‘Mind How You Vote, Boys’: The Crisis of Economic Voter Intimidation in the Late-Nineteenth Century United States, 1873-1896.” Dissertation, Northwestern University, 2020.
- Dahl, Alan Lewis. “The North of the South: Planters and the Transition to Capitalism in the Central Virginia Piedmont.” Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2010.
- Doss, Richard B. “John Warwick Daniel: A Study in the Virginia Democracy.” Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1955.
- Doster, James F. “Origins of the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887.” Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1936.
- Fennessy, Brian K. “Reconstructed Rebels: Ex-Confederates in the Republican Party.” Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2021.
- Fraser, Jr., Walter Javan. “William Henry Ruffner: A Liberal in the Old and New South.” Dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1970.
- Gilliam, George Harrison. “Building a Modern South: Political Economy in Nineteenth-Century Virginia.” Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2013.
- Greene, Jr., Joseph A. “A Critical Investigation of Virginia’s System of Taxing Railroads.” Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1951.

- Grenoble, William Luster. "A History of the Virginia State Debt." Thesis, University of Virginia, 1937.
- Horn, Herman L. "The Growth and Development of the Democratic Party in Virginia Since 1890." Dissertation, Duke University, 1949.
- Hucles, Michael Edward, "Postbellum Urban Black Economic Development: The Case of Norfolk, Virginia, 1860-1890." Dissertation, Purdue University, 1990.
- Jones, Robert Rivers. "Conservative Virginian : The Post-War Career of Governor James Lawson Kemper." Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1964.
- Kaufman, Burton Ira. "Henry De La Warr Flood: A Case Study of Organization Politics in an Era of Reform." Dissertation, Rice University, 1966.
- Mainwaring, Jr., William Thomas. "Community in Danville, Virginia, 1880-1963." Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1988.
- Martin, Robert E. "Negro Disfranchisement in Virginia," Thesis, Howard University, 1938.
- McFarland, George M. "The Extension of Democracy in Virginia, 1850-1895." Dissertation, Princeton University, 1934.
- McFarland, George M. "The Extension of Democracy in Virginia, 1850-1895." Dissertation, Princeton University, 1934.
- Moger, Allen Wesley. "The Rebuilding of the Old Dominion: A Study in Economic, Social, and Political Transitions from 1880-1902." Dissertation, Columbia University, 1940.
- Morton, Richard L. "The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1865-1902." Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1918.
- Newby, Cassandra Lynn. "'The World Was All Before Them': A Study of the Black Community in Norfolk, Virginia, 1861-1884." Dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1992.

- Ours, Robert Maurice. "Virginia's Funding Legislation, 1869-1875: Its Background, Principal Features, Related Measures, and Effects. Dissertation, College of William & Mary, 1974.
- Pincus, Samuel Norman. "The Virginia Supreme Court, Blacks, and the Law, 1870-1902." Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1978.
- Quinn, James Thomas. "John S. Barbour, Jr. and the Restoration of the Virginia Democracy, 1883-1892." Thesis, University of Virginia, 1966.
- Rachleff, Peter J. "Black, White, and Gray: Working-Class Activism in Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890. Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1981.
- Readnour, Harry Warren, "General Fitzhugh Lee, 1835-1905: A Biographical Study." Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1971.
- Robinson, Stephen Robert. "The Black New South: A Study of Local Black Leadership in Virginia and Alabama, 1874-1897." Dissertation, University of Southampton, 2010.
- Shelton, Charlotte Jean. "William Atkinson Jones, 1849-1918: Independent Democracy in Gilded Age Virginia." Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1980.
- Shibley, Ronald Edward. "Election Laws and Electoral Practices in Virginia, 1867-1902: An Administrative and Political History." Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1972.
- Smith, James Douglas. "Virginia During Reconstruction, 1865-1870: A Political, Economic and Social Study." Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1960.
- Soares, Leigh Alexandra. "A Bold Promise: Black Readjusters and the Founding of Virginia State University." Thesis, College of William & Mary, 2012.