

THE MAN ON THE MONUMENT: HERITAGE AND HATE IN LEXINGTON, NORTH  
CAROLINA

by

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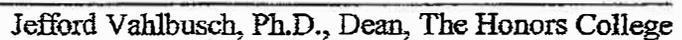
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## Abstract

Confederate monuments were brought into the national spotlight after the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, and the murder of African Americans worshipping in a church in Charleston, South Carolina. The debate over how to define Confederate monuments and what to do with them in the twenty-first century is often boiled down to this: are Confederate monuments vestiges of heritage or hatred? To symbolize heritage would mean that Confederate monuments are merely memorials to the sacrifices and patriotism of southern men who fought for their country. Conversely, to embody hatred signifies that Confederate monuments represent white supremacy and the oppression of African Americans after emancipation.

This thesis will address the popular debate between heritage and hate through an historical case study of a Confederate monument in a small North Carolina town called Lexington, which is the governing seat of Davidson County. The monument's historical context will be analyzed through a breakdown of Lost Cause ideology and its implications for the history of Davidson County. The Lexington monument is a product of a deeply complicated local history involving people who truly believed they were commemorating men, their fathers and grandfathers, who defended their community. This analysis of local history will attempt to explain how the monument cannot exist outside a history of white supremacy and the Lost Cause, and how turn-of-the-century politics in North Carolina planted seeds for the monument's development.

## Introduction

On September 14, 1905, the Robert E. Lee Chapter #324 of the United Daughters of the Confederacy of Lexington, North Carolina, unveiled a 22-foot tall bronze and marble statue of a confederate soldier. The ceremony involved much pomp and circumstance from the upper-middle class white citizens of Davidson County: members of the UDC rode in on horse-drawn carriages draped in confederate flags. Little girls arrived in their Sunday best with red and white ribbons adorning their braids. The A.A. Hill Camp of Confederate Veterans were gilded with Crosses of Honor, and the Lexington Silver Cornet band inspired fond memories of a time gone with the wind through performances of “Bonnie Blue Flag” and “Dixie.” And of course, no event in the humbly self-named “Barbecue Capital of the World” is complete without a massive barbecue dinner: following the celebrations, the A.A. Hill Camp of veterans was served a BBQ picnic at a local park.<sup>1</sup>

The monument, affectionately known by locals as the “Man on the Monument,” or more simply the “Man,” sparked a grand occasion for the small Piedmont town of Lexington. The local newspaper reported that anywhere from 5,000 to 8,000 people attended the unveiling ceremony, which was quite remarkable for a town of around 4,000 people.<sup>2</sup> The monument was planted at a strategic time in Lexington’s history. In 1905, Lexington, the capital of Davidson County, was benefitting from the textile and tobacco booms occurring across the South at the turn of the century. Before the Civil War, Lexington had been a small agricultural community. During Reconstruction, as money and resources poured into

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<sup>1</sup> Frances Holt Hunt, *Resume of the Robert E. Lee Chapter No. 324, 1899-1912*, 14 February 1912, transcribed by Gary D. Reeder, August 2003.

<sup>2</sup> “Unveiling of Monument: A Crowd of 5,000 to 8,000 Witness Ceremony Here Last Thursday,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, September 20, 1905 (Lexington, North Carolina).

industrializing the New South, Lexington became a critical railroad town due to its proximity to the burgeoning cities of Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, and High Point. The small farming community quickly became a bustling factory town where one could easily find work in furniture factories, cotton mills, or on tobacco farms.

Industrialization coincided with a cultural transformation in the New South. Reconstruction required a reconciliation between new economic growth and an “old” counterpoise for emotional sustenance.<sup>3</sup> This emotional sustenance became a mythos rooted in a more pleasant past containing slavery, orderly plantations, and graceful white women. The mythos, described by historian David Blight, was rooted in Davidson County’s history of slavery, and it is within the process of redefining the South that the Lexington monument was erected. In this way, Lexington mirrored a turn-of-the-century southern trend. The South’s redefinition of itself has been dubbed “The Lost Cause” by historians such as David Blight, Karen L. Cox, Joel Williamson, and Catherine Bishir. The Lost Cause grew from a culture awash with physical destruction, the trauma of defeat, a Democratic Party resistant to Reconstruction, racial violence, and an abiding sentimentalism.<sup>4</sup>

The Lexington monument is a symptom of the town’s saturation in the Lost Cause. Followers of the Lost Cause monumentalized the Confederacy in phases over a 150-year period. According to historian Kristina Dunn Johnson those periods follow as such: Reconstruction (1865-1877), post-Reconstruction and southern redemption (1878-1903), nationalization and the Lost Cause (1904-1922), and modern remembrances (1923-present).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001), 222.

<sup>4</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 258

<sup>5</sup> Kristina Dunn Johnson, *No Holier Spot of Ground: Confederate Monuments and Cemeteries of South Carolina* (Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2019), 13.

The Man on the Monument in Lexington was conceived during the redemption period when Democrats reclaimed their state from populists, Republicans, and African Americans. The Man was set upon his pedestal during the nationalization/Lost Cause period, when a monumentation crusade overtook North Carolina.<sup>6</sup> It was during this phase that Democrats and Ladies Memorial Associations (LMAs) sought to redefine the history of the Civil War as a lost cause. The Old South became synonymous with graceful plantation homes, beautiful southern women, and an honorable paternalism that held blacks in a lower social order. To solidify this image in the public's schema, Democrats and LMAs focused their energy on a vigorous monument-building campaign at the turn of the century.

This thesis will reconstruct an historical context for the Man that is typically overlooked or ignored in Lexington. To understand why the monument's historical context and meaning has been overlooked, it is necessary to defer to the words of historian Kirk Savage: "public monuments ultimately tested the limits and possibilities of collective consciousness. To be erected, monuments usually had to mesh with the beliefs and aspirations of the majority, even when those were so deep-seated that they were unspoken."<sup>7</sup> Reason to question the Man's authority in Lexington has never been considered because he reflected (and continues to reflect) the overwhelming beliefs of the majority of white citizens. For the people of Lexington, in the words of Kirk Savage, "the image of a common soldier on a pedestal in the town green spoke eloquently, every day of every year, for the heroism of the ordinary white man defending the nation."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it should be argued, the Man and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America, New Edition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018), 210.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

other confederate monuments reflect ideologies of the Lost Cause ingrained in the southern schema.

The content of the white majority's beliefs, crystallized in public confederate monuments, are a point of division amongst historians and the public. Some have argued that confederate monuments are not the product of something as sinister and racially-tinged as the Lost Cause. Others claim that such monuments are outward expressions of the public's internalized white supremacy. An analysis of United Daughters of the Confederacy archives and of newspaper articles from *The Lexington Dispatch* will reveal the beliefs of most white citizens. For such citizens, erecting a confederate monument in front of the county courthouse was an avenue through which they reaffirmed a racial status quo that maintained their power.

A prominent example of a confederate monument caught in the crossfires of historical analysis is Silent Sam on the campus of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Like the Man on the Monument in Lexington, Silent Sam is a generic confederate soldier in contrapposto upon a pedestal. Both the Man and Sam inhabited places of importance. The Man sits directly across from the county courthouse in a small courtyard along Main Street, the town's central thoroughfare. Before his demise, Silent Sam towered above UNC-Chapel Hill's McCorkle place, where students, professors, visitors, and members of the community walk every day. Unlike the Man on the Monument, however, Silent Sam has been the center of controversy for quite some time.

In the early 2000s, students and some professors at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill debated whether Silent Sam's position of prominence was warranted. Those who disapproved of Silent Sam claimed that he symbolized systematic racism, while others

argued that Sam symbolized nothing more than southern heritage and states' rights. In agreement with the latter argument, in 2001 Dr. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., a retired professor from UNC and an expert of Southern literature, wrote that Sam ought to remain because he does not symbolize white supremacy.<sup>9</sup> Rubin argued that the right to own slaves was not the principal motivation of the average North Carolina man who enlisted with the Confederacy. Rather, he argued, "it was far more basic and visceral than that. Their State was under attack. That was why they went to war – and one of every four Confederate soldiers killed in battle was a North Carolinian."<sup>10</sup> Rubin did not go so far as to claim that the South seceded solely in defense of states' rights; defending states' rights was a principal motivator, but the rights in question regarded the ownership of human beings as slaves.<sup>11</sup> He defended the common foot soldiers memorialized by Silent Sam (and by extension the Man on the Monument) as "ordinary and decent people, [who] fought hard and well in a cause that was morally flawed, and that they would have been economically, politically and morally better off not having been maneuvered into supporting."<sup>12</sup> In an effort to honor the average Confederate soldiers and their descendants, Rubin argued, Silent Sam ought to remain exactly where he had always been.

In 2018, controversy flared around Silent Sam once again after students pulled the bronze statue from its pedestal. In response to students' actions, Professor Ray Stevens of McDaniel College of Maryland issued a manifesto similar to that of Dr. Rubin. Stevens began by attacking the "masked Antifa activists" and "Tar Heel snowflakes" who protested Silent Sam in the wake of the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. The

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<sup>9</sup> Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Of Statuary, Symbolism, and Sam" *Callaloo* vol. 24 no. 1 (winter, 2001), 160.

<sup>10</sup> Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Of Statuary," 161.

<sup>11</sup> Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Of Statuary," 160.

<sup>12</sup> Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Of Statuary," 161.

reward of those “club-wielding thugs” was the “toppling of a bronze statue that commemorates the sacrifice of people who fought for, and lost, both a war and a home 153 years earlier.”<sup>13</sup> Just as Dr. Rubin argued in 2001, Stevens defended Sam and Confederate soldiers as good men who thought they were fighting for their state’s sovereignty. Stevens’ claim to historical authority and accuracy rests upon his being descended of two Confederate great-grandfathers, whom he suggests embodied Silent Sam. He claims that neither owned a slave and fought for their state, and should therefore not be scrutinized under the microscope of racism.<sup>14</sup> Stevens’ argument that Silent Sam is a non-racist memorial to well-intentioned southern men who sacrificed their lives for a noble cause is one that is often extrapolated and applied to any confederate monument.

Contrary to what Stevens and like-minded apologists believe, the yeoman North Carolina soldier was hardly on the minds of the genteel southern elite who dedicated monuments decades after the last gun was fired at Appomattox. Perhaps it was not on the minds of the average men who fought, either. History Professor James L. Leloudis of UNC-Chapel Hill responded to Professor Stevens by highlighting the wealth and power of those to whom Silent Sam was dedicated. According to Leloudis, the 84 students who graduated from UNC in 1860 (and most of whom enlisted with the confederacy) owned, on average, 26 slaves each. Their combined property was worth roughly \$1.9 million today. Leloudis concludes, “Those young men knew exactly what was at stake in the Civil War – and it had little to do with mythic notions of hearth and home. They took up arms to defend the institution of racial slavery that had produced their families’ riches.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ray Stevens, e-mail message, “In Defense of Silent Sam, by a North Carolina Great-Grandson,” 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> James Leloudis, email message to colleagues, 2018.

After remarking on the wealth generated by slave-labor that motivated the ‘poor boys’ to whom Silent Sam was dedicated, Leloudis claimed that those who did the dedicating were not disillusioned either. He points out that by the builders’ own accounts, the monument was erected as a sentinel of white supremacy. “After all,” Leloudis writes, “their purpose was to teach and perpetuate a species of opposition to the Constitution and the rule of law. That’s quite an ignoble cause to hitch to the veneration of one’s ancestors.”<sup>16</sup>

In agreement with Leloudis, historian Catherine W. Bishir reconstructed a context within which Confederate monuments like Sam and the Man could be understood. In an article about Confederate memorialization in North Carolina, Bishir describes the Democratic victory of 1900 as the end of “a long chapter that began in defeat [and] had finally ended in triumph.”<sup>17</sup> After ousting Republicans and Fusionists from the state legislature, North Carolina Democratic leaders inaugurated an era of “historical awakening” that led to a surge in Confederate monument construction.<sup>18</sup> The unified Democratic leadership codified a “lasting version of the state’s history that tied Old South to New, interweaving old family heritage, Anglo-Saxon supremacy, and military and political heroism . . . . It lauded the sacrifices and patriotism of North Carolina Confederates, and insisted that their cause had engaged the unified support of the populace.”<sup>19</sup> This ‘historical awakening’ had little to do with offering reverence to the sacrifices of Confederate dead. Instead, it was a deliberate attempt by white Democrats to rewrite history for their political longevity.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Catherine W. Bishir, “Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past, 1885-1915,” *Southern Cultures, Inaugural Issue* 1993, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Catherine Bishir, “Landmarks of Power,” 18-19.

<sup>19</sup> Catherine Bishir, “Landmarks of Power,” 19.

The debate surrounding Silent Sam is easily transferrable to the Man on the Monument in Lexington. To understand the Man a question must be asked: Is he a product of a patriotic and sacrificial heritage, or is he the subconscious outward expression of a town's racial bias? This thesis will address the popular debate – sometimes reduced to the slogan “heritage or hate?” – swirling around Confederate memorials through the study of a local monument that has not received much attention outside its local home.

The Man on the Monument is a product of a deeply complicated local history involving people who truly believed they were commemorating men, their fathers and grandfathers, who defended their community. This analysis of local history will attempt to explain how the Man cannot exist outside a history of white supremacy, and how turn-of-the-century politics in North Carolina planted seeds for the Man's development. The Man on the Monument is not a product of either heritage or hate, but of both – he is descended of a heritage of hate.

## Chapter I

Lexington lies immediately outside the western periphery of North Carolina's black belt, where African Americans were (and still are) concentrated in the eastern part of the state. Davidson County is sandwiched between counties where, before the Civil War, slaves composed 25-50% of the population. In these counties, tobacco production demanded slave labor. After emancipation, citizens of Lexington watched as African Americans in the state – particularly in the eastern coastal plains – worked for the advancement of a once-enslaved race. According to historians Crow, Escott and Hatley, African Americans in North Carolina sought to reap the benefits of equality through three avenues: “organization, uplift, and increasing diversity.”<sup>20</sup> Black communities organized via churches, lodges, and fraternal organizations that promoted character-building and the growth of an emerging class of black artisans, businessmen, and professionals.<sup>21</sup> Black leaders such as Charles and Osborne Hunter, Henry Plummer Cheatham, James H. Harris, William C. Smith, Rev. J.C. Price, and Warren Clay Coleman opened successful companies, became legislators, published newspapers, and spiritually guided African American communities in North Carolina.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1890s black Republicans fused with the Populist Party in North Carolina. With their political power combined, Republicans and Populists seized control of offices in local and state elections in 1896. The effects of fusionist politics particularly reverberated in eastern counties where many African Americans were appointed to minor federal positions such as postmaster, or became members of law enforcement and local government. A rapid increase in black political power occurred most notably in a northeastern Congressional

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<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey J. Crow, Paul D. Escott, and Flora J. Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Division of Archives and History 1992), 96.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 97.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 96-112.

district known as the “Black Second,” where the black population was the solid majority. Congressman George H. White, a black U.S. congressman elected from the “Black Second,” explained white Democrats’ growing resentment toward black political leaders as a white supremacist fear of miscegenation: “What bothered the whites, of course, was the fact that their womenfolk were forced to do business with black postmasters and clerks, often enough with their political cronies hanging about inside the post office.”<sup>23</sup>

What Congressman White referred to was the opportunity that newly-elected African American postmasters had to physically contact white women. Through the exchange of money and mail, it was possible that a black man could unintentionally touch a white woman. According to White, interacting with white women in a post office would give black men the courage to approach white women sexually. Ultimately, white women would reject the advances of black men, according to White, and black men would then be “pushed over the edge of civilization and into a furor of sexuality.”<sup>24</sup> In answering the question of why whites reacted fervently against black autonomy in eastern North Carolina, White concluded that “the local post office was becoming an institution in which a heedless and heartless federal government was casting white women into the very den of the Minotaur.”<sup>25</sup>

White-owned newspapers published white fear of miscegenation and anger at the federal government’s perceived apathy toward the plight of genteel southern ladies. In 1898, *The Lexington Dispatch* published reports and essays from Wilmington and other eastern towns in a special edition titled “Negro Rule In Eastern North Carolina: An Investigation in

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<sup>23</sup> Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 190-191.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

That Section of the State Where the Negro is in the Majority and Rules.” White journalists and editors, supposedly reporting on political action in the east, slandered black leaders as a plague, abominations of their race, violent human devils, worthless laborers, incompetent brutes, travesties on justice, and thieves.<sup>26</sup> Compounding those accusations were stories of black men abusing their newfound power to abuse and sexually dominate white women.<sup>27</sup> The timing of such news could not have been more convenient with a critical election only three months away. In the build-up to November 8, 1898, white North Carolina Democrats utilized newspapers to undermine black leadership in the east and to chip away at the foundations of fusionist power.

The news of supposed African American abuses in the east greatly impacted news readers in Lexington, who wrote to their local paper expressing anger and fear. One resident ignored decades of black organizing in the east and blamed Populists, who were “white men who have quitted the Democratic Party and united their fortunes with the negroes [who] can do nothing for themselves.”<sup>28</sup> Others framed black organizers for causing the disfranchisement of white southern people, and called upon local whites to fight on behalf of the poor, ignorant eastern whites to regain control of the state.<sup>29</sup> Publishers of *The Dispatch* even went so far as to include the voice of a supposedly local “loyal” African American, whose name was kept anonymous: “Republicans and Populists say vote for us and we will give you all county government. Did they do that? No. We, as colored people have decided

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<sup>26</sup> “Negro Rule in Eastern North Carolina,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XVII, August 5 1898 (Lexington, North Carolina), Davidson County Historical Archives in the Lexington Library.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XVII, July 28, 1898.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

to dissolve from that [Republican] party for ever and ever Amen. For they have failed to fulfill their promises. But they did not fool me.”<sup>30</sup>

Chairman of Davidson County’s Democratic Party and editor of *The Dispatch*, H.B. Varner, catalyzed white fear and resentment by calling for political retribution. In an editorial, Varner called on the white citizens of Davidson County to organize for the protection of the county against increased African American power and for retribution on behalf of “disfranchised” eastern whites. At the end of his editorial, Varner announced a meeting of the Democratic Convention and wrote “All voters in Davidson County who want good, honest government, and who intend to support the Democratic nominees, are cordially invited to attend our primaries and conventions.”<sup>31</sup> Varner’s words are clear evidence of Davidson County residents’ fear of resembling the false portrait of the eastern part of the state – dominated and ruled by African Americans.

As H.B. Varner wished, whites in Davidson County began organizing for the election of 1898 under the banner of the Democratic Party and white supremacy. On October 22, a barbecue and “White Man’s Rally” was held in Thomasville, a predominantly black town located to the east of Lexington. The rally was advertised in the *Dispatch* for weeks ahead of time, and on the day-of “the honest white men and the fair women of Davidson County assembled as never before in the history of the county.”<sup>32</sup> Flags and bunting decorated the town, and the day consisted of a parade, live music, speeches by notable local Democratic politicians like R.B. Glenn (the namesake of a local high school), and a dinner served by

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<sup>30</sup> “A Voice from the Colored People,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XVI, August 4, 1897.

<sup>31</sup> “Democratic Convention Called to Meet Saturday, May 21,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XVII, April 27, 1898.

<sup>32</sup> “A Great, Grand Occasion: The Thomasville Barbecue a Success in Every Particular,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XVII, October 26, 1898.

women of Thomasville. At the end of the day, H.B. Varner was presented with a silk-banner bearing the words “White Supremacy” on one side and the American flag on the other.<sup>33</sup>

The organizing and fear-mongering of Davidson County Democrats proved fruitful at the state and local levels on Election Day. *The Dispatch* announced election results with the headline “North Carolina Redeemed! The Legislature Democratic by Two-Thirds Majority in Both Houses” and “Davidson County Goes Democratic from 206 to 571 Majority.”<sup>34</sup> White supremacy was sealed, and Davidson County played no small role: “November the 8<sup>th</sup> was a great day for White Supremacy in North Carolina and *The Dispatch* is proud to say that Davidson County gave a larger majority for the cause than even the most sanguine had anticipated.”<sup>35</sup> The war against blacks had been “fought to a finish and decided in favor of Anglo-Saxon supremacy.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, decades of black political and social advancement were hindered by an electorate that sought its demise, legalized Jim Crow laws, and disfranchised black voters. The white race had been redeemed. Davidson County whites believed that they had been saved from the black control that had ravaged the eastern half of North Carolina.

To the white majority of Lexington, the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 was the triumphant example of white Democrats’ victorious overthrow of Fusion control in the east. The city of Wilmington had been home to a powerful black middle-class. In 1897, the year before the 1898 race riot, there were three blacks on the ten-member board of alderman (the city’s most important elected body). One black man was a member of the five-constituent board of audit and finance. More black men held public offices such as justice of the peace,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> “North Carolina Redeemed,” *The Dispatch*, vol. XVII, November 9, 1898.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

deputy clerk of court, coroner, and superintendent of streets. Wilmington also had two black fire departments, a significant number of black policemen, and black mail clerks and mail carriers.<sup>37</sup> This political power capped the dismantling of Democrats' election machinery by Fusionist policies after the election of 1894. In response, Democrats and the white citizens of Wilmington had been plotting an overthrow of black political power for almost a year before the coup of November 10, 1898.<sup>38</sup>

The outbreak of violence in Wilmington stemmed, in part, from an editorial published on August 18, 1898 by the black-owned *Wilmington Daily Record*. Alexander Manly, the *Daily Record's* African American editor, wrote a response to crusader Rebecca Felton's appeal for lynching of "a thousand [African Americans] a week" to stop supposed black rapists' attacks on white women.<sup>39</sup> Alexander Manly penned a scathing piece in response, arguing that "white women are not any more particular in the matter of clandestine meetings with colored men than are the white men with colored women."<sup>40</sup> Additionally, he wrote, many accusations of rape were merely cases of white women covering up affairs with black men.

Members of the Wilmington Democratic Party were enraged by Manly's words. Bolstered by the statewide Democratic win on November 8, leaders of the Wilmington party decided to discipline Manly. Under the name of former congressman and Democratic mayoral candidate Alfred M. Waddell, an order was issued to Manly that he take his press and leave the city by 7:30 a.m. on November 10. Unbeknownst to Democrats, Manly had

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<sup>37</sup> David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson. *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: UNC Press Books, 2000).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

already left the city: a white mob of nearly 500 people marched to the *Daily Record* office, smashed Manly's equipment, and burned down the building. Afterward, white bands roamed the city and hunted down Fusionists while shooting into neighborhoods believed to be black political strongholds. Many African Americans fled to nearby forests outside of town, while an estimated 11 were killed and 25 wounded. A new all-white city government was selected, and Waddell boasted that the Democrats had "choked the Cape Fear with [black] corpses."<sup>41</sup>

The race riot was hailed in Lexington as the "Wilmington Revolution."<sup>42</sup> In a two-page editorial in *The Dispatch*, the 'revolution' was defended as "the outcome of a social condition caused by the incompetent administration of public affairs by the Republican and Populist parties."<sup>43</sup> According to the article, Democrats had been forced to act due to lawlessness, insecurity to life and property, and daily dangers created by black Republicans in Wilmington. The result of the 'revolution' was, for Democrats, a "spirit of peace and calm and security" as hundreds of "lawless negroes who had infested the town absented themselves."<sup>44</sup> This victory encouraged white Democrats of Davidson County as they moved into the next election cycle in 1900.

Historians David Cecelski and Timothy Tyson argue that the "racial massacre in Wilmington almost certainly would not have occurred without the statewide white supremacy campaign of 1898," in which Lexington and *The Dispatch* played a supporting role.<sup>45</sup> Platforms such as *The Dispatch* stoked white fear and resentment by publishing racist

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Iredell Meares, "Wilmington Revolution," *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XIX no. 6, June 20 1900.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson. *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: UNC Press Books, 2000).

propaganda and broadcasting Democratic talking-points. The work of racial fear-mongering did not end with the 1898 victory, but continued into the Election of 1900.

White North Carolinians began preparing early for the next election. Democrats' attention shifted toward consolidating the control won in 1898, and their primary concern was the passage of an amendment to the North Carolina Constitution drafted by the 1899 General Assembly. The amendment sought to circumvent the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that bans infringement on the right to vote based "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."<sup>46</sup> The new amendment proposed by the General Assembly required prospective voters to pay a poll tax and pass a literacy test. To satisfy some Democrats who feared the amendment would inhibit poor whites from voting, a grandfather clause was included that allowed illiterate men to qualify if they or their ancestors had been registered to vote before 1867 – before Congressional Reconstruction. The amendment directly impacted the majority of African American men of voting-age, most of whom were poor and illiterate. A special election date for the proposed amendment was set for August 2, 1900.

In February, a new batch of articles slandering Republicans, Populists, Fusionists, and black people were published in *The Dispatch*. Three front-page stories about the importance of white supremacy and the election ran in *The Dispatch* on February 28, 1900. The first article detailed the development of county charters for White Supremacy Clubs across the state. Such clubs were necessary for organizing white political power, and "to fully restore and to make permanent in North Carolina the supremacy of the white race."<sup>47</sup> This call for

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<sup>46</sup> James L. Hunt, "Disfranchisement," *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (University of North Carolina Press), <https://www.ncpedia.org/disfranchisement>

<sup>47</sup> "White Supremacy Clubs," *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XVIII no. 42, February 28, 1900.

organization was rooted in the fear of a Republican or Fusionist election victory, as had occurred in 1894 and 1896.

The continuous stronghold of Fusionists and African Americans in North Carolina was exaggerated in the article as a threat to white rule, and it was acknowledged more sinisterly in a second article titled “Negro Domination Ruinous.” This race-baiting article claimed that the Republican Party had always, “without a single exception, been characterized by scandal, corruption, speculation, and the State’s disgrace.” The author of the article then tied the party directly to African Americans, claiming that “the negro is controlled by his passions and follows the leadership of those who will abuse and appeal to his lowest prejudices.” Accordingly, the past successes of the Republican Party were due to the sheep-likeness of black people who flocked together *en masse* to support one party.<sup>48</sup> In order to curb the dangerous effects of ignorant black voters, the author argued in favor of the disfranchisement amendment: “This power should be taken from [the black voter] until he can learn to exercise it in the realization of the responsibilities of citizenship.”<sup>49</sup>

A third article in the same issue of *The Dispatch* called for “all those in favor of a clean white man’s government” to work together to “secure the adoption of the amendment at next August’s election.”<sup>50</sup> The amendment ought to be the dominant issue of the election, argued the anonymous author, because North Carolina needed to be made “secure from the

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<sup>48</sup> “Negro Domination Ruinous,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XVIII no. 42, February 28, 1900.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> “General Items,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XVIII no. 42, February 28, 1900.

dirty horde who have done their best to disgrace it.”<sup>51</sup> It became clear in a later issue exactly who the ‘dirty horde’ included: “The amendment is aimed at the negro and no one else.”<sup>52</sup>

Just as in 1898, Davidson County was home to a massive Democratic Convention. As had occurred in 1898, white male voters were called to the meeting at which candidates for the House of Representatives and various county offices would be chosen. H.B. Varner, editor of *The Dispatch* and chairman of the Democratic Party of Davidson County, penned the article calling for the Democratic Convention. He wrote to his white readers: “There is so much at stake this year that is no more than reasonable to expect every man who is proud of the great race to which he belongs, to do his utmost and to make some sacrifices in upholding the dignity of that race of men who gave this country all the good there is in it.”<sup>53</sup>

The second page of that particular issue of *The Dispatch* showcased the 1900 Democratic State Ticket. Included on the ticket was none other than the editor of *The Dispatch*, H.B. Varner, running as Commissioner of Labor and Printing under gubernatorial candidate Charles B. Aycock. The Republican State Ticket was not included in the paper, but another article arguing for the proposed disfranchisement amendment ran alongside the Democratic ticket.<sup>54</sup>

Racial fear-mongering and calls for white organization continued to make their way into *The Dispatch* throughout 1900, and white supremacists found an interested audience in Davidson County. H.B. Varner reported to the *Raleigh News and Observer* on the state of the election in Davidson County: “The Republicans have been at work for months in my county

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> “Amendment Plain Talk,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XVIII no. 49, April 18, 1900.

<sup>53</sup> H.B. Varner, “Democratic Convention and Great Mass Meeting!” *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XVIII no. 15, May 2, 1900.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

and they are making every effort to carry their point, and defeat the amendment.”<sup>55</sup> Varner then said that Republicans were flooding Davidson County with lies and misinformation about the amendment in order to make poor, illiterate whites afraid that the amendment would disfranchise them. The county, which prior to 1898 had voted Republican because of the high number of poor farmers and African Americans, would nonetheless “give a majority to the amendment,” according to Varner.<sup>56</sup> In another grandstand of white supremacy, gubernatorial candidate Charles Aycock visited Lexington and spoke at a “White Supremacy/Good Government Public Speaking” on June 23, 1900.<sup>57</sup> The work of Democrats in Davidson County proved fruitful yet again on Election Day of 1900 as Democrats won the state Congress and the disfranchisement amendment handily passed. The effects of Democrats’ hard-won white supremacy campaign and the amendment resulted in a steadfast hold on state politics until the 1960s passage of strong federal voting rights legislation.

In order to better understand the rise of white supremacy during the 1898 and 1900 elections, it is critical to return to an analysis of the Lost Cause. A need to rationalize both physical and abstract loss is a theme that shrouds the politics of Davidson County and eventually the Lexington confederate monument. Throughout the South after the Civil War, southerners were forced to reckon with the loss of bodies and culture. Thousands of young men lost their lives in battle, and during Reconstruction Southerners’ world was turned upside down while their political power and wealth shriveled, democracy replaced aristocracy, and power passed into the hands of black and ordinary white citizens.<sup>58</sup> Historian

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<sup>55</sup> “The Political Situation,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XIX no. 2, May 23, 1900.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> “White Supremacy, Good Government Public Speaking,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XIX no. 4, June 6 1900.

<sup>58</sup> Catherine Bishir, “Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past, 1885-1915,” *Southern Cultures Inaugural Issue* (1993): 8.

David Blight argues that “white Southern memory was forever animated by this profound sense of loss in 1865,” and it was from that seedbed that the Lost Cause took root.<sup>59</sup> Southern culture was awash with physical destruction, the trauma of defeat, racial violence, and an abiding sentimentalism that flowered as a certain attitude toward the past. This attitude developed into one of confederate veneration and an allegiance to resistance, and it permeates newspaper reports regarding the Lexington monument in 1905.

In an article published in *The Dispatch* on August 23, 1905, the monument is described as an “ornament to the town and country,” and “permanent recognition of the devotion that is due towards the South’s heroes.”<sup>60</sup> Those heroes include deceased Confederate soldiers and the United Daughters of the Confederacy members who commemorated the deceased. Additionally, religious language on the front of the monument reads, “Sleep sweetly in your humble graves. Sleep, martyrs of a fallen cause, for lo, a marble column graves the Pilgrim here to pause.” The significance of calling confederate dead “martyrs” and visitors to the monument “pilgrims” should not be lost. Erecting such a monument was justified by the fact that many soldiers lied in “humble graves” - unmarked, unknown, and unable to be honored by relatives or supporters.

The soldier’s veneration was compounded by a letter written to *The Dispatch* by Dr. James F. Beall, a prominent resident of Lexington in 1905. Beall’s position in the community added weight to his call for citizens to attend the unveiling ceremony. Beall wrote:

It is impossible for me to say anything that will increase your appreciation of the interest that centers around the occasion of our next meetings, when the splendid monument is to be unveiled to commemorate the loyalty and bravery of Davidson County’s Confederate soldiers. It is fitting that this monument

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<sup>59</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001), 258.

<sup>60</sup> “Cyrus Watson Will Speak: Monument is Erected and Unveiling Day Will be a Great Day in Lexington,” *The Lexington Dispatch*, August 23, 1905.

should stand on this ground in Lexington, where so many years ago they gathered in all strength and beauty of their young manhood to receive their colors from fair hands and march away to join the Confederate army and win a glorious heritage for prosperity.<sup>61</sup>

Loyalty to the Confederate cause and bravery in the face of battle made honoring Lexington's Confederate dead with a monument necessary, according to Beall. He also stated that fighting for the Confederacy was an effort to "win a glorious heritage" for future generations, and the Lexington monument ought to be understood as a testament to such a "heritage." Beall's statement also sparks a question – what heritage was won by an army that lost a war? The heritage won by the losing side required the rationalization of extreme loss into a more appetizing schema: the South's heritage became one of resistance and traditionalism instead of a defense of slavery and white supremacy.

Maintaining the heritage won by Confederate veterans first became the job of Ladies Memorial Associations (LMAs). Such associations were established with gusto throughout the South in the 1860s, and their main objective was to properly bury, mark, and decorate graves of the Confederate dead.<sup>62</sup> The job of such genteel southern women grew as their attention shifted toward guarding regional memory and history. LMAs became the United Daughters of the Confederacy who, according to historian Karen L. Cox, "erected monuments, monitored history for truthfulness, and sought to educate coming generations of white southerners about an idyllic Old South and a just cause – states' rights."<sup>63</sup> Mrs. Mary Nowlin Moon, a member of the Kirkwood City Chapter of the United Daughters of the

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<sup>61</sup> Dr. James F. Beall, *The Lexington Dispatch*, 13 September, 1905.

<sup>62</sup> Bishir, "Landmarks of Power," 9.

<sup>63</sup> Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, ed. John David Smith (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida), 1.

Confederacy in Lynchburg, Virginia, summarized her job as a Daughter at a chapter meeting in 1915:

A part of my heritage was that I came into this world with the blood of a soldier in my veins, a soldier who may have had nothing more to leave behind to me and to those who come after me except in heritage, a heritage so rich in honor and glory that it far surpasses any material wealth that could be mine. But it is mine to cherish, to nurture and to make grace, and to pass along to those yet to come. That is why I have joined a group of ladies whose birthright is the same as mine; an organization which has for its purposes the continuance and furtherance of the true history of the South and the ideals of southern womanhood as embodied in its Constitution.<sup>64</sup>

A key way that LMAs, and later the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), carried on the torch of their heritage was by unveiling confederate monuments throughout the South. Unveiling ceremonies themselves became platforms for the reclaiming and redefining of a lost cause and a lost history.

In Lexington, for example, the unveiling ceremony for the Man on the Monument was rife with symbolism of the southern cause. The Lexington Silver Cornet band played confederate tunes, members of the UDC and their granddaughters rode into the town square in carriages decked with confederate battle flags, Democratic politician Cyrus B. Watson spoke of the veterans' bravery and a courageous "New South," and veterans marched to and from the ceremony as if marching into battle.<sup>65</sup> Celebrating the Confederacy through monument ceremonies was a cornerstone of the UDC effort to revise the history of the Civil War as a heroic defense of states' rights. Confederate soldiers are memorialized as heroes in spite of military defeat because, as the UDC claimed, they fought to defend states' rights.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Mrs. John (Mary Nowlin) Moon, "Why am I a Daughter of the Confederacy?" from the Kirkwood City Chapter 10 of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (Lynchburg, Virginia), June 2, 1915 (in the author's possession).

<sup>65</sup> "Program for the Unveiling of the Confederate Monument" *The Davidson Dispatch*, September 14, 1905.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

Hidden behind the polished pomp of the ceremony was a more insidious motivation: the preservation of white supremacy. Without being situated in a larger history of war, Reconstruction and Redemption, the unveiling ceremony appears to be no more than a patriotic celebration of veterans' sacrifices. When looking past the façade created by flags, beautiful women, flowery speeches, and a sparkling new monument, one will find the roots of a history riddled with a desire to maintain white supremacy.

## Chapter II

The Lost Cause met a fork in the road of Davidson County history after the Man on the Monument's establishment in 1905. The Man's central location in Lexington meant that he became a site for contests over race relations and Lost Cause ideologies. Leading up to the erection of the monument, the Lost Cause had depended upon a bounteous fear of African Americans. White Democrats in Davidson County had focused their time and energy on re-establishing a fallen Antebellum social hierarchy. The 1910s and 1920s brought about rapid changes on national, statewide, and local levels, and the culture of the Lost Cause was directly affected. In Davidson County specifically, expressions of the Lost Cause split between two groups: racial radicals, specifically the Ku Klux Klan, and Racial Conservatives who focused on remembering the heroism of local confederate veterans.

Historian Joel Williamson has written that in the South, "if one could somehow weigh for duration and intensity every thought about blacks that passed through every white mind between 1897 and 1907, most of those thoughts would have reflected the Radical mentality."<sup>67</sup> The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898, hailed in Lexington as a valiant revolution, was simply one expression of Radicalism in North Carolina and in Davidson County.<sup>68</sup> Radicalism's version of white supremacy was also loudly proclaimed by *The Dispatch* and its editor, H.B. Varner. Williamson argues that by 1915 Radicalism had "begun to lose its distinctive color."<sup>69</sup> The once vibrant ideology began to mix with a subdued white supremacy that Williamson calls Racial Conservatism. In this vein of racial thought, blacks were still

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<sup>67</sup> Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 181.

<sup>68</sup> Iredell Meares, "The Wilmington Revolution," *The Davidson Dispatch*, vol. XIX no. 6, June 20, 1900 (Lexington, North Carolina).

<sup>69</sup> Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*, 181

considered inferior to whites but a paternalistic approach was deemed necessary to fix the post-war “black problem.”<sup>70</sup> Such an approach required whites to civilize free blacks; in effect, to make them more white via education, fighting poverty, and job training. Racial Conservatism was characterized by the veneration of the Old South and a deriding concern for the well-being of African Americans. Williamson argues that Conservatism and Radicalism merged in the 1910s, “flowing smooth and wide, the father of Southern racial waters.”<sup>71</sup>

The history of Lexington, however, gives testimony to a different story. In Lexington, it appears that Conservatism and Radicalism emerged as two opposing sides from the same root of the Lost Cause and white supremacy. There is no way to pinpoint when exactly the split occurred, but articles in *The Dispatch* after 1905 track an increasingly defined border between two expressions of the Lost Cause. An analysis of *Dispatch* articles shows Davidson County Radicals and Conservatives in constant conflict rather than cooperating within the same stream of racial thought.

Radicalism in Davidson County materialized as the presence of America’s most notorious white supremacist group: the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan existed in Davidson County since the 1870s, but Klan activity rose significantly in the 1920s. The increased activity reflects the second wave, or rebirth, of the Klan on a national level.<sup>72</sup> The rebirth of the Klan was a conservative reactionary response to increased immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe to the United States of America, industrialization of the South, and amplified

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> David Cunningham, *Klansville U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 17.

globalization. The latter reasons for Klan revival were particularly resonant in Lexington, where new textile and furniture factories drew African Americans, poor whites, and immigrant workers. Racial radicals, and specifically members of the Klan, feared miscegenation and the loss of whites' jobs to blacks and immigrants.

In the late 1920s and again in 1930, local members of the Klan proudly rallied in the streets of Lexington. One image in *The Dispatch* from the early 1920s shows five robed Klansmen rallying around the Man on the Monument while, in the background, cars zoom by and citizens conduct their daily business in downtown Lexington.<sup>73</sup> A similar image from 1930 again depicts members of the Klan rallying near the Man on the Monument. The caption beneath the image reads: "Many well-known men were members of the Klan, and it is entirely possible that beneath the hoods of the figures demonstrating above are faces of prominent citizens of Lexington"<sup>74</sup> The images exemplify the degree to which Racial Radicalism had a home in Davidson County, and the extent to which the Man on the Monument stood at the center of their world.

While Klan activity was flourishing in 1920s Davidson County, racial moderates were claiming their own interpretation of the county and its history. In 1921, an interview with Captain Frank C. Robbins was printed in *The Dispatch*. Captain Robbins, a Confederate veteran and leader in the post-war growth of Lexington, was hailed in the story by fellow community members as a "leading citizen, brave soldier, forthright statesman, and able lawyer."<sup>75</sup> Nearly half of the interview was dedicated to Capt. Robbins's military adventures

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<sup>73</sup> H. Lee Waters, *The Davidson Dispatch*, May 9, 1967 (Lexington, North Carolina), Davidson County Historical Archives.

<sup>74</sup> *The Davidson Dispatch*, March 1958.

<sup>75</sup> "Captain F.C. Robbins Was a Leading Lexington Citizen for Many Years," *The Dispatch*, June 25, 1958.

and heroism in the Confederate Army. In line with Lost Cause reverence for the sacrifices of Confederate soldiers, the *Dispatch* article holds Robbins and other local Confederate veterans in a godly light. The author of the article described Robbins and other veterans as more brave and noble than the heroes of Julius Caesar's tenth legion and Napoleon Bonaparte's Old Guard.<sup>76</sup> The interview continues with descriptions of Robbins as an upright, grand living hero in whom the values of Robert E. Lee were reflected. Accordingly, Robbins and his fellow veterans exemplified the Lost Cause: "Though broken in defeat, [he] brought home with him just the courage and the faith in the right which made possible the rebuilding of a greater and more glorious South. Their sacrifices and deeds in peace have matched their accomplishments in war. In these heroes our people have a goodly heritage."<sup>77</sup>

The "goodly heritage" secured by Davidson County's Confederate veterans was one that, in the words of historian David Blight, represented "a prior heroic age, a time of authentic, romantic experience" during the Antebellum era.<sup>78</sup> It was a heritage built upon mutual concessions of Northern and Southern veterans' sincere devotion, forged by Lee and Grant at Appomattox. According to Blight, as the nation reunited and shifted into a period characterized by mass immigration to America's shores, and as racial hatred and violence reached a new zenith, veterans "provided a mother lode of nostalgia to an age that needed escape from its cities, its boardrooms, its dangerous and confusing machines, and its economic panics."<sup>79</sup> During Reconstruction, and at the turn of the century, Civil War veterans became synonymous with a nostalgia for a romantic pre-war era.

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<sup>76</sup> "Interview with Early Lexingtonian Reprinted," *The Dispatch*, October 6, 1972.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001), 209.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

Captain Robbins embodied the post-war spirit of reunion, rebuilding, and remembering. In the same article that praised Robbins's military actions for the Confederate Army, when asked about post-war socio-political changes, Robbins was quoted as having said:

The changes have been so many and so marked that it does not seem like the same world. In fact, I feel that I have lived in four different periods of civilization; before the Civil War, during that struggle, after it and during the recent World War, and in each one of these periods wonderful things have happened and great, great progress has been made.<sup>80</sup>

In the statement above, Robbins conceded to the idea that “wonderful things” had happened and “great progress” had been made since the Civil War. Unlike his racially radical counterparts, he did not claim that modern life should regress to mirror pre-war times. Given the high praise with which Robbins was held in *The Dispatch* it is reasonable to assume that the average reader of the local paper, and at very least the editors and writers for the paper, would have favored Robbins's acceptance of social, economic, and political change.

In 1950, the Man on the Monument required relocation due to increased traffic concerns, and the movement became an outlet for Racial Conservatism and moderation. Originally in 1905 the Man had been placed on a small median in the intersection of Main and Center Streets. At the time, vehicle traffic was non-existent in Davidson County. Horses and buggies, if wrecked into the monument's tall base, would not have caused much harm to the monument itself. This changed during the '50s when automobiles had become commonplace in Lexington, and when Main Street was the life-giving aorta for industries between Winston-Salem and Lexington. Lexington's narrow streets were not adequate for the amount of traffic brought on by post-World War II industrialism and commercialism. The

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<sup>80</sup> “Interview with Early Lexingtonian Reprinted,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, October 6 1972.

Man on the Monument had been hit several times by drunk, tired, or careless drivers, and the missing chunks of granite from his base still testify to his tangles with modernism. Car accidents and traffic became so unbearable in Lexington that a special commission was created to address the issue in 1950. One of the commission's top recommendations was that the Man on the Monument be "moved from the busiest traffic junction and be relocated more suitably."<sup>81</sup> The commission and its supportive city administrators agreed that moving the monument would provide more lanes through Lexington's busiest intersection, and thus the arteries of traffic could unclog and the Man would be safe from future accidents.

On the day of the monument's relocation, *The Dispatch* reported that the transportation improvement job had "brought both favorable and adverse comment among local citizens."<sup>82</sup> *The Dispatch*, however, spun the Man's relocation into a stand of defiance, a rallying call for the South to rise again. The article described the Man's new location 101 feet behind his old spot as a "counter-attack": "In short, he's retreating just 101 feet before setting up what can be a counter-attack. Good Southern folks here will argue he was never retreating, just fighting a "delayed action" until a "new day." The new day is today, just one day after the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration."<sup>83</sup>

The Man's 'retreat' was given a narrative voice by a reporter, L.A. Martin, who wrote for *The Dispatch*. Martin penned a letter in the paper, supposedly from the Man to the people of Lexington, on occasion of the statue's relocation. The Man begins his statement by expressing gratitude, first to the people of Lexington and then to the United Daughters of the Confederacy. He then moves into a recollection of important social and political events that

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<sup>81</sup> "As Recommended," *The Dispatch*, April 17, 1950.

<sup>82</sup> "Monument Will Face Direction of 'Damyankes'," *The Dispatch*, July 5, 1950.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

he has watched unfold before him on Main Street since 1905. He describes the “cars and trucks, and fire trucks, and patrol cars, and army trains” that had rumbled by and treated him “with great dignity and respect” during his stay on Main Street.<sup>84</sup> He details memories of soldiers marching down Main Street and off to World Wars I and II, of the annual Easter, Fourth of July, and Christmas parades, of a magnificent circus parade with elephants and clowns, and of such dignitaries like William Jennings Bryan entering the county courthouse.<sup>85</sup>

After reminiscing on the shifting flow of people through time and along Main Street, the Man points again to change. In a “submissive tone, and in the spirit of a true Southern Gentleman,” the Man expressed his gratitude for being moved to a location at which he could continue his watch over his city.<sup>86</sup> Yet in the midst of changes wrought by modernity since the Civil War, the Man on the Monument remained a constant for the people of Lexington, just as the Lost Cause changed through time while remaining viable. The Man promised to remain loyal to his people: “I want to stand here and live here so long as my people live here – where they go, I want to go, where they live I want to live, and where they are buried there I want to be buried. But meantime, I want to carry on and continue my vigil over my people.”<sup>87</sup>

At the end of the 1940s and start of the 1950s, the nation was reeling from an economic boom that brought small towns like Lexington into an increasingly global economy. At the same time, civil rights activists were ratcheting up their activities across the nation and especially in the South. For a people unsure of what the future – let alone the

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<sup>84</sup> “Meditations and Observations,” *The Dispatch*, July 8, 1950.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

present – held, the Man on the Monument symbolized a simpler and romanticized time that had extended into the present. He, as a literal embodiment of the Lost Cause, acted as a rock from ages past upon which Lexingtonians could cling as the turbulent waves of change crashed around them. His defiant new position facing the “damyankees” was a rallying cry for the good Southern folk of Davidson County in the midst of change – even a change as seemingly insignificant as increased traffic.<sup>88</sup> At the end of his ode, the Man sets an example for Lexingtonians moving into the future:

Then wiping a tear, and staring out into space, and trembling with a pathetic voice, the old man said: “No doubt you have seen that I am going to have to move and take my stand elsewhere. I shall not complain. Naturally, I shall go reluctantly, but I shall go bravely and courageously and without whining. I learned to take orders and obey them back in the [1860s] and I have never forgotten how.”<sup>89</sup>

With his last words before removal, the Man acts as the obedient and loyal soldier, whose personality was developed by the authors of the Lost Cause many decades prior. Just like his real-life exemplar Captain Robbins, the Man symbolized submission to change whilst holding on to a beloved southern heritage. The Man provided a sterling example for Racial Conservatives in Davidson County. Just as the Man had fulfilled the role of loyal soldier by obeying orders of surrender, moderate residents of Davidson County reluctantly obeyed the orders of federal civil rights legislation in the 1950s. The symbolism of the Man on the Monument provided them with an example of how to remain loyal to one’s superior while also maintaining pride in a Confederate heritage.

The Man on the Monument’s emphasis on maintaining connections to the past should be understood as a reaction to post-World War II black organizing. The Second World War

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> L.A. Martin, “Peace at Last!” *The Dispatch*, July 8, 1950.

increased racial tensions throughout the South: whites expected the war to preserve the status quo, while blacks were not eager to aid the war effort unless their participation resulted in equal rights.<sup>90</sup> During the war, black North Carolinians challenged lynching, police brutality, a lack of due process in court, infringements on suffrage, segregated facilities, and disparities in employment and wages.<sup>91</sup> Toward the end of the war, North Carolina became known for its immense NAACP membership. The number of total branches in the state doubled, and total membership neared ten thousand.<sup>92</sup> Wartime development of the NAACP in North Carolina signaled a growing maturity in the methods used to fight racial discrimination and segregation. At the end of the 1940s, whites were only slightly aware of the challenge to their customs, laws, and traditions that would detonate during the civil rights struggle of the 1950s and 1960s.

Perhaps the most challenging obstacle to maintaining North Carolinians' cherished confederate heritage was the 1954 Supreme Court declaration in *Brown v. Board* that separate but equal facilities are inherently unequal. Kansas and other states complied with the decision, but many southern states – including North Carolina – did not follow suit. Initially, North Carolina resisted desegregation of public schools. In response to the *Brown* decision, the state created the Pupil Assignment Act in 1955 to give local school districts broad authority in making student school assignments. The legislation was supposedly race-neutral, but it allowed district authorities to create a plethora of criteria that black students were required to meet in order to obtain school re-assignment. This made it virtually impossible

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<sup>90</sup> Crow et al, "Black Life in the Age of Jim Crow," *A History of African Americans in North Carolina* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Division of Archives and History, 1992), 145-147.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 148-152.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 151.

for black students seeking to transfer to white schools.<sup>93</sup> The emphasis on local control was taken a step further in 1956 when a state congressional committee, composed entirely of whites, crafted a legislative package known as the Pearsall Plan. The plan contained a constitutional amendment with two components: first, North Carolina would pay private school tuition grants to parents whose children were assigned to integrated public schools, thus giving parents the legal authority to reject the *Brown* decision.<sup>94</sup> Second, a local option clause declared that each school district contain “local option units,” roughly corresponding to the territory surrounding any given school. Each of those units, if faced with pressure to integrate, could hold a public referendum on whether to close its schools.<sup>95</sup> During a special session of the General Assembly, state legislators passed the plan with only two dissenting votes, but its enactment was contingent upon the outcome of a public referendum. On September 8, 1956, voters approved the proposals by a margin of more than four to one.<sup>96</sup> North Carolina succeeded in limiting school integration to a mere handful of African Americans attending white schools. The total effect of North Carolina’s desegregation stalling tactics was felt by 1964, when less than one percent of the state’s black children attended school with whites.<sup>97</sup> Rather than fight the Supreme Court’s order of desegregation with “all deliberate speed,” state legislators decided that moderation and sloth-like speed were the best approach. Throughout the state schools remained segregated via the ‘freedom-

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<sup>93</sup> Kyle Porter, “The Pupil Assignment Act: North Carolina’s Response to *Brown v. Board of Education*,” *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press), <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/pupil-reassignment-act-north-carolina>

<sup>94</sup> Crow et al, “With All Deliberate Speed,” *A History of African Americans in North Carolina* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Division of Archives and History, 1992), 166-170.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 168-169.

<sup>96</sup> Sarah C. Thuesen, “Pearsall Plan,” *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (University of North Carolina Press), <https://www.ncpedia.org/pearsall-plan>.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*.

of-choice' policies of local communities, their school boards, and persistent patterns of neighborhood segregation.<sup>98</sup>

Freedom of choice in North Carolina meant the burden of desegregating fell on black students and their families. Those who requested reassignment faced intimidation, and during the years in which the freedom-of-choice plan was operative (until 1968), eighty-five percent of the state's black students continued to attend all-black schools.<sup>99</sup> Not one white student requested reassignment to a black school. In response, African American parents, typically with assistance from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or the NAACP Education Fund, filed suits against North Carolina school boards. A slew of federal and district court rulings, including *Teel v. Pitt County Board of Education* (1967), and *Boomer v. Beaufort County Board of Education* (1968), prompted the eventual desegregation of North Carolina's schools.<sup>100</sup> Black organizing played a key role in challenging traditional racial mores. Students adopted civil disobedience as a means of challenging segregation in schools, restaurants, and other public facilities. Sit-ins, for example, were a favored tactic of black students in Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Charlotte, Durham, Raleigh, Fayetteville, Elizabeth City, and High Point.<sup>101</sup>

Efforts by North Carolina's black citizens to effect the desegregation of public facilities during the 1950s and 1960s prompted open resistance from segregationists, White Citizens' Councils, and the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>102</sup> As desegregation and school choice were battled in the

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<sup>98</sup> Kyle Porter, "With All Deliberate Speed," *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press), <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/all-deliberate-speed>

<sup>99</sup> Crow et al, "With All Deliberate Speed," 171-172.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 172-173.

<sup>101</sup> Crow et al, "The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s," *A History of African Americans in North Carolina* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Division of Archives and History, 1992), 183-189.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 189.

state legislature and in federal courts during the 1960s, the Ku Klux Klan in Davidson County took a radical approach to social change and federal legislation. The local Klan promulgated a deluge of activity in response to desegregation efforts within the state and county. On the night of January 10, 1967, local Klansmen burned a cross on the front lawn of Fair Grove High School in Thomasville. According to a *Dispatch* article published the following day, the Fair Grove burning was the “fourth such” incident of Klan intimidation “within the past 18 months in the Thomasville area.”<sup>103</sup> Thomasville was (and still is) home to a large African American population, but according to Fair Grove’s principal in 1967 “the Fair Grove student body numbers 1,125, two of whom are Negro students.”<sup>104</sup> The principal explained that the 1966-1967 school year was the school’s first attempt at integration, and he attributed desegregation to the Klan’s act of intimidation.

Cross burnings like the one at Fair Grove School appear to have been Davidson County Klansmen’s favorite tactic to target ‘race-mixers’ and poor whites. Even before Fair Grove’s integration, the Klan fought any threat of race-mixing. In December of 1965 a cross loaded with cherry-bombs burned and sent small explosions into the night air in front of an African American dance hall.<sup>105</sup> In 1966, a cross was burned outside the home of a white minister who pastored a black church in the northern part of Davidson County.<sup>106</sup> Another cross burnings occurred before the home of a former Klan chaplain who denounced the KKK.<sup>107</sup> In July of the same year, Klansmen burned a cross at the home of a furniture worker “who had

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<sup>103</sup> *The Davidson Dispatch*, January 11, 1967.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> “Cross burned near here,” *The Thomasville Times*, December 29, 1965 (Thomasville, North Carolina), from *The Davidson Dispatch* Collection at the Davidson County Archives.

<sup>106</sup> Ray Rollins, “Davidson Klan called Tiny,” *The Thomasville Times*, January 13, 1966.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

received a helping hand from a Negro co-worker.”<sup>108</sup> The same man reported that months before he had found a pamphlet in the front seat of his truck which warned him that “Your Klansmen are Watching You.”<sup>109</sup> The pamphlet appeared shortly after he had ridden with a black co-worker to their jobs at S and W Furniture on Lexington Avenue. One month later, Davidson County’s fourth cross-burning victim within thirteen months claimed that she and her family were targeted because of “her association with local Negro women orderlies while she was a patient at City Memorial Hospital.”<sup>110</sup>

Besides cross burnings, the local Klan made its presence known by simply being visible in public. Caravans of robed Klansmen paraded in various sections of Lexington on countless occasions.<sup>111</sup> In July of 1966, a crowd of 250 Klansmen rallied near the confederate monument in downtown Lexington. At the rally, speakers declared North Carolina to be “Klansville U.S.A.,” announced a membership drive across the state, and publicized plans to rally each night throughout the summer.<sup>112</sup> Despite the Klan’s activity throughout the 1960s, the tension between Racial Radicals and Conservatives still remained. The tension is exemplified by the reprinting of the 1921 interview with Captain Robbins in 1972.<sup>113</sup> The article’s resurgence in *The Dispatch* is a symbol of moderate Conservatives in the county whose beliefs did not wholly align with those of radical Klansmen.

It is unclear what activities the local Klan participated in after the 1960s, but membership did resurge during the 1990s. Community backlash to the group’s presence at the end of the

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<sup>108</sup> “Cross is Burned on Taylor Street,” *The Thomasville Times*, July 15, 1966.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Bob Marsh, “‘Done No Wrong’ cross-burning victim says,” *The Thomasville Times*, August 18, 1966.

<sup>111</sup> “Klan Demonstration at Square,” *The Davidson Dispatch*, March 1958.

<sup>112</sup> “About 250 KKK Rally at Lexington,” *The Thomasville Times*, July 15, 1966.

<sup>113</sup> “Interview with Early Lexingtonian Reprinted,” *The Dispatch*, October 6, 1972.

twentieth century indicates a growing social unacceptability of radical racism. Even still, the presence of the Klan indicates that such racism persisted in Davidson County through the end of the twentieth century. In 1990, George Byerly was elected as the state KKK's Grand Dragon. Byerly, a Lexington native, decided upon his election that the new capital for the state organization would be in Southmont – an unincorporated community of about 1,500 in Davidson County. A reporter for *The Dispatch* interviewed Byerly who, when asked about his decision to relocate the state Klan to Davidson County, claimed that his decision was based on prolific Klan activity in the county during the 1960s.<sup>114</sup> In defense of his decision, Byerly said: “You want your state organization’s capital at the strongest points. I feel this is the best area to be located.”<sup>115</sup> Being the “strongest point” for the state capital meant that the Klan already had deep roots in Davidson County, and therefore the relocation of the KKK to the area would not come as an unwelcome shock to residents.

By 1998, though, many citizens had become frustrated with the Klan's unflattering association with Davidson County. In March of 1998, local Klansman Robert Moore was featured on the Jerry Springer show. Throughout the broadcast, Moore made vulgar racial comments at African Americans in the audience, repeatedly calling them “niggers.” Moore even called Jerry Springer a “Jew boy.”<sup>116</sup> While on air, Moore claimed that his purpose for being on the show was for one reason, and one reason only: “To get my message out for Davidson County and Thomasville, North Carolina, that race-mixing is bad.”<sup>117</sup> Additionally, Moore claimed that the KKK played a major part in the 1997 Davidson County

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<sup>114</sup> Chad Killebrew, “State KKK Locates in Southmont,” *The Dispatch*, January 27, 1990.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Katie Olsen, “Alston: Klan has influence in county,” *The Thomasville Times*, April 2, 1998, 1A.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

Commissioners meeting when the board decided not to recognize Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Residents of Davidson County reacted strongly to Moore's inflammatory language. North Carolina NAACP President Melvin "Skip" Alston backed Moore's claim about the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Alston stated that the local Klan had an undeniable influence on the Commissioners' decision, and he quoted local Klansmen who had boasted the decision against Dr. King's holiday as "their victory."<sup>118</sup> Residents interviewed for *The Thomasville Times* disowned Robert Moore and the local Klan. Thomasville Mayor Don Truell said Moore's comments were "in no way indicative of Davidson County, Thomasville, or North Carolina."<sup>119</sup> Sue Hunter, a former county commissioner, claimed that Moore's appearance on the Springer show was "the most repulsive thing that could happen to Davidson County," and that "now is the time to stand up and say this is not Davidson County."<sup>120</sup> Despite Hunter's statement that residents ought to "stand up" for the county in the wake of Robert Moore's television appearance, she had been a member of the commission that voted against making Martin Luther King, Jr. Day an observed holiday in Davidson County. Ms. Hunter, unlike the outspoken NAACP leaders also interviewed by *The Dispatch*, represented the voice of many conservatives who wished to separate themselves from Radical Racism. Her voice highlights the division between conservatives, who wished to maintain some aspects of status quo, and radicals, in this case represented by the Klan. The public backlash to Moore's racist representation of Davidson County exemplifies how a generally conservative public was pushing away its radical peers.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Katie Olsen, "Alston: Klan has influence in county," *The Thomasville Times*, April 2, 1998, 10A.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

The shame associated with racial radicals continued into 1998 when a drama involving the Klan and the local Sheriff unfolded. A Klansman by the name of Rodney Hunt surrendered his robe, hood, and other Klan-related paraphernalia to Sheriff Gerald Hege at a televised press conference. Hunt had been a leader of over 200 Klan members in Davidson County for eight months as Exalted Cyclops of the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. During the press conference, Hunt cited a desire to restore his standing in the community as his main reason for leaving the Klan. If true, Hunt's claim is evidence of public disapproval of Racial Radicalism embodied by the KKK. If untrue, as some in the community have claimed, then Hunt's retirement from the Klan was likely a political motive to support Sheriff Hege's re-election campaign. Two weeks prior to the press conference, fliers had circulated claiming the local Klan supported Hege's re-election. President of the Davidson County chapter of the NAACP, Leon Hargrave, argued that the press conference was a political stunt to place distance between Hege and the local Klan, so that Hege could retain support of moderate and African American voters in the county.<sup>121</sup> Regardless of the political nature of Hunt's surrender, Sheriff Hege, a conservative Republican, publicly encouraged the weakening of Davidson County's most popular Racial Radicals. Hege's press conference carries the same weight as Sue Hunter's statement in *The Dispatch*. Both people were prominent conservative voices in the community who publicly derided the Ku Klux Klan.

The local Klan organization was angered that Sheriff Hege had acquired its paraphernalia. Three days after Hunt's press conference, local Klansmen were joined by members from as far away as Indiana at the Old Court House and Lexington Square, where

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<sup>121</sup> Craig Allen, "Klan leader gives up hood, robe: NAACP president says event was politically motivated to aid Hege," *The Dispatch*, August 12, 1998, 1A-4A.

the Man on the Monument stands guard. The Klansmen, some donning their robes and hoods, marched to the new courthouse on West Center Street in search of Sheriff Hege. They demanded that Hunt's robe be returned to the local Klan organization. Quite anti-climactically, by the time Hege arrived on the scene deputies had cleared the courthouse parking lot. Hege later told a reporter for *The Dispatch*, "They'd really hate to know where I was tonight. I was collecting five more robes from Klansmen in Tyro... They're my robes now. They were given to me. It says to me that there is not enough racist feelings in this county to keep this going."<sup>122</sup>

Perhaps Hege was correct that Racial Radicalism was a dying ideology in Davidson County. Even if the Klan's Radicalism had not died in 1998, the organization's power and efforts within the county were significantly tarnished by public responses to Robert Moore's racist spectacle on the Jerry Springer Show and Rodney Hunt's public defection from the group. Both events indicate a demarcation in the county between racial radicals and everyone else. The Radicalism represented by the Klan, and which had once been openly espoused in *The Dispatch* by people such as H.B. Varner, was no longer acceptable by the general public. Whether or not such a purge was politically motivated is unclear; however, what is obvious is the delineation between average Conservatives and their reactionary counterparts within Davidson County.

Klansmen and conservatives in Davidson County represent a split in Lost Cause ideology augmented by the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision. Throughout the end of the twentieth century, the Klan's Radicalism became socially unacceptable, while a gentler form of the

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<sup>122</sup> Jill Doss-Raines, "Klan demands robe from sheriff," *The Dispatch*, August 15, 1998, 1A-11A.

Lost Cause remained acceptable to most Davidson County residents. The Lost Cause's slightly less divisive strain is what sustained the Man on the Monument through the last half of the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries.

Perhaps this socially acceptable understanding of the Lost Cause could best be understood within the twenty-first century debate involving confederate monuments as the "heritage" strain. Many Americans claim that confederate monuments symbolize 'southern heritage,' an umbrella phrase that rationalizes monuments as symbols of states' rights, commemorations of deceased ancestors, or some ill-defined 'southern-ness.' Odes to the Man on the Monument and the glorification of Captain Robbins during the mid-to-late twentieth century point to Lexingtonians' veneration of the Man as a symbol of their heritage. Their claim of the Man as a legacy symbol is highlighted when contrasted with blatantly hateful Klan activity in the county. The local Klan organization used the Man on the Monument several times as a meeting place for rallies. It is also critical to remember that Racial Radicals were socially accepted during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that their beliefs were what led to the construction of the Man in 1905.

When placed into a convoluted history torn between Radicalism and Conservatism, it becomes more difficult to state whether the Man on the Monument fits within the "heritage" or "hate" categories of the modern debate. It appears that the Man, like the people over whom he keeps watch, is conflicted between both categories. Given that the "heritage" strain appears to win out over "hate" at the end of the twentieth century, it is critical to recall the Man's original roots in 1905. Many in Davidson County might argue that the Man is a memorial to Confederate veterans who were the ancestors of residents living in the county. They might say that the Man, to them, is a commemoration of their ancestors' sacrifices and

patriotism. When discussing the meaning of Confederate monuments today, it is important to recognize the connection to ancestors and patriotism that many people see represented in said monuments. However, the history of the Man on the Monument is likely misunderstood by many residents who are unaware of the monument's ties to a white supremacist monumentation campaign carried out by Democrats at the turn of the century. The Man on the Monument is a vestige of the Lost Cause, and he was a product of white Democrats who feared black equality and sought to maintain white supremacy. The Man on the Monument, therefore, can be understood as a descendant of hatred molded by his relative, heritage. He represents not one or the other, but both heritage and hate.

## Conclusion

In 1998, Sheriff Gerald Hege claimed that there was not enough racist sentiment left in Davidson County to fuel the fire of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>123</sup> Many residents might mirror Hege's statement that racism has been purged from the county, just as some Americans argue that racism in America is currently moot. The belief that racism has been defeated often merges with the argument that confederate monuments reflect southern heritage, not white supremacist hatred. Within that seedbed of ideas the debate between heritage and hate has flourished.

Twenty miles north of Lexington, the city of Winston-Salem is challenged with division because of its own confederate monument. The statue became central to local controversy after the deadly 2017 protest in Charlottesville, Virginia. A statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee was the original epicenter of the Charlottesville controversy. Attention to confederate monuments heightened on a national scale, though, after a young woman was killed by a white supremacist in Charlottesville. In Winston-Salem, an ardent statue-supporter named Pattie Curran said that she and other supporters have a "god-given right protected by the Constitution to honor our dead. These are dead soldiers. Leave our monuments alone. They are not harming anyone."<sup>124</sup> In the same vein of thought, Lance Spivey, a pro-statue organizer, stressed that the Confederacy stood for states' rights, not slavery, and that confederate monuments honor the men who died defending the ideals of America's founding fathers.<sup>125</sup> Others disagreed, including Mayor Allen Joines who initially called for the

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<sup>123</sup> Craig Allen, "Klan leader gives up hood, robe: NAACP president says event was politically motivated to aid Hege," *The Dispatch*, August 12, 1998 (Lexington, North Carolina), 1A.

<sup>124</sup> John Hinton, "Winston-Salem's Confederate statue: A symbol of white supremacy or a memorial to Confederate sacrifice?" *Winston-Salem Journal*, January 26, 2019 (Winston-Salem, North Carolina).

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

statue's removal. Joines argued that the Winston-Salem monument is a "symbol of subjugation of a people" once enslaved in the South.<sup>126</sup>

Additionally, the Winston monument has been the target of defamation and protest. On Christmas day, 2018, a black marker was used to deface the statue by writing "Cowards & Traitors" on the front face of the monument. Earlier that year in August someone vandalized the statue by spraying black paint on two sides. On January 3, 2019, an anti-monument group protested on one side of Fourth Street while across the street, at the statue's base, stood a group of monument supporters.<sup>127</sup> Since then a local chapter of the North Carolina Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy have vowed to fight the statue's removal with "everything in [their] power."<sup>128</sup> Mayor Joines attempted to strike a compromise between those who wanted the monument discarded and those who sought its position maintained. He decided to have the monument moved to a confederate section of Winston's largest cemetery, where a dignified remembrance of deceased soldiers could be provided while keeping the monument away from a public square.<sup>129</sup>

The controversy surrounding the Winston-Salem monument has not spread southward to Lexington. Perhaps this is because, unlike what Sheriff Hege said about racism's death in Davidson County, white supremacy is alive and protects the monument from outside opinion. Regardless of whether racism does or does not exist currently in Davidson County should not fully define our understanding of the Man on the Monument. To understand him, we must return to the history surrounding his development and construction.

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Wesley Young, "Confederate group vows statue fight," *The Winston-Salem Journal*, January 4, 2019.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

White supremacy initiated the cause for a confederate monument in Lexington. To understand how, it is critical to return to an analysis of the Lost Cause. In its purest form, the Lost Cause is one understanding of the death and destruction wrought by the Civil War. The South faced the nearly total destruction of physical property, as well as the attempted annihilation of a pre-war culture defined by slavery. The war swallowed the lives of thousands. Such an immense human loss was compounded during Reconstruction, when white Southerners' political power and wealth shriveled, democracy replaced aristocracy, and power passed into the hands of black and ordinary white citizens.<sup>130</sup> Historian David Blight argues that "white Southern memory was forever animated by this profound sense of loss in 1865," and it was from that seedbed that the Lost Cause took root.<sup>131</sup> Southern culture was awash with physical destruction, the trauma of defeat, racial violence, and an abiding sentimentalism that flowered as a certain attitude toward the past. While grieving their losses and fearing future change, Southerners looked over their shoulders for inspiration when reconstructing the South. Their reassembled southern schema became one of confederate veneration and an allegiance to resistance.

The most salient component of the Lost Cause is its veiled defense of white supremacy. During the Elections of 1898 and 1900, North Carolina Democrats made white supremacy their rallying cry, and they claimed that by voting Democratic blacks would be hindered from achieving equality. In *The Dispatch*, white supremacy took shape as the fear of miscegenation, stories of black ineptitude, and calls for white Democratic organization. Their rallying cries proved successful in both elections, which resulted in overwhelming

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<sup>130</sup> Catherine Bishir, "Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past, 1885-1915," *Southern Cultures* Inaugural Issue (1993): 8.

<sup>131</sup> David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 258.

Democratic wins. With those election successes North Carolina was “redeemed” from black influence, but the work of the Lost Cause and white supremacy was not yet complete in Davidson County. State Democratic leaders set into motion a monumentation campaign across North Carolina as a way to seal their power and reinterpret history in their favor.

The Lost Cause won a permanent stay in Lexington via the Man on the Monument, and afterward it continued to evolve in the county. After the monument’s establishment, the Lost Cause split between two different paths. Those two paths are known as Racial Radicalism and Racial Conservatism, and both flourished in Davidson County during the twentieth century. Radicalism found expression amongst the Ku Klux Klan, whose members used intimidation to fight segregation and race-mixing in the county. Conservatives, however, took a more moderate approach to socio-political change. They favored token and delayed integration, and they used the Man on the Monument to claim their ownership of an honorable southern heritage. Although Racial Radicalism may have lost its social reputability by the late 1990s, Conservatism’s stay in Davidson County must be understood as a remnant of the original Lost Cause. Both streams stem from the same headwaters that were rife with animosity toward blacks and a desire to maintain political control.

Those who claim that the Man on the Monument solely represents heritage are missing half of the story. The Man was equated to southern heritage only to solidify the legitimacy of white supremacy as a reaction to black equality. If white Democrats had not feared black political power at the turn of the century, they would not have needed to redeem their state government from the hands of supposedly unjust and incompetent blacks. If white Democrats had not found it necessary to seal their power with a monument-building crusade across the state, then the Man would likely never have been built. When we are able to

understand the nuanced (and far less appealing) history attached to the Man on the Monument and his counterparts across the nation, we might begin to fathom that they were never intended merely to memorialize the sacrifices of patriotic southern men. Despite how the Lost Cause transformed during the twentieth century, we cannot deny that the Man was dedicated as a reaction to black equality. The Man's heritage extends further and more deeply than confederate veneration. The Man on the Monument's existence speaks of a heritage of hatred in Davidson County.

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