

ELLIS, ELIZABETH A., M.A. "Branded as Cain": Jonathan Worth and Unionism in Post-Civil War North Carolina. (2018)  
Directed by Dr. Mark E. Elliott. 106 pp.

This project examines the political legacy of North Carolina's "inner civil war" that seems largely forgotten in popular memory. How was Unionism defined in North Carolina? Who were the leading Unionists and what did they want? Did North Carolina's Unionist legacy really disappear? If not, what happened to it?

Analyzing the political career of Jonathan Worth, a politician with Quaker roots from Randolph County, during Reconstruction helps to answer some of these questions. In 1865, Worth was the first post-war governor to be elected in North Carolina after campaigning on his original Union record. In the social and political struggles that emerged after the Civil War, two distinct versions of Unionism emerged in North Carolina: a Conservative Unionism that drew on the Old South and pre-war understandings of the Constitution versus a Progressive Unionism that embraced Reconstruction changes to the Constitution. Much hung in the balance between these two Unionisms, including civil rights, collective memory of the war experience, and national identity.

Worth's understanding of Unionism was Conservative, and thus more sympathetic to former Confederates than former slaves. Despite Progressive Unionist success in 1868, Worth's Conservative interpretation of Unionism would triumph in the long term, helping to form the basis of a New South Nationalism in North Carolina that outwardly professed loyalty to the United States but was also used to resist federal interference in Jim Crow laws and challenges to the Lost Cause interpretation of the war.

“BRANDED AS CAIN”: JONATHAN WORTH AND UNIONISM IN POST-CIVIL  
WAR NORTH CAROLINA

by

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A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

Greensboro  
2018

Approved by

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To Mema, for telling me stories,  
and to Matthew, for encouraging me to write them.

APPROVAL PAGE

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I want to recognize Dr. Paul Ringel, my undergraduate adviser at High Point University, for his enthusiasm over this project and believing in my ability to tackle it for the past eight years. I would not be writing this thesis were it not for him. My committee members at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) have taught me so much in the past two years and helped to steer this project each time I found myself at a dead-end. I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Mark Elliott, for trusting me to undertake this project and for being patient with me while I figured it out, and guiding me into new lines of inquiry when I did not have it figured out. Dr. Chuck Bolton was the first faculty member I met in the History Department, and I have been so fortunate to have his support ever since, both on this project and in other endeavors. Dr. Jill Bender's empathetic guidance as I wrote my first significant paper as a graduate student gave me the confidence I needed to undertake this thesis. She also encouraged me to travel to Rome over Spring Break when I was on-the-fence about embarking on such a big journey, and it ended up being the best trip of my life.

I am incredibly grateful for the support of the Graduate School at UNCG, especially Laura Drew and Dr. Greg Bell, for organizing "Writer's Bootcamp" sessions and peer support writing groups each semester, as well as the Graduate Research and Creativity Expo. Participating in each of these events has greatly enriched not only my project, but also my experience as a student at UNCG.

Throughout this process, Lynda Kellam has always been available to listen and provide much needed sympathy and insight. Hannah Dudley-Shotwell and Justina Licata graciously included me in their writing group and encouraged me to continue even when I wanted to give up. I am especially thankful for Justina's celebration of my successes, no matter how small.

Of course, I could never have done any of this without constant love and support from my family.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In March of 1871, at the height of Radical Reconstruction, North Carolina became the first state to impeach a chief executive. William Woods Holden was ordered out of office by the State legislature for “illegally” assembling a militia to end Ku Klux Klan violence in Alamance and Caswell Counties. A month before the official decision was made, Edward Conigland, a member of Holden’s legal counsel, delivered a passionate warning to the court about the accusing party:

although ostensibly undertaken to vindicate the constitution and the laws, they have invariably violated both... however studiously the instigators thereof may have attempted to conceal their motives under the specious plea of patriotism, the historian refers to them, not as efforts to punish crime in high places but as conspiracies to ruin and degrade political opponents,—not as examples of public virtue, but as exhibitions of partisan profligacy, and the foulest stains on judicial probity in the annals of jurisprudence.<sup>1</sup>

Conigland understood how much was at stake during this volatile and uncertain time in North Carolina’s history; definitions of Constitutionality and to whom Constitutional rights and protections were guaranteed, as well as nationalism and historical legacy were on the line. Southerners after the war knew that the Constitution had been violated, but a struggle emerged to define exactly how it had been violated and who had perpetrated the violation, and what this meant for them as Americans.

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1. James H. Moore, ed., *Argument in the Impeachment Trial of W. W. Holden*. (Raleigh, 1871), 1040.

The official end of the Civil War in April 1865 did not bring an end to fighting in North Carolina. During the war, a violent “inner civil war” upended the state’s established social and political order and plagued the Confederate authorities in the state. This conflict was especially violent in the “Quaker Belt” counties located in the north-central Piedmont region of the state. The late William T. Auman, primary historian of the region’s inner civil war, showed that in the Piedmont there was “persistent Unionism during the war and... the discontent [with the Confederacy] increased as the war progressed.”<sup>1</sup> The Quaker Belt became such a problem to the state’s Confederate government that by September of 1862 Governor Zebulon Baird Vance had dispatched troops to the area to suppress the Unionists, who were becoming increasingly organized, popular, and violent. As Auman puts it, “this contest of neighbor against neighbor and brother against brother continued throughout the war and well into Reconstruction.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the struggle of Unionists and for Unionism continued even beyond Reconstruction. After the war, violent exchanges continued between white and black Unionists and former Confederates, but the fight also moved into the political arena. People in the state struggled for power, rights, and to create new meanings of nationalism after the war, and definitions of Unionism were at the heart of this struggle.

This study began as an attempt to understand how and why North Carolinians came to “suffer from a severe case of collective historical amnesia” and almost

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1. William T. Auman, “Neighbor Against Neighbor: The Inner Civil War in the Randolph County Area of Confederate North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review*, LI (January 1984), 59.

2. *Ibid.*, 70.

completely forget the violent resistance to the Confederacy that existed for the duration of the war.<sup>3</sup> To quote Auman, “Few traumatic episodes in a people's past have been so successfully blocked from the communal memory as has been the fratricidal inner civil war that raged between white Southerners in the Quaker Belt and in many other areas of the South during the War between the States.”<sup>4</sup> In fact, not only does it seem that the inner Civil War has been forgotten in popular memory today, but many white North Carolinians, even in the former Quaker Belt region, take pride in claiming a Confederate ‘heritage.’ The reality of the Civil War experience in North Carolina, and indeed the South at large, was much more complicated than it is popularly remembered. I wanted to know how and why this story was forgotten; how was the experience of North Carolina’s Civil War Unionists undermined to the point of erasing their experience from history? What was the danger in their legacy?

Answers to these questions are partially revealed in the testimony of Conigland at Holden’s impeachment hearings. At the end of the war, North Carolinians continued to fight amongst themselves for political control as well as in retaliation for malfeasance that had occurred during the war. Immediately after the war, people participated in vigilante justice and also sought legitimate justice through the courts for wrongdoings that had occurred before April 1865. The influential men of the state struggled to gain control of the political arena and shape it according to their vision as it emerged from the

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3. Auman, *Civil War in the North Carolina Quaker Belt: The Confederate Campaign Against Peace Agitators, Deserters, and Draft Dodgers* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2014), 213.

4. Ibid.

Civil War. Conceptions of what constituted “Unionism” became central to these struggles.

In Reconstruction era North Carolina, Unionism was a much more complicated political label than has been recognized by historians. During and after the war, North Carolinians from a variety of political leanings considered themselves to be true Unionists. Susanna Lee has done incredible work to complicate the term “Unionist” by showing how ideas of loyalty were used in a post-war context, and her work focuses on the negotiations that went on between Southerners and the federal government over what “Unionism” and loyalty meant.<sup>5</sup> The context of these negotiations, proving loyalty to receive federal aid, made the sincerity of Unionist expressions by Southerners significant but uncertain. How did North Carolinians understand Unionism and loyalty amongst themselves?

In the social and political struggles that emerged after the war, North Carolinians developed different definitions of “Unionism” and claimed that certain “Unionisms” were more patriotic than others. Two distinct versions of Unionism emerged in North Carolina: a Conservative Unionism that derived its legitimacy from “Constitutional Unionism” rhetoric based on pre-war interpretations of the Constitution, versus a Progressive Unionism that embraced post-war changes to the Constitution, including Reconstruction Amendments that granted rights to former slaves.

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5. Susanna Lee, *Claiming the Union: Citizenship in the Post-Civil War South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Ultimately, the dividing line over these competing versions of Unionism was race. North Carolinians understood that slavery was no longer a constitutional possibility as it was in 1861, but what social and political rights former slaves would have was uncertain during Reconstruction. This same uncertainty also applied to white North Carolinians as the nation debated what punishments or rights should be doled out to former Confederate sympathizers. Participating in legitimate political structures in the South hinged on loyalty to the Union, and thus the term Unionism became increasingly used and pluralistic in meaning. Many conservatives in the state feared that black North Carolinians would be given political rights while their fellow whites that had served the Confederacy would be disenfranchised, a reverse of power that many firmly believed would result in ruin. Conservative Unionism was more sympathetic to the struggles of white former Confederates, while Progressive Unionism tended to side with Republican political goals that included expanding rights for African Americans. People that identified with either version of Unionism considered theirs to be the “true” version, and much hung in the balance between these two. The version of Unionism that would win the day would ultimately shape the state’s political and social institutions as it entered the “New South” era, and with the creation of such institutions, it would determine which group or groups of people would experience power, how the state would define nationalism in the post-Civil War era, and even how the war itself would be remembered.

It is difficult to understate the centrality of race in the struggle to appropriate Unionism during Reconstruction. Many prominent pre-war Unionists in North Carolina had warned secessionists that leaving the Union would be more likely to result in

abolition than remaining a part of the United States, and the Peace Movement that cropped up in the state during 1863 was blatantly motivated by a fear of abolition, which peace party leaders claimed “would involve the whole social structure in ruin.”<sup>6</sup> It is worth probing the nuances of Unionist political ideologies, because Unionism did not disappear in the South after the Civil War. When Democrat “Redeemers” regained control of North Carolina’s political apparatus, they did not completely divorce themselves from Unionism. On the contrary, their reign was in no small part fueled and justified by Conservative Unionism. In North Carolina, rhetoric and policy were created to give appearances of compliance with Reconstruction policies, but politicians and policies that threatened too much subversion of the racial hierarchy were painted as agitators preventing the state from reunion and reconciliation. This rhetoric would intensify and become increasingly racialized throughout Reconstruction and into the New South era, further dividing original Unionists and erasing the anti-Confederate wartime experience.

North Carolinians’ negotiations over what Unionism meant and who was a true Unionist was the beginning of the state’s case of “historical amnesia” that erased memory of the state’s “inner civil war” before the creation of a Southern “Lost Cause” ideology. As Ian Binnington has pointed out, “We have excellent studies of the Lost Cause, but the nature of the cause before it was ‘lost’ has only recently come under the sustained gaze of

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6. William W. Holden to the *North Carolina Standard* January 19, 1864 in “William W. Holden and the Peace Movement in North Carolina,” by Horace W. Raper, *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 31.4 (October 1954), 506.

historians.”<sup>7</sup> Struggles to redefine and negotiate Unionism in North Carolina began arguably with the Peace Movement in the state before the war had even ended, and gaining the upper hand in this ideological struggle frequently relied on defending one’s own version of Unionism while undermining the Unionism of political opponents. Certain understandings of Unionism thus ran the risk of being undermined out of power and erased from historical memory if it could not prop up the ideology of whichever political party was in power.

Questions and ensuing struggles over meanings of Unionism were playing out in the lives of average North Carolinians in violent ways, which fueled a long battle to create political and legal doctrine at highest levels of government and press media in North Carolina. Several historians point to the election of 1876 that placed Confederate war governor Zebulon Baird Vance back into the governor’s mansion as the signal event in ending the promise of creating a progressive state during Reconstruction.<sup>8</sup> While this event is a crucially important event in both state and Southern history, pushing the narrative back reveals the centrality of Unionism to this struggle, which had lasting implications as Southerners grappled with a new sense of nationalism that questioned the motives and authority of the federal government while ignoring the motives and authority of the failed Confederacy. I posit that the state developed what I am calling a “New South Nationalism” along these lines, and furthermore sought to utilize this nationalism to

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7. Ian Binnington, *Confederate Visions: Nationalism, Symbolism, and the Imagined South in the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 8.

8. Both William Auman and Jeffrey Crow point to this election as evidence of the failure of Reconstruction in North Carolina.

create a nation within a nation by clearly and distinctly defining citizenship for its members based on race.

New South Nationalism touted a desire to reunite with the federal government but distrusted the Republicans that held most of its power, as well as the Northern public at large. New South Nationalism held on to its own distinctly Southern conception of identity and often espoused “progressive” language while maintaining pre-war power structures to the fullest extent possible. New South Nationalists were quick to portray Southerners, especially white former Confederates, as victims whose rights were further being violated by the federal government. This is evidenced by the fact that Holden was impeached for what his political opponents called “an alleged invasion of their [North Carolinians’] rights as secured to them by the constitution and laws of the Land, and the subversion of their liberties,” while Confederate Governor Zebulon Vance was re-elected to the governorship in 1876 despite the war he launched against Unionists during the Civil War in 1862.<sup>9</sup> It is worth mentioning that Vance’s actions against North Carolina Unionists during the war was, in fact, a violent assault, while Holden’s “War” was simply a mass arrest of Klansmen that had participated in violent hate crimes and even murders of Progressive Unionist public officials.

The impeachment of Holden was the beginning of the end of North Carolina’s progressive project during Reconstruction, and set up the state on a path that would socially and politically privilege white men, decide to favor the Conservative interpretation of Unionism over a more complicated definition and history of the term,

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9. Moore, ed., *Argument in the Impeachment Trial of W. W. Holden.*, 105-106.

and establish a New South Nationalism in the state that would call on the Conservative Union legacy to resist federal authority. The dual identity of Conservative post-Civil War North Carolinians had been fully realized with Holden's impeachment. With the impeachment of Holden, they learned their new political boundaries as defeated Southerners navigating reunification with a changed United States. This interpretation shows a lasting Southern skepticism of the federal government and probes the extent to which Southerners really felt that they had "reconciled" with the federal government.<sup>10</sup>

To explore the process of appropriating Unionism there is no better exemplar than Jonathan Worth, who has been largely neglected as a stand-alone historical subject in the Civil War history of North Carolina.<sup>11</sup> The son of a prominent Quaker physician in Randolph County, Worth grew up in the heart of the Quaker Belt and made a living through a career as a lawyer and businessman. Worth himself never joined the Quaker

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10. David Blight's exceptional monograph *Race and Reunion* (2007) posits that there were three "visions" for how the Civil War would be remembered on a national level: Reconciliationist, White Supremacist, and Emancipationist. He argues that "the forces of reconciliation overwhelmed the emancipationist vision in the national culture..." and that "the inexorable drive for reunion both used and trumped race." (2) Southerners would indeed make concessions to the federal government, but many of these were superficial; through New South Nationalism, Conservatives, who ultimately won the battle to define Unionism in the state, would remain skeptical of the federal government and maintain a distinctly Southern identity that was very much based on race and maintaining racial hierarchy. Furthermore, their skill at negotiating their new place in the larger Union allowed Conservative Southerners to create a nation within a nation, clearly defining who was included and excluded in its social and political institutions despite federal pushback. My research explores how Unionism played a role in the process of reconciliation.

11. Despite the fact that Worth shows up in nearly every Civil War and Reconstruction study of North Carolina, the only work that considers Worth as its primary subject is Richard Zuber's 1965 monograph *Jonathan Worth: A Biography of a Southern Unionist*. In the book's preface, Zuber wrote that "At a time when the tide of Southern sectional consciousness is once again rising, Jonathan Worth seemed to me to deserve a historical and biographical consideration because he represents a type which has not yet been adequately examined, the southern unionist." It is important to note that Zuber's interpretation of Worth and the Civil War are sympathetic towards the South. Reading Zuber's work in the context of when it was written in 1965, the fact that Zuber's biography deals with the subject of "Southern Unionism" in itself represents the ongoing use and appropriation of the term in the South to resist perceived federal overstep.

faith as an adult, but his connection with many in the Quaker community and his role as an elected Representative of the area would put him in a precarious position during and after the Civil War as many Quakers refused to compromise on their abolitionist and anti-secessionist beliefs.

Jonathan Worth was a staunch Unionist before the war, refusing entirely to run for a position as a delegate to the state's Secession Convention in May of 1861.<sup>12</sup> When North Carolina seceded, Worth wrote "There are few men in so unhappy a frame of mind as myself" because of "the overthrow of Washington's popular idea of a *united* government."<sup>13</sup> But his Unionist views did not make Worth an abolitionist. In the same letter, Worth wrote that the war had moved the issue of slavery from a "pretext for this sectional conflict" to a "cause," and of Abraham Lincoln that "If the restoration of the Union was his object, which I believe was his object-- then he is a fool. If his purpose was to drive off all the Slave states, in order to make war on them and annihilate Slavery, then he is a Devil..."<sup>14</sup> As a slaveholder himself and a man of means, Worth quickly threw his support behind the Confederacy after fighting began in earnest, but he would continue to think of himself as a Unionist true to "Washington's government."

Worth's political career after the war would be defined by his struggle against William Holden. For Worth, countering Holden was both personal and political, and his actions in the struggle would shape the state for decades. Worth was the first civil

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12. Interestingly, Zuber's biography of Jonathan Worth fails to mention this point entirely.

13. Jonathan Worth, "To T.C. and B.G. Worth, May 13, 1861," in J. G. de Rouillac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 140.

14. Ibid.

governor elected in North Carolina after the Civil War, defeating Holden, who had been appointed provisional governor by Andrew Johnson just a few months earlier in the summer of 1865.<sup>15</sup> Worth campaigned on his own Union record leading up to the Civil War and undermined Holden's allegiance to the United States through correspondence and schemes with Holden's political enemies in both the federal and state governments, as well as through publicly denouncing Holden as a secessionist in prominent state newspapers. Early on in the struggle the two men were actually fairly similar in terms of political platforms, and simply using Unionism in their competition to personally hold political power. But as Reconstruction moved from the Presidential plan to the more radical Congressional Plan, Worth and Holden would diverge and come to represent the main Unionist factions. Worth used Conservative Unionism to resist Reconstruction, while Holden fully embraced Progressive Unionism and Reconstruction.

In the years following the war, Worth became increasingly disillusioned with the federal government. Worth did not support integrating newly freed African Americans into the social and political fabric of the South. Worth, like many conservative Southerners during Reconstruction, balked at federal Reconstruction policies that deprived white Southerners who had sympathized with the Confederacy of political rights while enfranchising African Americans. To politically resist and undermine these policies, Worth relied on his Unionist past. Worth presented himself as a "true" Unionist

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15. Holden and Worth's political leanings can be sketched out in a "Scissor graph" model-- Worth went into the war as a Unionist supporting the federal government as it existed in 1861, whereas Holden had been one of the most influential secessionists in the state. As Reconstruction continued after the war, Worth began to disdain the federal government, while Holden adopted Republican political platforms for the Southern states.

who was loyal to the United States as it was, as opposed to the corrupted and usurping federal government that had emerged after the war. He defended virulent racists like Josiah Turner, Jr. as original Unionists and spent no insignificant amount of his time in office seeking federal pardon for them, which would allow them to once again participate in state politics.

During his governorship, what constituted as Unionist continued to be complicated by Worth as he split from his original friends and voter base in the ‘Quaker Belt.’ Local organizations under the National Union Party cropped up all over the state in 1866 to express their support for Congressional Reconstruction, which would more absolutely disqualify former Confederates from holding public office than the lenient Presidential Reconstruction. Worth was horrified to discover that his old friends from Guilford and Randolph Counties had joined, because their resolutions would effectively bar him from his elected position. When Worth questioned his old friends about their participation in what he saw as political backstabbing, D. F. Caldwell responded, “the secessionists and your political friends continue to denounce the members of this Convention and constitution” and warned “that all who thought and acted with you, as union men during the war shall be branded as *Cain and sink*, to rise no more as *politicians*.”<sup>16</sup>

Influenced by well-known Confederates like war governor Zebulon Baird Vance, Jonathan Worth was instrumental in paving the way for Klan violence and thus the impeachment of Holden in 1871 by ignoring claims of violence against Unionists that

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16. Caldwell, D. F., “Letter from D. F. Caldwell, July 31, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 713-14.

flooded his office from early on in his term and denouncing them as part of a continued effort by the federal government to maintain martial law in the state. In a political climate that Jonathan Worth had helped to create, Conigland and Holden went into the impeachment hearings in 1871 suspecting that the outcome would not be in their favor, thus signaling the victory of Conservative Unionism in North Carolina. Conigland's last-ditch effort to prevent this redemption of the state by Conservatives (who would later fully adopt the political label of Democrat) was to warn that historians would look back on Holden's impeachment and be able to clearly define the impeachers as the historical villain that corrupted the Constitution, were insincere in their patriotism, and morally abhorrent in their failure to promote justice. Conigland was speaking from a vantage point "in the late 1860s and 1870s [when] the Lost Cause orthodoxy remained unarticulated."<sup>17</sup> He was not able to anticipate the power and authority of Lost Cause ideology which would continue to use the legacies of Conservative Unionists like Jonathan Worth, while fully erasing the legacy of the "inner civil war" and the Progressive Unionists as exemplified by Holden and others supportive of the federal government.

The first chapter of this thesis will reconsider Jonathan Worth as an influential political actor in the struggle to define Unionism from the Peace Movement to the close of Presidential Reconstruction. During this period, Worth built his political career by defending his own Union record and Conservative Unionism, while undermining the loyalty of his political enemies like William Holden. During this early phase of

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17. Jeffrey J. Crow, "Thomas Settle Jr., Reconstruction, and the Memory of the Civil War," *The Journal of Southern History*, 62.4 (November 1996), 691.

Reconstruction, Worth earned a reputation as the “Secession candidate,” to his dismay, at least initially. As governor, Worth worked with and for the support of many former Confederates, and guided state legislators to make just enough concession to the federal government to appease Presidential Reconstruction while maintaining a social and political structure that upheld the supremacy of wealthy white men. His actions and alliances during Presidential Reconstruction started to cause a split between Worth and his original political supporters from the Quaker Belt. This chapter will examine the impact of Worth’s personal and political struggle in both the immediate circumstances as well as the larger and long-lasting implications of his executive decisions through his first term as governor.

The second chapter picks up with Worth’s re-election campaign in 1866, just before the Reconstruction Act of 1867 ushered in the Congressional, or Radical Reconstruction phase. It was during this time that Worth and Holden fully diverged in their understandings of Unionism, and whom they represented as such different political figures. Progressive Unionism became more fully developed in the state and finally resulted in the establishment of a Republican party in North Carolina under Holden’s leadership. On the other hand, Worth’s understanding of Unionism became less loyal to the federal government, and his faith in the national political apparatus diminished almost completely. He more frequently used the term “Constitutional Unionism,” as did other Conservatives, to differentiate his own meaning of Unionism from Holden’s. Worth continued to split from his original supporters in the Quaker Belt, and ignored or undermined claims from this region and other heavily Unionist areas that there was

increasing violence and injustice against Unionists, paving the way for Klan violence to take hold in the state and ultimately leading to the impeachment of Holden. Worth was galled by what he called the “partisan rage” that necessitated federal oversight in reorganizing the governments of Southern states to include rights for black Americans, and he considered this achievement of Radical Reconstruction unconstitutional and ruinous to the state. This shaped his identity as a Southerner to a greater extent than even the war itself.

A brief epilogue considers the legacy of Jonathan Worth after his death in 1869, beginning with the Kirk-Holden War and continuing through the early twentieth century. By this time, the Lost Cause ideology was in full swing, which makes an examination of how and when Unionism was remembered and used a critical part of the narrative in explaining why some things were remembered, like the original Unionism of Jonathan Worth, while the inner Civil War between Unionists and the Confederacy was largely forgotten, how the Confederacy and Reconstruction were remembered in North Carolina, as well as how those memories shaped the state’s social and political institutions.

North Carolinians would continue to use the legacies of Conservative “Unionists” like Jonathan Worth as examples of true American patriots to justify Southern opposition to federal authority for decades to come. Jonathan Worth died in 1869 shortly after he left the governor’s mansion, but the brand of Conservative Unionism he helped establish and perpetuate served as useful rhetoric for Conservative Southerners to resist federal authority on racial policies throughout Reconstruction and beyond. Not only did his own actions contribute to the victory of Conservative Unionism and New South Nationalism

based on it, but his progeny continued a conservative influence in North Carolina during the New South era. His daughter E. E. Moffitt, for example, was influential in North Carolina during the early twentieth century, especially through her close connections to social and political leaders and her involvement in memorial associations including the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Colonial Dames, and the Daughters of the American Revolution. Moffitt's work is representative of the Lost Cause ideology during the period when it became nationally accepted, the New South era when supposedly sectional differences had been put aside at the expense of black Americans. Through remembering the legacy of her father, Moffitt was influential in spreading the Lost Cause ideology in North Carolina while simultaneously restoring the state's sense of nationalism. Moffitt and other Lost Causers continued to eliminate the nuances of North Carolina's Civil War experience and successfully branded a lasting Conservative Unionism that cemented a positive memory of the Confederacy compatible with American patriotism.

## CHAPTER II

### FROM UNIONIST TO SECESSION CANDIDATE

Efforts to understand Unionism politically and reconcile it with allegiance to the Confederacy had started well before the war officially ended. Many North Carolinians had never been entirely convinced by the Confederate project and secession, and disruptive “murmurs of discontent against the Confederacy in North Carolina were heard as early as July, 1861.”<sup>1</sup> Historians have demonstrated the difficulty faced by the Confederacy as it attempted to build a nation and a nationalism separate from the United States, and North Carolina’s reluctance to secession in the first place made it especially vulnerable to internal challenges to the Confederacy.<sup>2</sup> By early 1863 the Confederate government of North Carolina had a serious problem on its hands in the form of widespread, organized resistance to the Confederacy concentrated in the state’s “Quaker Belt” region. This anti-Confederate swell at the local level spurred political action in the state’s capital, leading to the organization of a peace movement by William Holden.

William W. Holden had been a leading proponent of secession in antebellum North Carolina. His widely read newspaper, the *North Carolina Standard* had been the “mouthpiece” of the Democratic party in the two decades leading up to secession, but as

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1. Horace W. Raper, “William W. Holden and the Peace Movement in North Carolina,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 31 (October 1954), 498.

2. Victoria Bynum, Stephanie McCurry, Paul Quigley, and Anne Sarah Rubin are several historians that have challenged the notion of homogeneous Confederacy.

the prospect of secession and war started to materialize Holden changed his tune in favor of remaining in the Union before ultimately voting that the state secede at the state's convention on May 20, 1861.<sup>1</sup> As resentment towards the war and the Confederacy continued to grow in North Carolina, politically savvy Holden schemed to create a new Conservative political party in the state through which to bring the state back into the Union through a concerted effort with popular peace movement. News of a potential peace being negotiated in the political arena instead of on the battlefield spread like wildfire throughout the state and into neighboring states. North Carolina soldiers stationed in Virginia had abandoned their posts and come home when they heard the news, and "many claimed that their actions had been induced by reading Holden's *Standard*, which published accounts of public meetings throughout the state wherein resolutions had been adopted demanding that peace be negotiated."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Holden's newspaper had started to do extremely well when its editorials shifted to promote a separate peace between North Carolina and the United States. Subscribers to the *Standard* ranged somewhere between 2,900 and 3,150 in November of 1860. At the end of 1863, the paper boasted 11,000 subscribed readers, making it second to only one other Confederate paper in Richmond.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Horace Raper, "William Woods Holden, 24 Nov. 1818-2 Nov. 1892" in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, edited by William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

2. Raper, "Holden and the N.C. Peace Movement," 501.

3. Richard Reid, "William W. Holden and 'Disloyalty' in the Civil War," *Canadian Journal of History* XX (April 1985), 24.

The Peace Movement was popular in North Carolina, and it did not sit well with Confederate authorities. President Jefferson Davis pressed the state's governor, Zebulon Vance, to contain Holden or look into whether "Holden's 'treasonable action' warranted criminal prosecution."<sup>4</sup> Vance and Holden were friends, and had developed a symbiotic relationship through which Holden would keep the governor informed about the general political pulse of the state and support in the *Standard*, which allowed Holden to escape persecution from the many prominent Confederates his political peace scheming had undermined. Holden proved such a threat to these Confederates that the *Standard* office was broken into and sabotaged by a Confederate regiment from Georgia as they were passing through Raleigh in September 1863. The vandals were dispersed personally by Governor Vance, and local Unionists were so angry that they responded with an attack on the office of the Confederate-sympathizing newspaper the *State Journal*.<sup>5</sup>

This violence over the peace movement in North Carolina galvanized political leaders at the State and Confederate levels on the issue. Holden continued to press the people of the state to support a separate peace, while Governor Vance, under pressure from President Davis, began to promote peace through the Confederacy.<sup>6</sup> But the excitement generated by the peace movement posed too great a threat to the weak Confederacy in the eyes of President Davis, who decided to suspend the writ of habeas corpus and thereby quell the movement in early 1864. Just one month later, in March,

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4. Raper, "Holden and the N. C. Peace Movement," 502.

5. *Ibid.*, 504.

6. *Ibid.*, 507.

Holden announced he was running for Governor of North Carolina “as a Conservative ‘after the straitest sect’” and promised “if elected, I will do everything in my power to promote the interests, the honor and the glory of North Carolina, and to secure an honorable peace.”<sup>7</sup> The friendship between Holden and Governor Vance was officially and publicly over.

Jonathan Worth watched the political conflict between Holden and Vance from close proximity as State Treasurer. In February of 1864, Worth wrote to John Pool, a state Senator who had reentered politics because of Holden’s peace movement following a retirement from State politics after the Secession Convention in May 1861, regarding the split in state politics.<sup>8</sup> “For myself,” wrote Worth, “I retain my early convictions that the government established by our forefathers was admirably adapted to promote the happiness and prosperity of its people... I now think... that a Union on the old basis will be better for both sections, than a separate independence.”<sup>9</sup> Worth was not only personally hoping for the State to return to the Union, but he sensed that it was also “the opinion of a majority of the people in North Carolina.”<sup>10</sup>

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7. W. W. Holden, “Holden to the People of North Carolina,” *Raleigh Standard*, March 3, 1864.

8. William C. Harris, “Pool, John” in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, edited by William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). John Pool was disgusted by secession, and refused to participate in the Civil War. He would become one of the strongest allies Holden would have in state politics during Reconstruction. According to Harris, Pool had pushed Holden to take a hard-line approach to putting down Ku Klux Klan violence in the state, ultimately resulting in the Kirk-Holden War that would get Holden impeached.

9. Jonathan Worth, “To John Pool, February 6, 1864,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 288-9.

10 .Ibid.

The “opinion,” as Worth called it, in favor of bringing North Carolina back to the Union was dangerous to have in 1864. While the calling of a peace convention would have been “a blessing to the whole land,” Worth distressed over his opinion as one “which the dominant powers of the Southern Confederacy denounce as traitorous-- and which subjects the man who utters it to the monstrous imputation, of deserving to die by the gallows.”<sup>11</sup> But Worth did not see himself as a traitor to the Confederacy. “It is silly to charge me with disloyalty to my state,” he wrote to Daniel L. Russell, and justifying his support for the call of a peace convention further by qualifying it was “not with the view of seceding from the Confederacy, but with the view of seeking to bring about a General peace.”<sup>12</sup> If the terms of the hypothetical peace convention were not met, Worth argued “then we should sternly buckle on our armor and unanimously and bravely make the war the arbiter.”<sup>13</sup>

Holden also felt pressure to clarify to the people of North Carolina that although he wanted to negotiate a peace with the United States, he was still loyal to the Confederacy. After the attack on the *Standard* office, Holden published a letter in his paper defending his political record as a Unionist and a Confederate, and reminding the public that the state had suffered under the corrupt and unfair government set up at Richmond. Holden claimed that he “was a Union man up to Mr. Lincoln’s proclamation,” and in the time since he had “contributed as much in proportion to my means to the

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11. Ibid.

12. Jonathan Worth, “To Daniel L. Russell, February 16, 1864,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 297.

13. Ibid.

Confederate cause as any man in the State.”<sup>14</sup> But working with Richmond had not been easy, and Holden resorted to a State-before-Confederacy rhetoric to explain his creation of a Conservative Party in the North Carolina. These men, Holden claimed, were “the old Union men, but now true Confederates,” and they had been snubbed politically by the Confederacy; these men were under the impression that “unless they submitted quietly to such treatment, and behaved themselves, would have a ‘hideous mark’ put on their foreheads, by which they and their children after them would be known as traitors.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, the original Union men had been “branded as Cain” in their pragmatic call for peace by the Confederate Destructives.

Why were Worth and Holden, and other like-minded individuals in the state, seemingly so duplicitous when advocating for a separate peace? What was motivating them to check their own Unionism? Furthermore, what did they hope to accomplish if their plan succeeded? What were the “terms” of peace that Jonathan Worth had in mind when he wrote to Daniel Russell in February of 1864? The Davis administration was cracking down on citizens who “avow their disloyalty and hostility to our cause” through the suspension of habeas corpus, but fear of the Confederacy alone does not explain why Holden and Worth seemed so torn between the United States and the Confederacy. Both men were politically prominent at the State level, and even Governor Vance had publicly criticized and denounced President Davis. Something else was driving their combined hope of re-Union with a Confederate sympathy: slavery.

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14. William W. Holden, “Holden to the Public,” *Raleigh Standard*, October 2, 1863.

15. *Ibid.*

At least at the high level of state politics, North Carolina's Peace Movement was motivated by a fear of abolition. Unionism might have represented a challenge to the Confederacy, but it was not a challenge to slavery and should not be seen as such.<sup>16</sup> An editorial that Holden ran in the *Standard* in July of 1863 began with, "We favor peace because we believe that peace now would save slavery, while we very much fear that a prolongation of the war will obliterate the last vestige of it," beating out "enough of blood and carnage, enough of widows and orphans" as the most important reason to seek a separate peace.<sup>17</sup> Holden's own transformation from a fire-breathing secessionist in the 1840s and 1850s to a unionist in 1860 was also due to his belief that a war would lead to abolition. In an article he printed with this title in the *Standard* in February of 1861, Holden warned that "The whole world outside the slaveholding States, with slight exceptions, is opposed to slavery; and the whole world... will take sides with the North against us."<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, he expressed fear that "The negroes will know, too, that the war is waged on their account. They will become restless and turbulent."<sup>19</sup> As the war made this fear more of a reality, Holden pressed for peace because he felt that "if the war should be continued twelve months longer negro slavery will be utterly and finally

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16. Eric Foner points out this distinction as well in *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, writing about the complicated political situation of original Unionists across the South at the war's end. "In 1865, Southern Unionism, whether unconditional, Old Line Whig, or simply anti-Confederate, did not necessarily imply a willingness to extend civil and political equality to the freedmen." 186.

17. "Peace-- When shall we have Peace?" in the *North Carolina Standard*, July 17, 1863.

18. William W. Holden, "Civil War Will Be Abolition," *Raleigh Standard*, February 5, 1861.

19. *Ibid.*

destroyed in these states... Its sudden destruction would involve the whole social structure in ruin.”<sup>20</sup>

Jonathan Worth had never supported secession because he truly believed that owning slaves was one of his Constitutional rights under the federal government of the United States and that right would be best protected by remaining in the Union. “Slavery is doomed if the South sets up a Southern Confederacy,” Jonathan Worth wrote to his son-in-law in December of 1860.<sup>21</sup> He anticipated that a war would make slavery even more vulnerable, as it was becoming increasingly unpopular globally, “With Canada in effect for her Northern border from the Atlantic to the Pacific- all hating us, it is madness to think of anything else only to cut the throats of the negroes or have our own throats cut.”<sup>22</sup> When Holden’s peace movement gained traction in North Carolina, Jonathan Worth supported it because, as he explained to Daniel L. Russell, “A very large part of the property of myself and my children, consists of slaves. I wish to retain them as slaves, believing it best for them, as well as for me. I believe the provisions of the Constitution of the U. S. a better security to this property than separate Independence...”<sup>23</sup> Not only did Jonathan Worth want to keep what he viewed as his rightful property, but he also feared abolition for its social and political consequences. Negotiating an early and

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20. William W. Holden to the *North Carolina Standard*, January 19, 1864, in Raper, “Holden and the NC Peace Movement,” 506.

21. Jonathan Worth, “To J. J. Jackson, December 17, 1860,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 127.

22. Ibid.

23. Worth, “To Daniel L. Russell, Feb. 16, 1864,” 298.

separate peace with the United States “would be a blessing to the whole land and would prevent that universal emancipation and the curse of an enormous free negro population making the country unfit to live in,” wrote Worth in a letter supporting Holden’s peace movement.<sup>24</sup> After the war, Worth would blame both secessionists and abolitionists for disunion.

Since preserving slavery was what Conservative Unionists like Jonathan Worth were most concerned with in terms of their “Constitutional rights,” the end of the war would be greeted with mixed feelings. Relief and hope that war had ended, yes, but also uncertainty and fear over a changed social and political landscape. Although Worth had not supported secession, he had still actively participated in the Confederate project, and his own allegiance to the Union was at least partially motivated by a desire to preserve slavery, which was no longer legal in the defeated South under the laws of the United States of America. This would make for an uneasy political transition for Worth after the war, even though during this period he would achieve his greatest political success and set the state on a lasting course towards a New South Nationalism.

The solidarity formed between Worth and Holden over the peace movement would be challenged in the summer following the end of the war. Holden’s peace organizing a few years earlier had earned him the attention of then-Governor of Tennessee, Andrew Johnson, who would succeed Lincoln as President after his assassination.<sup>25</sup> In May 1865 Johnson appointed Holden to the position of Provisional

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24. Worth, “To John Pool, February 6, 1864,” 289.

25. Raper, “Holden and the N. C. Peace Movement,” 501.

Governor of North Carolina.<sup>26</sup> As the state prepared for a civil election to take place in the fall, in which Holden intended to run as a candidate for governor, a rumor began that Jonathan Worth would also be a candidate.

#### A Unionist Becomes the Secession Candidate: Worth and the 1865 Election

The Civil War had irrevocably changed North Carolina's political landscape, and just where Jonathan Worth fit into that political landscape was uncertain when he began to entertain the thought of running for governor. The old political party organizations had at least initially been abandoned, and people in the state were scrambling to forge new political alliances. Worth's private correspondence reveals that, to his dismay, he was being slated as the candidate of choice for former Secessionists. "There is no public man in N. C. whose whole public record is so completely at variance with the principles of that [Secession] party," wrote Worth.<sup>27</sup> He continued to distance himself from former Secessionists and defend his own Union record in the same letter, but he could not help but grapple with the fact that he had been marked as a favorable candidate for former Secessionists. He reasoned that "perhaps most of the Secessionists-- respect my consistent opposition to their doctrine and give me credit for honesty."<sup>28</sup>

The lenient requirements for political participation that Worth was advocating for post-war was more likely the reason behind his newfound political support base than his

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26. Raper, "William Woods Holden."

27. Jonathan Worth, "To Dr. Pugh, July 23, 1865," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 383.

28. *Ibid.*

“honesty.” He expressed that “as a constant advocate of civil liberty and republican government, I would have the State government reorganized by the call of a Convention by our Genl Assembly and every body allowed to vote for delegates who is entitled to vote by under our constitution immediately prior to May 20/61.”<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Worth might have detested secession, but not to the extent that he thought its original supporters should be barred from participating in political decision making after the war.

Furthermore, Jonathan Worth was seen as an ideal candidate for governor because he had a record as an original Unionist, and demonstrating remorse and political loyalty was important to North Carolina politically as it sought readmission to the Union. His original Unionist record was well known, and so was his conservatism. William Holden had been appointed by President Johnson as provisional governor and thus his election would have pleased the federal government as North Carolina sought statehood again. But Holden was despised by many in the state for his apparent “demagoguism,” as he had found himself on opposite sides of heated political arguments.<sup>30</sup> Jonathan Worth was a welcomed alternative to Holden for both Conservative original Unionists who remembered Holden as a supporter of secession as well as those “reluctant unionists” who had supported the Confederate cause but sought a swift return to statehood on their own terms in 1865.<sup>31</sup>

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29. Ibid.

30. William Pell, ed. *Sentinel*, August 11, 1865, 1.

31. Roberta Sue Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen: Race Relations During Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-67* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1985), 34. The term “reluctant unionists” is used in Alexander’s book and was taken from an 1880 report by Whitelaw Reid entitled *After the War: A Tour of the Southern States, 1865-66*. Reid said that this term applied to many whites in the

In this political context, Jonathan Worth and William Holden vied to be the face of the post-war Conservative party in North Carolina. Holden would later come to represent Republicans in the state as the federal government moved away from Presidential Reconstruction and into Radical Reconstruction, while Worth would come to champion the reactionary Conservative faction in the state and even resist the federal government's Reconstruction policies. But at this point in 1865, "the political views of both men were actually similar... Both supported President Johnson and his Reconstruction policy, both had good Unionist records and both opposed black suffrage and court testimony."<sup>32</sup> The election of 1865, however, marked the beginning of a split between Worth and Holden that would become increasingly drastic throughout Worth's term as governor. The long-term result would be the development of two competing state factions: Conservative Unionism and Progressive Unionism.

In August of 1865 a new newspaper, the daily *Sentinel*, splashed onto the scene in North Carolina to counter the influence of Holden's *Standard*. Its debut issue threw more than a little shade in the direction of Holden's paper by claiming it intended to act as "the watchful *sentinel* to guard the citadel and give the alarm" during a time "when the *standard* of political truth fails to impress itself upon the popular ear."<sup>33</sup> The paper claimed to "be loyal and ingenuous to both the Federal and State governments" and that

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South that claimed to be Union men "if they can have the Union their way-- if the negroes can be kept under, and themselves put foremost." In this same chapter, Alexander discusses the 1865 election of Worth over Holden, but does not include Worth in the 'reluctant unionist' group, even though his political goals were very much in line with what Reid described.

32. *Ibid.*, 37.

33. *Sentinel*, August 8, 1865, 1.

“not a disloyal or unkind word against the government of the Union of these States shall pass our lips.” Regardless, the paper undoubtedly became the organ of a New South Nationalism that was increasingly based on a complicated conception of “Unionism.” The editor checked his claim of loyalty and support for the Union by letting his readers know that the paper would be “true without sycophancy, honest without flattery, nor will it lie to shield its own throat.”<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Worth liked the paper so much he bought a daily subscription of the *Sentinel* for his brother B. G. Worth, a businessman in New York. The paper would support Worth during his bid for governor and throughout his governorship, and would eventually be taken over by Worth’s friend (and later Klan apologist) Josiah P. Turner, Jr.

Although Jonathan Worth had supported Holden’s peace movement during the war, he began to see and promote himself as the more legitimate Unionist candidate for governor. Worth had been encouraged to run for governor by men like Josiah P. Turner and William A. Graham, who also considered themselves original Unionists, but for whom Holden had not worked to secure pardons from the federal government.<sup>35</sup> In justifying his bid for governor against Holden, Worth criticized Holden for “refusing even a hearing to so steadfast a Union man, as Turner” while promoting himself as more true to the Union cause.<sup>36</sup> “I think the real interests of the State require that the name of a

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34. Ibid.

35. Josiah Turner was a Unionist during the secession crisis, but he would come to support the Confederate war effort. He became the owner and editor of the *Sentinel* in 1868 and later used the newspaper as Klan apologia and to further undermine Holden and the North Carolina Republicans.

36. Jonathan Worth, “To John Pool & Lewis Thompson, October 16, 1865,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 430.

consistent opponent of disunion ought to be run; and believing that a large number of consistent Union men have their minds fixed on me,” Worth contended, justifying his decision to run for governor against his former political ally.<sup>37</sup>

Worth, aided by the *Sentinel*, publicly promoted himself as a more legitimate Unionist candidate than Holden. The newspaper printed Worth’s Circular announcing his candidacy for governor of North Carolina on October 16, 1865, where he claimed a “constant opposition to the doctrine of secession and my adhesion to the Union,” a political record that he dated back to “the journals of our General Assembly of 1831,” which would show that he proposed legislation to refute Calhoun’s principle of Nullification.<sup>38</sup> He also reminded readers that he continued to oppose secession up through the Convention of 1861 and called their attention to the fact that a circular he wrote against the convention in January of 1861 had been picked up by “most of the newspapers published west of Raleigh.”<sup>39</sup> This western region had been more sympathetic to the Union before and during the war, and had largely come to support Holden through the peace movement. In bringing up the popularity of his own opinion in the Quaker Belt and Western part of the state during the secession crisis, Jonathan Worth was appealing to voters in those regions whose votes he now risked losing to Holden in 1865.

Worth also used his Circular in the *Sentinel* to refute the argument that President Johnson would be more pleased with a civil election of Holden, his appointed Provisional

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37. Ibid.

38. “Mr. Worth’s Circular,” *Sentinel*, October 18, 1865.

39. Ibid.

Governor, than with Worth. He claimed that neither his “mind or heart” was in support of secession, “one of the most terrible convulsions in history,” and that he had remained true to his distaste for secession throughout the war. “How then can my election as Governor of North Carolina give offense to the President or to the Congress of the United States, or to any friend of our glorious Union?” he asked.<sup>40</sup> Worth mirrored this opinion privately as well, indicating a sincerely held conviction that he was more true to the Union than Holden. In a letter to A. M. Tomlinson just weeks before the 1865 election, Worth scoffed at the public perception that Holden was more Union-friendly than he. “They insist that an old Secessionist-- a new convert to Union, will be preferred by the Prest and Congress over one whose life is consistently for Union.”<sup>41</sup>

Even in his Circular, Worth was openly pandering to former Confederates more than progressive Unionists. He knew that the state’s secessionists felt betrayed by Holden for switching the *Standard* from the most vocal secessionist paper to a vehicle for undermining the Confederacy during the war, and these men would refuse to vote for Holden in 1865. This left an influential voter base in the state hungry for a candidate to serve their interests, and Worth offered himself to them despite his earlier protests at being labeled the secession candidate.<sup>42</sup> “All who would not vote for him [Holden] with one voice centered on me. The pressure was irresistible,” Worth wrote to a friend.<sup>43</sup>

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40. Ibid.

41. Jonathan Worth, “To A. M. Tomlinson, October 18, 1865,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 435-6.

42. Paul D. Escott also briefly explores the 1865 gubernatorial election that pitted Jonathan Worth against William Holden in Chapter 3 of his book *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900*. His book argues that maintaining a rigid class hierarchy was a primary motivation

Worth touted Presidential Reconstruction as lenient and forgiving, and insisted that President Johnson “does not demand of us [Southerners] a surrender of our manhood.”<sup>44</sup> The right to vote freely was a significant right guaranteed by that manhood. Worth pointed out that President Johnson had pardoned the governor of Mississippi immediately upon his popular election, despite the fact that he had been a Confederate General, and he also drew voters’ attention to Johnson allowing former Confederate soldiers to serve in a militia in the same state, despite how disagreeable it was for federal military officers. He used the latter situation to emphasize a sense of acceptance of a peculiar sense of a dual loyalty experienced by former Confederates, claiming that the President “knew that the soldiers who had been true to their colors when fighting under the Southern flag, would not forfeit their military honor when they entered service under the flag of the United States.”<sup>45</sup> In a bid that further sought the support of former Confederates, Worth insisted that as governor he would “endeavor to soften the animosities which have grown out of the horrible war” and “encourage a spirit of mutual

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behind political decisions in North Carolina during Reconstruction, and argues that North Carolinians’ “fear of change revealed that Reconstruction was more than a contest over racial equality-- it was a battle against the principle of equality itself.” (85) Escott interprets Worth’s actions during Reconstruction as passive and ignorant of the social and political realignments, and that he interpreted his election over Holden as a pre-war Whig beating out a pre-war Democrat, failing “to see Reconstruction in terms of Unionist vs. secessionist.”(100) This is inaccurate for many reasons. First of all, it ignores the fact that Jonathan Worth did define the election in terms of Unionist vs. Secessionists, and he saw himself as the most capable and politic Unionist candidate that could bring Confederates back into the fold, quickly end Reconstruction, and rid the state of potentially radical federal policy. Secondly, it does not explain the political alliance between Holden and Worth during the Peace Movement. Lastly, and most significantly, it neglects race as a political motivation of Worth.

43. Worth, “To A. M. Tomlinson, October 18, 1865,” 435.

44. “Mr. Worth’s Circular,” *Sentinel*, October 18, 1865.

45. *Ibid.*

forgiveness-- a return to the habits of law and order and a steadfast attachment to the Union.”<sup>46</sup> Rather than ostracize former Confederates, Jonathan Worth wanted their support to help the state return to the way it was before the war both socially and politically, which seemed to be a possibility in the early months of Presidential Reconstruction.

### The Fracturing of Unionism and Navigating Presidential Reconstruction

Jonathan Worth suspected that indulging the secessionist voters would cause a divide between himself and his original voter base—the Unionists of Randolph County and the Quaker Belt region at large. This area of the state had been the site of violent, organized resistance to the Confederacy during the war, and the fighting had spilled over into Reconstruction. “My mortification would be great indeed, even if I were elected, if Randolph should not stand up to me as in times past,” Worth wrote to a friend shortly after announcing his candidacy.<sup>47</sup>

But Jonathan Worth’s use of his Unionist past was more than just a rhetorical strategy; Worth genuinely believed that he was a more true Unionist than Holden. Even though he was warming up to former secessionists in the months following the conclusion of the war for political expediency, the public and private struggle between Worth and Holden over which candidate was better for the “Union” exposes the larger struggle between Conservative Unionism and Progressive Unionism that was emerging in

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46. Ibid.

47. Worth, “To A. M. Tomlinson, October 18, 1865,” 435.

the state. Conservative Unionism was not incompatible with the political and social goals of former Confederates, and Worth's defense of Presidential Reconstruction reflects an understanding of this, as does his confusion over the loss of support among his original voter base. Knowing that he may very well not carry his home county of Randolph in the 1865 election against Holden, Worth wrote to a friend that losing the county would "be because Randolph has changed and not I."<sup>48</sup> This idea is not entirely wrong. Worth was a conservative politician both before and after the war. His conservatism before the war was the reason behind his strong commitment to the Union. Many voters in Randolph County and the larger Quaker Belt region were also Unionists, but many of them were also abolitionists or poor whites who had little to no personal investment in slavery. In 1860, eleven percent of families in Randolph County owned slaves, and of those that did own slaves, 70 percent owned between two and nineteen slaves.<sup>49</sup> Just ten percent of the Randolph County's total population in 1860 was enslaved, compared to the population of New Hanover County that was made up of 50 percent enslaved people.<sup>50</sup> The war had been a crucible of sorts, and people of the Quaker Belt were forced to confront slavery as a root cause of the war in which many of their sons, brothers, and fathers had died fighting. After the war, Jonathan Worth's Conservative Unionism was no longer politically appealing to those who had suffered in a war that they did not support in the first place.

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48. *Ibid.*, 435.

49. Escott, *Many Excellent People*, 17.

50. U. S. Bureau of the Census, "Population of the United States in 1860: North Carolina, Table 1," <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/population/1860a-27.pdf> (accessed June 26, 2018).

Jonathan Worth did, in fact, lose Randolph County to Holden in the 1865 gubernatorial election, but he won the state. The support for Worth over Holden was overwhelming in some of the counties that had most enthusiastically supported secession. In fact, the combined voter margins in some of these Eastern counties, including Camden, Currituck, Duplin, Edgecombe, Gates, Jones, and Pitt, was 82.3% for Worth.<sup>51</sup> These same counties also refused to formally apologize for their support of the Confederacy. Despite claiming to be the more true Unionist candidate, Jonathan Worth clearly appealed to former secessionists much more than Holden did. This indisputable fact piqued federal concerns about the loyalty of North Carolina and political conditions in the state.

Jonathan Worth caught on to federal distrust of him as Governor even before the election of 1865 and worked diligently to counter the reputation he was getting as sympathetic to former secessionists. The election was held on November 9, but in October Worth had sent a letter to B. S. Hedrick, his unofficial agent in Washington, D.C., about his reputation as a post-war Unionist. Enclosed with the letter was a copy of Holden's *Standard* with an article entitled "Holden and 'Go Back' or Worth and 'Stay Out' of the Union," and while Worth was slightly worried that this could cost him the election, he explained it as a fabrication of Holden's.<sup>52</sup> He maintained the same argument after the election. Writing to a business contact in New York, Worth questioned the

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51. Paul D Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1895), 87.

52. Jonathan Worth, "To B. S. Hedrick, October 21, 1865," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 442.

extent to which his reputation as a Confederate sympathizer had spread and blamed it on Holden; “I perceive that certain Northern papers, probably taking their cue from the Raleigh Standard, treat my election over Mr. Holden, as evidence of hostile feeling in N. C. against the Govt. of the U.S.”<sup>53</sup> He countered this by writing that “Holden, for long years, had taught Secession. He deserted and reviled his associates; and hence they hate him but respect me as an unvarying opponent of Secession,” and implored Dibble to “contribute something to the correction of public opinion North.”<sup>54</sup>

Regardless, this idea that the federal government was suspicious of his loyalty would in part guide his actions as governor. Just a few days after taking the oath of office in December of 1865, Worth wrote to the people of the state and called on them to “maintain the enviable reputation of our people as to the observance of law and order, and prove how groundless is the calumny, that there are still among us persons who are disloyal to the Government of the United States.”<sup>55</sup> Publicly Worth conveyed a dismissive attitude when confronted with his reputation as the secession candidate, but privately he strategized the most politic ways to minimize this reputation, which he acknowledged was not entirely unjustified.

Jonathan Worth also avoided passing judgement or condemnation of former secessionists. To his associates in North Carolina, he commented on the difficulty of making politic decisions on appointees that would both appease the federal government

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53. Jonathan Worth, “To C. B. Dibble, November 27, 1865,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 455.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Jonathan Worth, “Governor Worth’s Address to the People,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 458.

as well as influential men in the state. “I am sure there were some very good men Old Union democrats and Whigs who did not vote for me,” said Worth in a “Confidential” letter to former Whig governor John Morehead, adding that “ it would be wrong and impolitic to proscribe them” when making appointments to executive positions. On the other hand, Worth strategized that “the ultra war men, in view of their own and the State’s interests had better remain in the back-ground for the present.”<sup>56</sup>

Proving loyalty to the United States was more than just personal to Jonathan Worth; it was essential to gaining readmission to the Union, as was a recommitment in the state to govern itself and maintain law and order. Worth acted quickly to set up a new state government by convening state legislatures in January of 1866 to begin organizing the necessary structures. Worth’s priority as governor was to minimize federal interventions in the state, especially when it came to policies and interventions regarding race. At the legislative convention in January of 1866, Worth urged lawmakers to pass legislation that would allow African Americans to testify in court. This was, perhaps unsurprisingly, unpopular among many of the state’s lawmakers and prominent men, and the fact that Worth pressed for such an unpopular change in the state’s courts led his biographer to claim that this was Worth’s “main contribution to their [black North Carolinians’] welfare,” and explain that, “Worth was a man who believed in fair play, and his sense of justice compelled him to defend, and even to champion, the rights” of

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56. Jonathan Worth, “To John M. Morehead, April 25, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 561.

African Americans in North Carolina.<sup>57</sup> But the proviso allowing for testimony by black men was attached to restrictive black codes that went into effect at the conclusion of the convention.

Furthermore, Worth's interest in securing testimony rights for black North Carolinians was more about how the state would look in the eyes of the federal government than about securing any real justice for black people in the state. Worth wrote a letter to William Graham while the convention was in session, explaining that this particular right was worth ceding to black North Carolinians because it most likely would not result in any real benefits. Worth expressed that "the cause of few would be promoted by allowing their testimony to go to the jury with no other instructions than those applying to white witnesses," suggesting that there were ways for white North Carolinians to work-around new rights for blacks.<sup>58</sup> He also emphasized the importance of the testimony proviso because "policy affirmatively requires that we at once remove the restrictions."<sup>59</sup>

From the beginning of his tenure as governor in 1865, Jonathan Worth's goal in granting concessions to black North Carolinians was motivated by the potential to get rid of the Freedmen's Bureau. This is why he became so fixated on securing testimony in state courts for African Americans. When the convention was called, Worth "told the

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57. Richard L. Zuber, *Jonathan Worth: A Biography of a Southern Unionist* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 216.

58. Worth, "Letter to William A. Graham, Jan. 12. 1866," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 467.

59. *Ibid.*

members of the legislature that General Ruger had informed him there would be no military interference with the state courts if Negroes were allowed to testify and if they received the same punishment for a crime as a white man would receive.”<sup>60</sup> The state legislature reluctantly agreed to allow black North Carolinians to testify in court but only in cases in which the Freedmen’s Bureau had no interference. B. S. Hedrick warned Worth that including such an exception would damage the state’s standing with the federal government, much to Worth’s chagrin. In March, Worth wrote to another connection in Washington, D. C. explaining that he “used every legitimate means to have this proviso stricken from the bill,” but had failed and now wondered if they might advise him on how to ask President Johnson to intervene in efforts to end the Freedmen’s Bureau’s interference in the state’s courts.<sup>61</sup>

Jonathan Worth’s executive decisions concerning public education in the state were also shaped by the new reality of emancipation and a desire to balance white supremacy in the state without offending the federal government. For the duration of Worth’s terms as governor, the state’s public schools, sites of his “favorite social institution,” were closed.<sup>62</sup> As Worth was contemplating the direction he wanted to steer the state legislature as they attempted to rebuild the state’s government in January of 1866, he wrote to former Governor Graham of his fear about educating black children

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60. Zuber, *Jonathan Worth*, 213.

61. Worth, “To David L. Swain, March 16, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 509.

62. Zuber, *Jonathan Worth*, 227. Zuber claims that the schools “had to be closed down in 1865,” and that “in spite of his [Worth’s] efforts to raise money for the schools by selling some of the state’s swamp lands, the schools did not reopen until he left office.”(227) Holden would work to reopen the schools for all children in the state when he succeeded Worth as governor.

and prolonging the life of the Freedmen's Bureau in the state. Worth explained that "if we educate white children at the public's expense, we will be required to educate the negroes in like manner," and laid out his plan to deal with education when meeting with lawmakers at the convention. "I think the Com. School system had better be discouraged, for a time, and thus avoid the question as to educating negroes," Worth wrote.<sup>63</sup> The fact that funds were short for public education was a convenient excuse to help the state avoid answering the education question.

While Jonathan Worth supported expanding rights for black North Carolinians in the state's courts, he did not dare think of giving them rights to vote. In the political and social uncertainty of Reconstruction, many white Southerners, including Jonathan Worth, feared what they called "black rule." Writing to his nephew in September of 1865, Worth advised "that it would be better for you and every body else who is a white man to leave North Carolina."<sup>64</sup> The reasons for moving, which were no doubt more angry political musings than serious advice, were all related to changes in the state's racial hierarchy brought about by emancipation. "While the two races remain here in anything like their present proportions, there can be neither comfort nor prosperity here," lamented Worth.<sup>65</sup>

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63. Worth, "To William A. Graham, January 12, 1866," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 467.

64. Worth, "Letter to B.G. Worth," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 417.

65. *Ibid.*

The *Sentinel* regularly printed articles that stoked these fears of political and social integration. One article used the 1860 census to figure that enfranchising black Southerners would give them majorities in many states because of racial imbalances in those counties that had been most dependent on slave labor as well as the political disenfranchisement of white Southerners that had fought for the Confederacy.<sup>66</sup> Just one day later, the paper commented on public sentiment concerning voting rights for black North Carolinians, “All will take Union in place of discord-- abolition of slavery in place of further conflict and blood... None will favor negro suffrage or negro equality at least openly. They will all recognize the principle that *this is the white man's country*,” the emphasized portion of quote apparently borrowed from none other than President Johnson, and predicted that “Candidates who propose anything adverse to this, will fail to reach the Convention.”<sup>67</sup>

While Worth recognized the importance of appearing to make racial concessions in the state, despite the danger he saw in them, he blamed radicals, mostly Northern but also some Southerners and original Unionists as well, for the necessity of such compromises. In Worth’s opinion, these people were just as responsible for the sectional division during Reconstruction as the secessionists were before the war. “I could not tell formerly which I most abhorred: the abolitionist who wanted to break up the Union to destroy slavery-- or the secessionist who wished to break it up to preserve slavery,”

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66. “Effect of Negro Suffrage at the South,” *The Sentinel*, August 10, 1865.

67. “Parties of North Carolina,” *The Sentinel*, August 11, 1865.

Worth wrote to a contact in New York.<sup>68</sup> But while the secessionists had failed at making the rupture between the sections permanent, Worth believed that the “Northern disunionists...” whom he called “the most detestable of the human family,” were trying “to accomplish what the secessions could not.”<sup>69</sup>

### Conservative Unionism and Continued Sectionalism

Worth viewed both abolitionists and secessionists as pre-war enemies, but Reconstruction would mark an important turn in Jonathan Worth’s opinion on which was the most threatening. Former secessionists had been defeated, and as Worth saw it, “all our people feel conquered and not one thinks of any further resistance. Nobody is now disloyal in the proper sense of the term--” but still sectional divisions remained. In Worth’s mind, the disunion efforts of secessionists had ended and been absolved, so they were not to blame for the remaining sectional divisions. Worth felt that radical Northerners sought vindication and subjugation of the South through “black rule,” and was horrified that Congressmen in the federal government were increasingly falling into this camp. Jonathan Worth expressed a “hope [that] the great body of Northern people is not impelled by the unstatesmanlike and malignant feelings which govern Congress,” as an indication of the possibility of reconciliation between the sections without granting

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68. Worth, “To George R. Ricketts, March 17, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 510.

69. *Ibid.*

African Americans more rights in the South. But pragmatically he lamented that popular opinion in the North had shifted and this was probably not a realistic hope.<sup>70</sup>

Jonathan Worth was certainly not alone as he shifted blame for continued sectional divisions from secessionists to Northern radicals. In August of 1865, the *Sentinel* reprinted an editorial from the *New York Journal of Commerce* that claimed “President Johnson... regards the political fact as complete, that the Union is restored,” and thus there should be no further federal interference or repercussions at the national level for the war. The paper interpreted the growing federal interest in the South’s race problem retaliation for the war by misguided and equally culpable “Northern Radicals” that “helped to bring about the war” in the first place. Just as many Southerners, Worth included, had considered slavery one of their rights as elite white men, they now viewed Reconstruction as a “trampling on the rights of those from whom they have differed.”<sup>71</sup> Ironically, Conservative North Carolinians in the New South Era would eventually look back on 1865-66 as a missed opportunity to make enough concessions to avoid the Reconstruction Act of 1867 and the brief Republican ascent in the state.

The *Sentinel* also reprinted a speech by Alfred Moore Waddell of Wilmington called “Advice to Freedmen,” in which Waddell blamed racial tension in the South on Northerners. According to the editor’s preface, Waddell had written the speech as a response to a letter he had received from newly emancipated Wilmingtonians asking him to comment on race relations. The speech, which the *Sentinel* considered a “service” to its

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70. Ibid.

71. “Where the Danger Lies,” *The Sentinel*, August 9, 1865.

own readers and the black community to print, claimed that there was no hatred among white Southerners for newly emancipated blacks, despite the “sudden reverses of fortune” from their “loss of property.”<sup>72</sup> Waddell explained that “the white people know that you are not responsible for their loss,” and that suspicions of hateful feelings among blacks were actually the result of “bad men” that “have taught you otherwise.”<sup>73</sup> Waddell sought to cast doubt among African Americans about the legitimacy of federal agents working for the Freedmen’s Bureau by questioning their motives for working with black communities; “what do such teachers know about the matter?” he asked, “Is it because they love you so much, or because they hate some other persons so intensely?” Waddell sought to change the perception of federal policy from a benevolent intervention on behalf of blacks to a spiteful attack on Southern whites. Worth himself gave a similar speech at the North Carolina Freedmen’s Convention in 1866.

Like Worth, Waddell was a Whig and identified as a Unionist before the war. In 1860 he had been an alternative delegate to the national Constitutional Union Party convention, which offered up a fourth party candidate in the Presidential election that year.<sup>74</sup> He fought for the Confederacy during the war, and like Worth he would increasingly identify with Southern nationalism over US nationalism throughout Reconstruction. Waddell dedicated his political career after the war to solidifying white supremacy in North Carolina, rising to power in the state as a ‘Redeemer’ Democrat in

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72. “Advice to Freedmen: Mr. Waddell’s Address,” *The Sentinel*, August 8, 1865.

73. *Ibid.*

74. “Alfred Moore Waddell,” in *Dictionary of American Biography*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936).

the 1870s and eventually he would stoke the racial animosity that led directly to the Wilmington massacre and coup d'état in 1898, the outcome of which would see him installed as mayor of Wilmington.<sup>75</sup>

Waddell's speech represents an early example of the development of a distinct Conservative Unionism that would become the foundation for a New South Nationalism. This type of nationalism recognized that the power of the federal government was stronger than that of the state, but also argued that federal efforts to expand and protect rights for blacks were unconstitutional and that even though the South had attempted to secede, it was not responsible for the continued sectional division. In the eyes of Conservative Unionists, the fundamental relationship between the federal government and the South during Reconstruction was antagonistic and unbalanced; the South was weak and unfairly victimized by the federal government and the Northern people, but it was being forced to play by rules it viewed as unconstitutional. The fact that Worth and Waddell, as well as many other "original Unionists" like Josiah Turner, Jr., would develop a lasting sense of Southern identity as the federal government sought more control in the region points to the centrality of Reconstruction and racism in distinguishing Conservative Unionism from the emerging Progressive Unionism. The outcome of this struggle between the two understandings of Unionism would shape a lasting new sectional and national identity in the state.

At this point in Presidential Reconstruction, Conservative Southerners argued that the outcome of the war had made everyone a Unionist, as there was no energy remaining

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75. Timothy B. Tyson, "The Ghosts of 1898: Wilmington's Race Riot and the Rise of White Supremacy," *The Raleigh News and Observer*, November 17, 2006.

in the South to launch another fight. But negotiations over how much political trust and power should be assigned to former ‘Unionists’ and ‘secessionists’ and what marked the difference between them was still up in the air. As governor, Jonathan Worth found himself constantly having to justify his executive appointments, especially in terms of Unionist or secessionist, although the monikers were becoming less and less useful for understanding where someone stood on the role of the federal government during Reconstruction. When another original Unionist began exhibiting more Progressive Unionist political leanings and started questioning Worth for being the “leader of an organization of the leading war men” in the state, Worth snapped back:

I do not know whom you embrace among those ‘prominent’ in the rebellion. Does this classification embrace every body who was a member of the Convention of 1861-- Every body who was a member of the Confederate Congress-- every one who took the oath to support the constitution of the Confederate States-- every one who opposed secession up to the 3rd May 1861, but afterwards sustained the South by arms or otherwise.<sup>76</sup>

Worth’s dislike of the federal government would only grow more intense during 1866. “I have always abhorred the Northern quite as much as the Southern disunionist--” he wrote in April of that year, adding, “the latter being now impotent and the former in power I will not disguise that my affection for the Northern Disunionist has not grown any of late.”<sup>77</sup> No doubt his feelings were complicated by Congress’s rejection of the North Carolina state constitution, which made the state’s gubernatorial election of 1865

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76. Worth, “Letter to John Pool,” April 23, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 555.

77. *Ibid.*, 557.

invalid. Once again, Worth was preparing for an election, but his outlook on the direction of Reconstruction had soured.

As Worth became more disgusted with the federal government and its policies surrounding re-admittance to the Union and the gubernatorial race in 1866, Holden would find himself increasingly supporting it. Holden urged North Carolinians to support the Fourteenth Amendment after its proposal in the summer of 1866, claiming that ratifying it would be essential for a “prompt restoration of the Union,” and taking pains in a speech to show that the amendment was compatible with Presidential Reconstruction rather than a deviation from it.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, Holden made it clear in his speech that Congress had every right and authority to create such legislation as the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, marking a stark divergence between his and Worth’s outlook on the constitutionality of Reconstruction.<sup>79</sup> No doubt further galling to Worth was Holden’s defense of federal military presence in North Carolina during 1866. Worth both publicly and privately expressed that his main goal as governor was to end martial law in the state. In September of 1866, however, Holden was representing a more mature Progressive Unionism outlook on this Reconstruction measure, touting it as “a necessary precaution... to preserve the peace.”<sup>80</sup>

This divergence between Worth and Holden over the constitutionality of Reconstruction marked more than just a disagreement over the law of the land; it represented a fundamental difference in who the men felt was responsible for a lasting

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78. William Holden, “To the People of North Carolina,” *The Standard*, September 26, 1866.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*

division between the regions as well as what constituted “Unionism.” While Worth felt that Reconstruction laws were being created by Northerners with the intention to keep the Southern states out of the Union, Holden blamed North Carolinians, especially those who were sympathetic to the former Confederacy, for keeping the state out of the Union by not supporting federal Reconstruction policies. “The great body of the people of the North... wish us well,” claimed Holden, sensing a growing sectionalism in the state.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the more favorable tone of Holden regarding the federal government, his vision for reunion in 1866 did have its limits. There had been speculation that the first two Reconstruction amendments, which abolished slavery and granted citizenship rights to African Americans, were leading up to enfranchisement to be enforced by the federal government. To Worth and other conservative Southerners, this fed into a fear of Northern-imposed “black rule.” But Holden sought to dispel rumors that there was a “concealed purpose” of the Fourteenth Amendment, claiming that “the amendment leaves the question of suffrage wholly and solely with the States.”<sup>82</sup> Holden also had published in the *Standard* an article to refute the *Sentinel’s* insistence that he was “complicit” with Thaddeus Stevens’s efforts to enfranchise black Americans, explaining that what the conservative paper was interpreting were his efforts to have North Carolina ratify the Fourteenth Amendment because failure to do so would result in federal “reorganization... with negro suffrage, confiscation of property, and many other evils” in the state.<sup>83</sup> At

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81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83.. William Holden, “W. W. Holden’s complicity with Thad. Stephens,” *The Standard*, October 10, 1866.

least publicly, Holden was still resistant to enfranchise black North Carolinians. Like Worth, he saw some concessions as necessary to prevent “other evils.”

Although Holden did not get the nomination to run for governor against Worth in 1866, he worked to undermine Worth, continuing to present him as the secessionist candidate, especially in run-up to election that took place in October. Holden portrayed Worth as complicit in the anti-federal change in the state, if not actively participating in it. Which ever it was, Holden’s message to the Union Convention was clear: Jonathan Worth was not a friend of the United States of America. Holden did not call him by name, but stated “that man is no patriot, but is supremely selfish, who would retain his hold on office, when he knows he is doing so at the expense of the unity, harmony, and prosperity of his country.”<sup>84</sup>

Holden promoted the idea that during Worth’s tenure as governor, North Carolina had experienced setbacks in terms of a “proper spirit” of Unionism. In the *Standard*, Holden lamented that “our opponents do not cultivate as they should, and as they agreed to do when they surrendered, *a spirit of nationality*.”<sup>85</sup> The speech Holden gave at the state’s Union Convention, which he then had printed in the *Standard*, Holden expressed regret that the “abundance of good material for the work of restoration” existing in the state in 1865 “was used for a time, and then cast aside.”<sup>86</sup> Referencing Worth’s executive appointments, Holden made a comment that “Devotion to the Union is no longer the

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84. William Holden, “To the People of North Carolina,” *The Standard*, September 26, 1866.

85. William Holden, “W. W. Holden’s complicity with Thad. Stephens,” *The Standard*, October 10, 1866. Emphasis in original.

86. William Holden, “To the People of North Carolina,” *The Standard*, September 26, 1866.

passport to office, or even to the respect of those who control our affairs.”<sup>87</sup> He also admittedly told federal officials, including President Johnson that “loyalty in North-Carolina was at the bottom and disloyalty on top,” and that the state’s “government was in the hands of the secessionists,” casting wide doubt about the nature of Jonathan Worth’s professed Unionism.<sup>88</sup>

Already in 1866 there was a struggle going on in the state over narrating and defining the recent sectional conflict and its implications for the relationship between North Carolina and the federal government. According to Holden the post-war hostility to Unionism in the state was trickling down from the high levels of state government, led by Worth, and impacting people on the local level in 1866. He reported in his speech that “those who can take the test-oath, instead of being honored for their loyalty, are ridiculed and despised.”<sup>89</sup> Holden complained to federal authorities that “if those who now control the State government and control society could have their way, they would indelibly stamp us [Unionists] and our posterity with a ‘hideous mark,’ because we were not true to the Confederacy.”<sup>90</sup>

Jonathan Worth had indeed found it difficult to present an acceptable version of himself to the federal government. While he did not see himself as anti-Union, he sensed that federal power and expectations for the South were changing. While this influenced

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87. Ibid.

88. William Holden, “W. W. Holden’s complicity with Thad. Stephens,” *The Standard*, October 10, 1866.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

his decisions as governor, it also distanced him from United States nationalism and instead lent itself to his participation constructing New South Nationalism. In 1866 Holden levied a critique that political leaders in North Carolina “seem to think more of the memories of the dead Confederacy than of the glories of the living Union,” which would certainly become true of Jonathan Worth as he navigated Reconstruction, even if it was not true immediately after the war’s end.<sup>91</sup>

An interesting example marking Worth’s transformation into a Confederate sympathizer is evidenced in his conflicted feelings over attending the unveiling of a monument to Annie Carter Lee, the daughter of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Annie had been sent to Warren County during the summer of 1862 to stay at a resort at White Sulphur Springs, where she died from typhoid fever before the end of the year. Because of the war, the Lee family decided to lay Annie’s body to rest in the family cemetery of the resort’s owner rather than move the remains across Union lines. After the war, members of the community raised money and employed a wounded Confederate veteran to craft a granite obelisk to mark her grave.<sup>92</sup> In July of 1866, the monument was complete and Jonathan Worth was among the dignitaries that received an invitation to the unveiling ceremony from a ladies memorial association in Warren County.

Jonathan Worth wrote to B. S. Hedrick, his informant in Washington, D. C., about the propriety of attending such an event and to gauge how his attendance would be interpreted by the federal government. He was dismayed when Hedrick advised him to

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91. Ibid.

92. “Annie Carter Lee Monument, Warrenton,” in *Documenting the American South* collection: Commemorative Landscapes of North Carolina, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed December 13, 2017, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/commland/monument/93>.

decline the invitation, but ceded that he wanted to avoid participating “in any proceeding of mere feeling, which is likely to receive, with or without, reason, a construction tending to keep up alienation between the sections.”<sup>93</sup> Worth took the advice of Hedrick and did not participate in the monument unveiling, but he expressed contempt for what he thought was Northern disrespect for Southern affection for General Lee “for his personal virtues and... as a great military man.”<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, Worth argued that Northerners were misinterpreting the growing positive attitude towards Lee as disloyalty. Southerners admiring Lee “do not regard the cherishing of these feelings as incompatible with their oath of allegiance to the U.S... They may cherish respect-- even affection for him-- with entire compatibility with the most steadfast adherence to the Union” said Worth.<sup>95</sup> Worth himself was attempting to reconcile his own complicated identity as both a Unionist and a Southerner, and the Annie Carter Lee memorial experience demonstrates that he expected the Southern part of that identity to be respected on equal par with the Union part.<sup>96</sup>

Although Worth and Holden were competing to define Unionism during Presidential Reconstruction, their political views were actually fairly similar. They differed primarily in their political allies and supporters. It was not until the election of 1866 and the Reconstruction Act of 1867 that the two men developed entirely distinct political platforms based on their respective uses and understandings of Unionism.

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93. Jonathan Worth, “To B. S. Hedrick, August 6, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 731-2.

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*

96. It is interesting to note that the monument to Annie Carter Lee still stands in Warren County, although the remains were moved to the Lee family crypt in Virginia at the insistence of the Lee family in 1994.

Radical Reconstruction would further separate the two as Worth clung to a Conservative Unionism that was increasingly shaped by his own sectional identity. In essence, Reconstruction did more to shape a sense of Confederate nationalism for Worth than his actual Civil War experience. On the other hand, Holden's understanding of Unionism became more progressive and accepting of federal interventions, especially when it came to implementing policy that granted more rights to black North Carolinians. Worth's conservative Unionism and his adherence to an emerging New South Nationalism caused him to ignore and even actively deny the ongoing and often violent efforts to politically was elected as North Carolina's governor in 1868, Jonathan Worth had effectively championed a Conservative Unionism that allowed other North Carolinians to claim loyalty to the United States while simultaneously resisting federal policies, especially when it came to race. This political rhetoric would help form the basis of a New South Nationalism that informed Conservative Southern elites as they sought to move forward from the economic depression of the war and reconcile with the North without losing a distinctly Southern identity and Old South hierarchy.

### CHAPTER III

#### DEVELOPING A NEW SOUTH NATIONALISM

As Reconstruction moved in a more radical direction, there was an increasing divide over the political meanings of the term Unionist in North Carolina, and race was at the center of this division. While Worth and Holden, once fairly similar in terms of political platforms, continued to diverge in their political platforms in the summer of 1866 and beyond, they increasingly represented two distinct conceptions of Unionism. Worth represented the Conservative, or what he called “Constitutional” Unionism, which expected the state’s social and political structures to remain as close to the antebellum past as possible. Conservative Unionists accepted abolition begrudgingly, but resisted political and social rights for black North Carolinians. Because of the power of the Republicans in Congress, the federal government considered these Southern Constitutional Unionists to be less and less loyal and patriotic. The Conservative Unionists in the South were disgusted with the turn of events during Reconstruction and that disgust shaped their own identity, resulting in a new cultural and political understanding of “Southern.” On the other hand, Progressive Unionism during Reconstruction, as represented by Holden, accepted not only abolition, but supported the federal government in its efforts to extend rights to black North Carolinians. In addition to shaping and changing the understanding of the term “Unionist” and the identity of

Southerners like Worth, this political battle had implications for the way the war would be remembered.

When it became apparent to Jonathan Worth in 1866 that the President's plan for Reconstruction was failing, both his rhetorical tone regarding Unionism as well as his nationalist identity began to change. Clinging to a Conservative political understanding of "Constitutional Unionism," Worth's attitude towards reunion after being re-elected in October of 1866 shifted into a more singularly Southern identity, which he relied on to resist federal Reconstruction policies and changes in the South. This identity and accompanying ideology would form the origins of a New South Nationalism that would influence the state for the next century, and arguably even longer. Instead of simply hoping to use his political influence to end certain Reconstruction policies, by the end of his time in office, Jonathan Worth's attitude and political actions would be more critical of the federal government apparatus and overall less hopeful for the future of the South.

During this phase of Jonathan Worth's career, there was also an emerging interest in how the war would be remembered and the reputation of the state among its former Confederate allies as well as among the greater United States. Conservatives in North Carolina would exhibit increasing anxieties over the role the state had played during the war, and already by 1866 these men and women were working to monumentalize the Confederacy both literally and figuratively in order to validate their suffering, and also add to the credibility of Conservative Unionism. Initially, Worth expressed mixed feelings about this effort in the state to remember the war experience with such pointed political purposes. By the end of his term as governor, and certainly by the end of his life

the year after leaving office, however, Worth saw both himself and the state as victims of Radical Northerners and their narrative of the Civil War.

#### 1866, The Union Party, and the Realization of Progressive Unionism

In the summer of 1866, North Carolinians prepared for a regular ballot election. Jonathan Worth was nominated as a candidate by the Conservative faction in the state. While the path to nomination was relatively easy for Worth, it revealed the continued fracturing of Unionism in North Carolina as well as a continued distancing between Worth and many of his original constituents in Randolph and Guilford Counties. Both Worth and William Holden were continuing to claim Unionism in the run-up to the election in October, but differences in their platforms were now more fully developed than they had been when the two men vied for the governorship in 1865. Although Holden had decided that facing off against Worth again so soon after his loss the previous year would not be politically expedient, North Carolinians were aware that Holden was leading the political resistance to Worth. While Worth ran simply as the Conservative candidate, Holden was organizing a Union party in the state.

Holden was partially galvanized to organize the Union party in the state because of North Carolina's failure to approve the revised state constitution in August of 1866, a product of the state legislative convention of 1865-66 and highly influenced by Worth.<sup>1</sup> The initial state constitution produced at the convention included a strict set of Black

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1. Richard L. Zuber, *Jonathan Worth: A Biography of a Southern Unionist* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 236.

Codes and had not been approved by Congress. Some sections of the Black Codes technically applied to people regardless of race, such as a provision to criminalize a perceived intent to steal livestock even if no theft had actually occurred. This type of provision was undoubtedly the result of white North Carolinians perception of black people as predisposed “to a criminal way of life.”<sup>2</sup> Another provision made failure or inability of a father to support illegitimate children punishable by forced labor in a workhouse or as a court-ordered apprenticeship.<sup>3</sup> Still other provisions overtly applied to black North Carolinians and severely restricted their civil rights, including basic rights to move freely.<sup>4</sup> Revisions to the Black Codes at the legislative convention in May of 1866 included striking the prohibition of black North Carolinians from testifying in court and unequal punishment for attempted rape for black and white North Carolinians. As discussed in Chapter 1, these revisions had been pushed by Worth “mainly to rid the state of Bureau interference with the judicial process” in the state and “to control the freedmen and to separate the races without subjecting the state to charges of discrimination.”<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the still discriminatory nature of the new state constitution and its potential to get federal approval under Presidential Reconstruction, North Carolinians rejected the constitution in a vote of 21,552 to 19,570.<sup>6</sup>

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2. Roberta Sue Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen: Race Relations During Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-67* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1985), 48.

3. Ibid.

4. Mark Emory Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice : Albion Tourgée and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 107.

5. Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen*, 51.

6. Zuber, *Jonathan Worth*, 233.

In response to this defeat, in late August and September the *Standard* printed the minutes and resolutions of various Union party meetings in counties around the state. These local political statements were preceding a Southern Loyalist Convention in Philadelphia scheduled for September and were particularly revealing of the complicated meanings of Unionism in North Carolina. The platforms emerging at Union party meetings throughout the state exemplified a Progressive Unionism that embraced radical Reconstruction and equal rights for black North Carolinians through the Fourteenth Amendment. But the main thrust of these Unionists' rhetoric was retaliation against "sympathizers with a dead Confederacy."<sup>7</sup> The Surry County Union party, in a statement surely aimed at Worth and his compatriots, resolved "That the course pursued by certain individuals, who set themselves up as leaders of the Union party, is utterly unworthy of the name of loyalty much less leaders and guides to the party." The resolution further complained that these false Unionist politicians were more dangerous to North Carolina even than overt former secessionists because "they become the willing tools of the rebels and secessionists to accomplish their base designs of sowing the seeds of sectional hate and strife, that have well nigh ruined our country..."<sup>8</sup> Similar sentiments echoed in Union Party resolutions across the state. In the eyes of these Progressive Unionists, politicians like Jonathan Worth were dangerous hybrids.

With Holden as the acknowledged leader of the state's Union party, it was further implied that Jonathan Worth was the antithesis to the Progressive Unionist movement.

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7. "Union Meeting in Surry County," *North Carolina Standard*, August 29, 1866.

8. Ibid.

Worth remained politically powerful in the state and felt little fear of losing the election in October of 1866, but still he resented the challenge to his reputation. Being cast as a secessionist could damage his ability to navigate a Conservative state back into the Union. Worth found himself increasingly defending his Unionist record to the people of North Carolina and even Northern audiences, as well as to his old friends and political allies from Guilford and Randolph Counties. In the Circular he wrote to announce his candidacy for governor in the 1866 election, Worth laid out his extensive Unionist past and told voters that those “prominent points” in his “political record” were necessary “to counteract the unjust impression... at home and abroad,” that his “election was a disunion triumph.”<sup>9</sup> Worth strategized to counter Holden’s influence among Unionists in the state, mainly through discrediting Holden’s own political record and presenting his platform as a way to establish ‘black rule’ in the state. “I have not the slightest fear that the Radicals can show much head in the state,” Worth wrote to a political ally in Greensboro, pressing him to “use all legitimate means to defeat their disgracing us.”<sup>10</sup>

But Worth would discover that such a campaign could do little to redeem his reputation among his original constituency in Randolph County. His son-in-law, J. J. Jackson, reported in August that the pro-Union secret society called the “Red Strings” had organized in the area “to elect Union men to office and for mutual protection.”<sup>11</sup>

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9. Jonathan Worth, “Governor Worth’s Circular,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 615.

10. Jonathan Worth, “Letter To John A. Gilmer, Sept. 8, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 772.

11. Jonathan Worth, “Letter From J. J. Jackson, August 9, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 740. The Red Strings organization also went by the name Heroes of America. In his book *Civil War in the North Carolina Quaker Belt: The*

According to the letter, one of the members of the organization allegedly called Worth and his supporters “secessionists and latter day war men,” and told Jackson that they would “hear it thunder next fall.”<sup>12</sup> The Red Strings were looking for a candidate to face off against Worth and the Conservatives, and Jackson reported that back in Randolph County he was running the risk of losing the support even from those that were not affiliated with the Red Strings, like his friend D. F. Caldwell. Jackson reported that Caldwell had visited and was complaining “very grievously” over Worth’s executive appointments. Jackson wrote that Caldwell professed not to be against Worth politically but accused him of “completely ignoring all the Union men” and considering a political “crime for a man to have been an officer under Holden.”<sup>13</sup> Caldwell himself wrote to Worth that very same day, criticizing him for appointing so many men who supported the state’s Confederate governor, Zebulon Vance and expressing disappointment because he had “expected Jonathan Worth to act the man and patriot a little more than the former, mousing trucklers who had filled the Executive chair of this state had done—and he has not come up to the mark exactly.”<sup>14</sup> Caldwell made sure to let Worth know that this criticism did not mean he was “advocating the claims of Holden men per se,” but

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*Confederate Campaign Against Peace Agitators, Deserters and Draft Dodgers* (2014), William T. Auman describes the Red Strings as “diehard Unionists” that organized themselves into “a secret, underground, anti-Confederate group” in the Quaker Belt region. (7) This organization was considered a significant threat to the Confederacy, and Auman documents “the seven Confederate military campaigns conducted by Confederate authorities” against the Red Strings throughout the war. (1)

12. Ibid., 741.

13. Ibid.

14. Jonathan Worth, “Letter From D. F. Caldwell, August 9, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 739.

nonetheless let Worth know that his reputation and political alliances back home were at risk.<sup>15</sup>

The most distressing break for Worth was his split with the influential Quakers in Guilford and Randolph Counties. When Worth discovered that many of the Quakers, including influential Nereus Mendenhall whom Worth had given an executive appointment, had attended Unionist Party meetings and were planning to send delegates to the Southern Loyalist Convention, he wrote to a friend to see if the rumors were true and gauge how representative Mendenhall was of the larger Quaker community.<sup>16</sup> “What is the matter with Nereus Mendenhall?” snapped Worth in a letter, “That he should participate in a meeting... favoring the vindictive and Disunion schemes of the ultra-Radicals annoys me.”<sup>17</sup>

Worth was further galled to learn that Guilford County Quakers, including Nereus Mendenhall, were looking to carpetbagger Albion Tourgée as a leader of the county’s Unionist party. Tourgée and his wife Emma moved South after the Civil War, seeing “a new opportunity to serve his country, to assist the former slaves, and perhaps to achieve social standing and financial security in the bargain.”<sup>18</sup> The Tourgées had decided on North Carolina because of its “reputation for antislavery Unionism” and were connected to Guilford County’s Quaker community by Holden, who was provisional governor at the

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15. *Ibid.*, 737.

16. Jonathan Worth, “Letter To John A. Gilmer, Sept. 4, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 760.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 103.

time. In October of 1865, when he was just twenty-seven years old, Tourgée moved his family and settled just outside of Greensboro. He would dedicate the rest of his life to the fight for equal rights for black Americans, and according to a historian, it was Worth's victory in the North Carolina gubernatorial election of 1865 that "made Tourgée's entry into politics inevitable."<sup>19</sup> He quickly gained ascendancy among Quakers in the region and was chosen to represent the area at the Southern Loyalist Convention in September of 1866.

News of Tourgée's speech at the Southern Loyalist Convention in Philadelphia exposed the violence against black North Carolinians as well as depredations against white Unionists in the state to a broader audience, and spurred Worth to defend his own political reputation and attack Tourgée's. The speech, which first came to Worth's attention through several New York newspapers on September 10, accused him of ignoring petitions from Unionists seeking interventions on their behalf. Worth hastily wrote to Nereus Mendenhall upbraiding him for participating in the political meetings that nominated Tourgée and discrediting the young delegate as a "lying villian... purporting to represent 2000 North Carolinians in a pretended patriotic convention."<sup>20</sup> Regardless of these accusations, Worth felt it necessary to disclose his side of the story to Mendenhall regarding the Unionist petitions that he looked into, but concluded that justice had been served and there had been no need to interfere.

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19. Ibid.,107.

20. Jonathan Worth, "Letter To Nereus Mendenhall, September 10, 1866," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 774.

Immediately after writing Mendenhall, Worth penned a letter to the editor of the *Greensboro Patriot*, reiterating publicly his role in the Union men petition scenario and claiming Tourgée’s speech contained “1200 lies.”<sup>21</sup> He presented the speech as part of a scheme to keep North Carolina out of the Union and upend its political mechanisms, telling readers that Tourgée had “spread this speech throughout the Nation to make the North hate us,” and that he “demands the right of suffrage to the negroes and if practicable the disfranchisement of nearly the whole of the white population...”<sup>22</sup> Worth ended the letter by challenging Tourgée to appear at a meeting in Greensboro and publicly defend his claims, but ultimately his wrath fell short of ending Tourgée’s political career in Guilford County. Worth’s angry letter did inspire a Conservative backlash in the county that would increasingly rely on racist rhetoric and violence to undermine the county’s interracial alliances, however.<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, by the election of 1866, Worth and his original supporters understood that their political goals as Unionists were much different than what they had been before the war. Despite this recognition that Unionists from Guilford and Randolph Counties were politically sympathetic to Radical Reconstruction, Worth still insisted that he was a Unionist. He confronted Mendenhall in a lengthy letter, challenging the political alignment of the term “Unionist” with Radicalism. He blamed “the Disunionists of the North and South” for starting the war and placed culpability for continued sectionalism

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21. Jonathan Worth, “Letter To the Editor of the Greensboro Patriot, September 10, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 775.

22. *Ibid.*, 776.

23. Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 110.

on “That Northern set of Disunionists,” and spoke to the problematic political label of “secessionist” during Reconstruction as well.<sup>24</sup> “I do not rank as secessionists those who have combatted the doctrine at all times and resisted by all means in their power the inception of the war, but whose sympathies were with their own section after the war was begun,” Worth wrote, alluding to a provision in the Fourteenth Amendment that was tougher on former Confederates seeking public office.<sup>25</sup>

In Worth’s opinion, it was possible to be loyal to the Union but also disapprove of and resist Reconstruction policies. He saw this conflict as a larger showdown at the federal level between President Johnson and “a vindictive Congress.” Furthermore, he believed that “excluding from office all who sympathized with the South after the war begun,” would make a farce of the concept of a “Republican Government,” despite the fact that under his guidance the state legislature decided to tax black North Carolinians without permitting them to participate in the state government.<sup>26</sup> In fact, almost every situation where Worth relied on his Unionist past to resist federal interference was in situations relating to race. In the summer of 1866, Worth’s main political antagonism was aimed at defeating the Fourteenth Amendment. In a letter to B. S. Hedrick, Worth said that ratifying the amendment would “restore a worthless Union,” which would be fraught “with mutual detestation and abhorrence between the lately alienated people.”<sup>27</sup> When it

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24. Jonathan Worth, “Letter To Nereus Mendenhall, August. 24, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 750.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., and Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen*, 51-52.

27. Jonathan Worth, “Letter To B. S. Hedrick, July 2, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 666.

came to punishment for the conquered South, Worth told Hedrick that as a Southerner he personally “would submit to confiscation or any other calamity which brute force can impose before I would be guilty of the self-degradation of voting for this amendment.”<sup>28</sup>

Holden’s Union party platform was organizing itself around approving the Fourteenth Amendment as necessary for a return to the Union. The *Standard* ran an article called “The Way Open” on its front page on August 8, 1866, expressing “the hope that the people of this State will adopt the constitutional amendment, and thus return to the Union,” and accusing Worth of being “bitterly opposed to it.” In addition to sharing that he personally did not support the amendment, and thus Presidential Reconstruction, the article portrayed Worth as the enemy of Union men in the state and a pawn of “the oligarchs and traitors” that were controlling North Carolina and keeping Unionists “depressed and cowed.”<sup>29</sup>

There was truth to the claims made by Tourgée and the *Standard* that Unionists were suffering in the state during Governor Worth’s tenure, and this discrimination was at least partially responsible for the necessity of forming a Union Party in 1866. As early as February, just two months into his tenure as Governor, Worth received a letter from a group of Union veterans in the Quaker Belt region congratulating him on his election and “expressing... hope that thorough Union may soon be restored” so they would be “allowed to return to peaceful homes.”<sup>30</sup> But allegations of violence against Unionists

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28. *Ibid.*, 667.

29. “The Way Open,” the *North Carolina Standard*, August 8, 1866, 1.

30. Jonathan Worth, “Letter To Mr. Yates,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 492. When I started this project, I hoped to find that

and injustice in North Carolina's courts did not become a serious political problem for Worth until later in the summer of 1866, as the state prepared for the election. In late July, Worth wrote to wartime Governor Zebulon Vance that Holden and several "others of like malignant feeling towards North Carolina," were scheming "to restore the state to military rule" by making "the impression that Union men (so called) cannot have justice in our Courts."<sup>31</sup> Worth spent a large portion of his time as governor that summer trying to disprove such claims, despite being warned by friends that "there must be some cause for the complaints" of Unionists and the knowledge that as news of injustices spread throughout the state, Unionists were organizing out of solidarity and for mutual protection.<sup>32</sup>

Worth went beyond ignoring direct pleas from Unionists seeking executive interventions, going so far as to actively undermine more publicized claims of violence and injustice against Unionists. Worth wrote to B. S. Hedrick in Washington, D. C. that the state's federal military commandant expressed genuine concern "that a Union man cannot have justice in our Courts," but upon reviewing some of the petitions himself concluded "that they are got up for effect."<sup>33</sup> In response, Worth began writing to county

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Jonathan Worth had championed the concerns of North Carolina Unionists such as these men, but as this paper attempts to demonstrate, Worth used his Unionist political past to keep the state as close as possible to that of the antebellum period as possible.

31. Jonathan Worth, "Letter To Z. B. Vance, July 26, 1866," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 697.

32. Jonathan Worth, "Letter from B. S. Hedrick, July 23, 1866," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 691.

33. Jonathan Worth, "Letter To B. S. Hedrick, July 25, 1866," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 694.

justices to inquire after specific cases, and he even put out an executive request for statistics on crime and sentencing throughout the state. None of the evidence he collected convinced him that there was a problem, and he maintained that the allegations were a ploy to keep the state under federal military rule. Despite Worth's insistence that this was all a scheme, federal authorities had been dispatched by General Grant earlier that month to gather data about conditions in North Carolina and found sufficient evidence to be concerned about justice in the state. According to one historian, "the levels of violence in the early phases of Reconstruction came close to equaling the later lawlessness of the Ku Klux Klan, which has attracted far more attention."<sup>34</sup>

The impact of Worth's betrayal of Unionists would be greater than just a political distancing from Progressive Unionists in the state. It essentially sanctioned the "wartime patterns of extra-legal, violent activity" that "continued to be an unusually frequent feature of life" for Unionists and black North Carolinians.<sup>35</sup> By refusing to deal with this violence in 1866, Jonathan Worth made it necessary for the next governor, William Holden to intervene militarily in 1870, a move that would cause him to be the first state executive to be impeached and removed from office. Furthermore, intimidating Progressive Unionists into political submission would work alongside a vicious propaganda campaign by the *Sentinel* to shame Unionists and virtually erase the true Civil War experience of many of these Unionists that had openly and even violently resisted the Confederacy. B. S. Hedrick reported to Worth that news had reached

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34. Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 103.

35. Escott, *Many Excellent People*, 103.

Washington of “numerous indictments are being found against the Union men in the Mountain Counties for offences committed by outlaws and others who refused to go into the rebellion.”<sup>36</sup> Wartime Unionists in the State were faced with vigilante violence, injustice in state courts, as well as smear campaigns by Conservatives. These obstacles to their lives and legacy would only grow worse as Reconstruction moved in a more radical direction.

#### Conservative Unionist Pushback: Constitutional Union Rhetoric

Although he took no responsibility for fostering sectionalism, or what he called “disunionist” attitudes, in North Carolina, Worth’s stance on violence against Unionists was in fact contributing to negative Northern perceptions of the state. After the Southern Unionist Convention in Philadelphia, B. S. Hedrick penned a lengthy correspondence to Worth informing him that “the conditions of things in the South” had created “a good deal of apprehension with men at the North who are not politicians.” According to Hedrick, Northerners had lost almost all faith in the ability of Southern executives like Worth to effectively govern because in the South it appeared that “the authorities seem to have no power or disposition to punish the lawless.”<sup>37</sup> Northerners were afraid of a mass insurrection by whites in the South like that of 1861.

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36. “Letter from B. S. Hedrick, June 22, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 645.

37. “Letter from B. S. Hedrick, September 16, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 782.

Hedrick also warned Worth that Northerners had noticed changes in Conservative attitudes in North Carolina since he had been elected, and that these changes were especially evident in leading Southern newspapers. Although not necessarily the product of Worth himself, Hedrick cautioned Worth about his support for William Pell's paper, the *Sentinel*, and implored him to see if he could temper the content of the paper. "I think the spirit manifested by the leading Southern newspapers... has had more effect in helping the extreme radicals than anything the radicals could do for themselves," Hedrick wrote, continuing to insist that editorials in Southern newspapers, including the *Sentinel*, were more influential in causing Northerners to "doubt the loyalty of the South" than any Southern politician. Newspapers both represented and influenced public opinion, and Hedrick sensed that the *Sentinel* was moving away from simply a political focus and instead relying on sectional rhetoric to shape public opinion. "'Yankee' he describes the most opprobrious epithet in the Dictionary, and even the 'dead dog of abolition' has to be stirred again," demonstrated Hedrick.<sup>38</sup> In response, Worth wrote back that "Mr. Pell has repeatedly declared in his paper, that I am to be held responsible for nothing appearing in the *Sentinel*," and insisting that no newspaper in the state was his partisan "organ," despite what Holden had been claiming about the relationship between Worth and Pell. He claimed that Pell was simply "personally and politically my friend," but admitted that while he approved of the content of the *Sentinel* overall, he took some issue with articles

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38. *Ibid.*, 782.

that were “injurious asperity to the Red Strings (among whom there are many good men) and undue commendation of the leaders of the Rebellion.”<sup>39</sup>

But the tone of the *Sentinel* and its opinion of the federal government had shifted in the year since its inception, and it would only grow more vitriolic in the following year with the Radical turn Congress would take. The issues with the paper that Hedrick and Worth debated-- the increasingly caustic sectionalist rhetoric, slandering Progressive Unionists in the state, and praise for the Confederacy-- pointed to the development of a New South Nationalism in North Carolina that would continue to shape the identity and political maneuvers of the state’s white conservatives as both “loyal” Americans but also distinctly Southern peoples.<sup>40</sup>

The lynchpin of this New South Nationalism rhetoric observable in Conservative Southern newspapers and politics was a simple political ideology called “Constitutional Unionism” that had emerged in 1860 as a central tenet of the short-lived Constitutional

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39. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to B. S. Hedrick, September 12, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 779.

40. Drew Gilpin Faust’s 1988 cultural history entitled *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism* was one of the earliest examinations of the language and symbolism employed in the Confederacy’s efforts to shape a distinct nationalism between 1861 and 1865. Historian Paul Quigley’s work *Shifting Grounds* (2012) takes an intellectual approach to explore nationalism in the South from 1848-1865, considers Confederate Nationalism an ideological failure and argues that once the war was over, the remnants of sectionalism and the “postwar white southern identity” that emerged after the war should not be considered nationalism “because it did not seriously involve a political claim of independence.” (217) Anne Sarah Rubin’s work *A Shattered Nation* examines Confederate nationalism and identity “of those Southern Unionist whites who supported the Confederacy” between the years 1861 to 1868. She posits that “White Southerners were less interested in forming their own nation and more concerned with preserving elements of Southern distinctiveness within the larger United States,” and that they “resented measures that they saw as punitive.” (144-5) Each of these works makes important contributions to the study of Confederate nationalism, but none fully explains the nationalist phenomenon of post-war North Carolina. New South Nationalism employed Constitutional Unionism to resist federal interference in its definitions of this citizenship, not just resent it, and would employ this rhetoric well beyond Reconstruction and into Jim Crow.

Union Party platform. The goal of the Constitutional Union Party was to maintain the status quo by keeping the Union together and refraining from too much emphasis on the issue of slavery, resolving in their weak platform to resist partisan politics and “recognize no political principle other than the Constitution of the Country, the Union of the States, and the Enforcement of the Laws.”<sup>41</sup> Constitutional Unionist rhetoric emphasized maintaining the Union above all, and enabled politicians like Worth to then accuse not only Southern secessionists of being disunionists but also Northern Radicals that they considered overreaching with abolitionist platforms and thereby also contributing to the sectional crisis. During Reconstruction, Constitutional Unionists would begrudgingly accept the abolition of slavery but see any further federal policies to guarantee rights to former slaves as the work of Northern Radical “disunionists” and a violation of the Constitution.

The Constitutional Union Party faction in North Carolina in 1860 was considered the Opposition Party, and was mainly comprised of conservative former Whigs that disagreed with the Democratic party’s openness to secession.<sup>42</sup> Although a Whig party no longer existed after secession, most Whigs, like Jonathan Worth, supported the Confederacy during the war.<sup>43</sup> After the war, “Whiggery survived in the hearts of many Southerners,” especially those like Worth, who, despite supporting the Confederacy, insisted they were loyal, original Unionists and “would beguile Northern politicians well

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41. "Platform of the Constitutional Union Party." *Platform Of The Constitutional Union Party* (August 2017): 1. *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed May 13, 2018).

42. Escott, *Many Excellent People*, 29, and Zuber, *Jonathan Worth*, 114.

43. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2014), 186.

into the 1870s.”<sup>44</sup> Many of these former Whigs, including Worth, were elitists and had resisted antebellum democratic reforms such as the free vote amendment in North Carolina.<sup>45</sup> The ability of former Whigs to rely on Unionist records would enable them a certain level of political negotiation during Reconstruction not initially enjoyed by antebellum Democrats, but they still maintained elitist, conservative platforms.

Jonathan Worth professed to be a Constitutional Unionist, and had been using the language and rhetoric of Constitutional Unionism since the secession crisis. As governor, he would cling to Constitutional Unionist ideology as a way to resist federal interventions in political and social matters in the state, especially when they involved rights for former Confederates as well as black North Carolinians. In the Circular he wrote to announce his candidacy for governor in the election of 1866, Worth claimed that “the preservation of the Union has been the polar star of my political life” and defended both himself and the former secessionists that had voted for him as loyal to the United States. Worth made little attempt to hide his disdain for certain federal policies, but did encourage North Carolinians to “quietly and industriously... obey the laws of his country, while they are in force, however distasteful some of them may be.”<sup>46</sup> He also told North Carolinians that he believed they were “unwisely and unconstitutionally excluded from the National councils,” but he insisted it would be “unwise to indulge in denunciations of the

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44. Ibid.

45. Charles C. Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeast Mississippi*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 132, and Escott, *Many Excellent People*, 28, and Foner, *Reconstruction*, 187.

46. Jonathan Worth, “Governor Worth’s Circular,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 615.

dominant power.” His approach to Reconstruction professed outward appearances of obedience and law and order, with the “hope that Providence will ultimately guide the minds of our late foes to counsels becoming magnanimity and wise and generous statesmanship.”<sup>47</sup> Worth’s use of Constitutional Unionist ideology in this Reconstruction Circular points to the emergence of New South Nationalism in the state.

A less guarded expression of “A Hopeful View” in the spirit of New South Nationalism appeared in an editorial by that title in the *Sentinel* on July 6, 1866. The editorial sought to soothe anxieties over the “existing condition of the South, and the further evils with which it is threatened, under the sway of Radical fanaticism and malignity.” The newspaper had started printing at the top of each issue, just under the section listing its title, editors, and date, the banner “For the Constitution of the United States, AS IT IS, and the Union AS IT WAS. No further Amendments,” followed by “FOR GOVERNOR JONATHAN WORTH OF RANDOLPH” in bold type. The editorial explained and justified the Conservative reactionary elements in North Carolina as “the logical consequence of excess” at the federal level, and told Conservatives in the state to take hope that “the day is not remote when the angry tide apparently threatening to engulf the people and the States of the South will flow into other and better channels. Nay, it will flow backwards, and in turn will overwhelm the bad, desperate, and unscrupulous men who would have let loose its turbulent waves upon us...”<sup>48</sup>

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47. Ibid.

48. “A Hopeful View,” *The Sentinel*, July 6, 1866, 1.

But the *Sentinel*, in all of its New South Nationalism excitement, went beyond simply criticizing the policies of the federal government and had already started working to construct a separate identity for Southerners rooted in Constitutional Unionism and a victimized narrative of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The issues of the *Sentinel* claimed history would be on its side, boasting “Of history we have no fears,” and that “when... the calm and dispassionate judgement shall have been formed... the South will have no reason to blush for the record.”<sup>49</sup> The *Sentinel* was already crafting a “glorious” past narrative complete with Lost Cause sentimentality and a distinctly Southern hero character for the historical record. The South’s “endurance, valor and heroism, --its conduct of the war, so far as lay in its contracted ability, according to civilized usage,-- the names and the fame of its great leaders and citizen soldiery,-- will illuminate the pages of the historian,” claimed the paper.<sup>50</sup>

Efforts to shape a distinctly Southern identity, strongly influenced by Constitutional Unionism, still involved a certain attempt to claim Americanness as well, or at least to make it seem as if the North had corrupted the original vision of the founders. In another editorial that appeared in the *Sentinel*, the editor reflected on what he considered a gross corruption of the Fourth of July, making it apparent that the only people celebrating the holiday in Raleigh in 1866 were federal troops and black North Carolinians. He continued to equate Reconstruction in the South to “the grievances inflicted upon the colonies by George the Third,-- the inhuman monster,” and hoped that

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49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

“wherever the Declaration of Independence was read throughout the States of the North... that the listening peoples were fired with a virtuous indignation,” at how similar the two situations were to one another.<sup>51</sup>

Jonathan Worth acknowledged that his favorite newspaper, the *Sentinel*, could at times be a little excessive in its attacks on Progressive Unionists and elevation of the Confederacy, but Pell’s views on Constitutional Unionism were similar to his own, and he recognized the political benefits of the paper in promoting him and resisting the federal government. The paper attacked the Union Party at the state and national level by questioning how it could consider itself a “national” party while supporting Reconstruction policies that denied “eleven States of the Union... rights under the Constitution.” Pell sought to counter the Union Party influence by uniting the old Whigs and Democrats as the new “Constitutional Union men of the state,” who were of course led by Worth.<sup>52</sup>

Worth’s friends cautioned him about the consequences of such an alliance and the impact it would have on Progressive Unionists in the state, many of whom originally supported Worth as a Unionist leader in 1861. D. F. Caldwell wrote to Worth in August of 1866 that “there has been and is a conspiracy on the part of the secessionists and the ultra old line War Whigs to brand and stigmatize in every way possible,” Progressive Unionists in the state as “radicals,” and he criticized Worth for his inaction to defend his former supporters. The *Standard* called for a complete split with Worth and the

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51. “Fourth of July,” *The Sentinel*, July 6, 1866, 1.

52. “Radicalism vs. Nationalism,” *The Sentinel*, July 2, 1866, 1.

Constitutional Unionist alliance, referring to its supporters as “rebels” and warning that they were “determined to make it honorable to have served in the army against the Union, and to disgrace and ruin the Union men.”<sup>53</sup> Another article in the *Standard* claimed that in the political climate of North Carolina under Worth “devotion to the Union brings losses in business, loss of office, loss of social standing, and is met everywhere by these ruling oligarchs with the sneer of scorn.”<sup>54</sup> By these accounts, both the legacy and promise of Progressive Unionism was seriously at risk, and Jonathan Worth was not helping.

#### 1867: Radical Reconstruction and Origins of New South Nationalism

In October of 1866, Jonathan Worth was once again elected governor of North Carolina. He defeated the Union Party’s candidate, Alfred Dockery, who actually refused the nomination but still managed to gather almost 24% of the vote and win Worth’s home county of Randolph by a landslide.<sup>55</sup> Since taking office in 1865, Worth had guided state lawmakers to concede to federal demands just enough to fulfill the requirements of Presidential Reconstruction as he understood it, but the state had still not gained admission to the Union nor representation in Congress. Worth had completely lost hope in the Reconstruction and reconciliation process, and rather than make concessions as he had done in 1865-66, he would spend his next term as Governor fighting Radical

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53. “Interesting Extracts from Letters,” *The Weekly Standard*, June 27, 1866, 1.

54. “The Way Open,” 1.

55. Zuber, *Jonathan Worth*, 238.

Reconstruction with Constitutional Unionist rhetoric. “I hold that the Union has not been dissolved,” Worth wrote to a friend, arguing that “North Carolina is still in the Union and is entitled to the benefits of the Constitution of the U. S. and bound to obey it.” But when he was pressed on the expediency of approving the Fourteenth Amendment in order to gain representation for the state, he defended the state’s rejection of the Amendment, saying “we not only have no assurance that its adoption would induce Congress to allow us representation, *but we have positive evidence to the contrary,*” and claimed that the representation proposition was rejected by Congress.<sup>56</sup> His opinion towards Congress was skeptical at best; he refused to make concessions that he felt would get the state nowhere and made decisions as executive with the attitude that “any further concessions will but invite further encroachments-- and instead of protecting us, will result in the total overthrow of Constitutional liberty.”<sup>57</sup>

Worth’s outlook on the state’s relationship with the federal government only grew more unpropitious in 1867. Shortly after Worth’s reelection, news of the 2nd Session of the 39th Congress began to reach North Carolina. In response to the state’s rejection of the Fourteenth Amendment, Radical Republican Thaddeus Stevens had proposed an early version of what would become the Reconstruction Act of 1867.<sup>58</sup> This Act laid out the Congressional Plan for returning former Confederate states to the Union,

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56. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to Dr. J. T. Leach, October 4, 1866,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 813.

57. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to W. F. Leak, January 5, 1867,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 860.

58. Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 114, Zuber, *Jonathan Worth*, 245.

and the original proposal made by Stevens called for Southern governments to open the polls to all men, regardless of race and excluding former Confederates, to elect representatives to constitutional conventions in each state.<sup>59</sup> But rather than scramble to negotiate state lawmakers to make concessions as he had done in 1866, Worth plotted what almost amounted to mutiny. Afraid that the civil government recently elected in the state would be overthrown, Worth contemplated calling his executive council to a meeting to discuss refusing to leave office should the federal government appoint a governor to replace him or if another election was held in which black North Carolinians were permitted to vote. He even went so far as to scheme a plan of action should he be arrested and detained in his refusal to vacate the office, hoping that such an action would necessitate the intervention of the United States Supreme Court.<sup>60</sup>

Although he entertained the idea of leaving office with such a statement, Worth ultimately decided that there was no person with a better temperament than he to help the Conservative faction of the state ride out Reconstruction. His second term as governor was shaping up to be more reactionary than constructive. His main agenda was not really to establish anything in the state, but rather to minimize the impact of Reconstruction and the social and political changes it threatened. Despite the fact that he continued insisting he was a Unionist, Worth was very much opposed to Reconstruction policies for their potential to undermine slavery and taint the Southern past. He saw it as his gubernatorial

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59. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 273.

60. Jonathan Worth, "Letter to William A. Graham, January 3, 1867," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 848.

duty to defend the state's autonomy as much as possible and thus avoid having to grapple with such an admission.

Governor Worth was especially concerned about the growing political alliance between poor whites and black North Carolinians. Noticing the Radical turn of Reconstruction, savvy William Holden quickly changed the name of the Union Party in the state to the Republican Party.<sup>61</sup> “The most alarming feature of our affairs at present, is the effort of Holden and his followers to ride into power by the disfranchisement of the great body of our white men and the universal enfranchisement of the negroes,” Worth wrote in January of 1867.<sup>62</sup> Despite their responsibility for causing the war, Worth was petrified by the possibility that former secessionists could lose the right to participate in state politics. He considered former secessionists as a “large and intelligent class of whites,” as opposed to “the mean whites co-operating with the negroes,” an elitist attitude that informed his political record as a Whig before the war.<sup>63</sup>

As one historian put it, “The fate of Reconstruction in North Carolina rested upon the ability of either the Radicals or the Conservatives to woo a sufficient number of poor white voters into their party to maintain an electoral majority.”<sup>64</sup> Worth knew that class antagonism in the state was a serious issue, so much so that he had been forced to support voter reforms in North Carolina before the war despite harboring a belief that democracy

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61. Zuber, *Jonathan Worth*, 274.

62. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to W. F. Leak, January 5, 1867,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 859.

63. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to W. H. McRae, September 9, 1867,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1047.

64. Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 115.

was dangerous. He worried that poor whites were motivated by the potential of property confiscation and land reforms as punishment for former Confederates, which he interpreted as a clear violation of Constitutional Unionism. “I regard any Union, not based on the Constitution, as Revolutionary and likely to result in ultimate disaster to our Country” Worth wrote to another Conservative in Randolph County, continuing that he could not “regard a government which admits to the polls *all* this ignorance and excludes *much* of the intelligence of its people, as likely to secure personal liberty or protection to the fruits of industry.”<sup>65</sup>

As leader of the state’s Republican Party, Holden was instrumental in growing the party from a coalition of whites as well as black North Carolinians, including some of Worth’s original political allies like William Clarke, Thomas Settle, and John Pool. These men were among wealthier whites who, for a variety of reasons, came to support the Republican Party.<sup>66</sup> Pool and Worth had worked together as Whig Unionists during the secession crisis, when Pool narrowly lost the 1860 election for governor in the state against Democrat John Ellis, as well as during the wartime peace movement, and again during Reconstruction. Pool had conservative leanings, but was increasingly disappointed in Worth’s political abandonment of Unionists.<sup>67</sup> Worth no doubt saw himself as more honest, consistent, principled, and even Unionist than Clarke, Settle, and Pool. Worth was

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65. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to A. M. Tomlinson, September 26, 1867,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1051.

66. For more information about why wealthy white North Carolinians became Republicans, see Escott, *Many Excellent People*, 142, and *The Scalawags: Southern Dissenters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (2004) by James Alex Baggett.

67. Zuber, *Jonathan Worth*, 113.

disgusted that these men were cooperating with black North Carolinians in the state and called them “Secession allies” of Holden’s, “base scoundrels who hope to attain ascendancy through negro votes.”<sup>68</sup>

North Carolinians began voting on the 1868 Convention in the fall of 1867, and Jonathan Worth’s political opposition to the 1868 Convention mirrored the strategy he had employed back in 1861 when North Carolinians were voting on the secession convention-- feeling that both were unconstitutional, he simply refused to participate. In fact, “because a majority of registered voters was needed for approval, he hoped that nonvoting could block Congress’s plan.”<sup>69</sup> As governor, his lack of support was obvious, but he refrained from speaking out against the Convention publicly. “I live under a reign of terror,” Worth wrote to a relative in Indiana, saying that he felt it “unsafe and unprofitable to publish” his thoughts on the matter.<sup>70</sup> His public silence was intended to save face in the eyes of the federal government and the Northern public, as well as prevent him from being removed from office, but privately Worth did not hide his feelings on the Convention of 1868. He wrote scathing “Confidential” letters blasting the Convention, and urged the recipients to circulate and “use these ideals as you please, but *not as coming from me.*”<sup>71</sup>

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68. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to William Clark, April 13, 1868,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1188.

69. Escott, *Many Excellent People*, 140.

70. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to William Clark, October 26, 1867,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1065.

71. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to J. C. Pass, October 25, 1867,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1062.

The content of Worth's privately-circulated criticisms combined Constitutional Unionist rhetoric, racist resentment, and New South Nationalism. Worth insisted that Radical Reconstruction was unconstitutional and repeatedly claimed that Congress simply sought to finish destroying the South and keep the Republican party in power. He saw this as a betrayal of antebellum Unionist Whigs, who "abhorred Democracy and Abolition as disunion elements," but many of whom, he argued, "most steadily adhered to the Union throughout the war believing the object of the North was to uphold the Constitution and the Union," which he lamented was not coming to fruition.<sup>72</sup> Of course, Worth's understanding of upholding the Constitution as an antebellum Whig included the protection of slavery, and even though he recognized in 1867 that slavery had been abolished without the possibility of revival, he wrote about it as if it were the first constitutional violation on the road to Radical Reconstruction.

For all of his Constitutional Unionist protests against the Convention, what really bothered Worth was that, if successful, the Convention would force North Carolina to grant rights to black North Carolinians. For Worth, and many other North Carolinians, race was at the center of everything about Reconstruction-- the constitution, sectionalism, and identity. He explained this intersectionality to his relative William Clark, a Northern Quaker:

When the whites see all the negroes and a few time serving whites... formed into a coalition devised and carried out by the North, with the aid of the military, to give political ascendancy to the negro race, it naturally produces hostility between

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72. Jonathan Worth, "Letter to William Clark, October 26, 1867," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1064.

racism and hatred toward the faction which tramples on all the manhood of the South.<sup>73</sup>

When Clark rebuked Worth's outlook on Reconstruction, he replied that he was annoyed that "the Quakers... should believe under the circumstances that the African race is capable of attaining to a respectable degree of civilization," and that black North Carolinians "are rapidly sinking into their natural position and by an irresistible law of nature, will soon perish out in contact with a superior race-- and in the mean time will be the curse of our country."<sup>74</sup> Worth admitted that he spoke "of the race" in general, "not of individual cases trained by contact with the whites," but as governor he had refused to fund public education in the state if it meant educating black students as well as white students.<sup>75</sup>

In addition to spreading racism and Constitutional Unionist ideas among his correspondents, one of the ways Worth sought to resist Radical Reconstruction was to play up the state's Unionist reputation. He failed to recognize that his abandonment of Progressive and Radical Unionists in the state, who had turned to the federal government themselves when Worth ignored or undermined their plight, was a significant contributing factor to the birth of Radical Reconstruction. Worth encouraged influential secessionists in the state to lay low in 1867 and sought to ease the impact of Reconstruction by portraying the state as loyal and reluctant to participate in the war, and

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73. Ibid.

74. Jonathan Worth, "Letter to William Clark, December 28, 1867," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1096.

75. Ibid.

finding “people as went into the rebellion not by choice, but by force of surrounding circumstances,” from North Carolina to appeal to moderate Republicans in Congress.<sup>76</sup>

Worth reached out personally to moderate Republicans and Democrats in Congress defending his record as a Unionist. He even went so far as to send Representatives old issues of the *Standard* that exposed William Holden’s inconsistent political past. He resented the fact that Unionist had changed as a political label and ideology, and that “if the Union man be not now a Radical,” he had little legitimacy in the eyes of Congress.<sup>77</sup>

Worth also expressed concern over what he sensed was a growing nationalism in the North based on abolition and civil rights for black Americans, which he rightly perceived could tarnish the reputation of the South for all of history. “The great body of the American people, now believe, that the late war arose from antagonism between Freedom and Slavery. Nothing could be more palpably false,” Worth wrote, claiming that what really caused the war was “*Party Spirit*,” which resulted from disagreements over tariffs and sectionalism. Worth called the Northern interpretation of the cause of the Civil War “narrow malevolence... under the guise of patriotism.”<sup>78</sup> Such an interpretation of the war in the North was dangerous because it completely justified the Reconstruction Act of 1867 and the calling of a convention to write civil rights for black North Carolinians into the state constitution. As one historian put it, “if Reconstruction

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76. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to W. F. Leak, January 5, 1867,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 859.

77. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to Charles A. Eldridge, February 14, 1868,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1151.

78. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to William Clark, May 25, 1867,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 970.

succeeded, then all the proslavery arguments would have been proved wrong.”<sup>79</sup>

Southerners would have had to grapple with the knowledge that the war was their mistake, and they would have had to share political and social power with former slaves. Worth and many other Conservatives further turned to New South Nationalism to avert themselves from the inclusive nationalism of the United States.

#### “Partisans, Not Patriots”: Republican Victory in 1868

Conservative fears of a successful alliance between poor whites and black North Carolinians would be realized when, under the Reconstruction Act of 1867, federal authorities oversaw the organization of the 1868 Convention to revise a new constitution in the state that was compatible with the Reconstruction Amendments. Black and white North Carolinians had elected Republican delegates in an overwhelming majority to the Convention, which assembled for two months between January and March and completely overhauled the political apparatus of North Carolina. The resulting government replaced the state’s “traditional aristocratic structure of local government” with “full, local democracy.”<sup>80</sup> The new constitution, which Conservatives gave the derogatory nickname of “Black and Tan Constitution,” protected universal suffrage for men, provided for the direct election of judges and county commissioners by voters, and eliminated property requirements for candidates running for public office. Delegates at

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79. Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 120.

80. Escott, *Many Excellent People*, 144.

the convention also revamped the state's commitment to education, mapping out a plan to provide public education for black and white North Carolinians.<sup>81</sup>

Jonathan Worth detested the new Constitution, especially because it enfranchised black North Carolinians, but he also sensed its popularity in the state and thus resisted making public statements against it. Instead, he privately schemed as North Carolinians prepared to elect officials in the state under the new Constitution in April. Worth knew that the Republican candidate for governor, William Holden, still had many political enemies even among Progressive Unionists, and he tried to find a Conservative candidate with a "Unionist" past like himself to run against Holden and split the Republican vote. He was dismayed by the Conservative party's decision to nominate the state's wartime governor Zebulon Vance and wrote to urge Vance to drop out and instead use his influence to defeat the new constitution by "rousing our people from their fatal lethargy." Worth attempted to convince Vance that "No patriotic man would desire to be elected under this Constitution."<sup>82</sup> He also wrote to United States Senators sympathetic to President Johnson, who was facing impeachment at the time, to beg for interventions in the state that would "set aside the election held under military auspices and congressional enactment." Worth considered the upcoming election as unconstitutional as the 1868 Constitution itself and railed that it had enabled Holden, "an original Secessionist... who did more than any other North Carolinian to produce and foster the sectional alienation,"

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81. Ibid., 143-44 and William C. Harris, "Black and Tan Constitution," *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*, University of North Carolina Press, <https://www.ncpedia.org/black-and-tan-constitution> (accessed June 13, 2018).

82. Zuber, *Jonathan Worth*, 282-3, Jonathan Worth, "Letter to Z. B. Vance, March 2, 1868," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1167.

to be a frontrunner for the governorship.<sup>83</sup> Although Vance did cede the Conservative nomination to Thomas Ashe, Worth's schemes were unable to stop the momentum behind Republicans in 1868. In the April elections, North Carolinians voted their approval for the new constitution, elected Holden as governor, and voted in a super majority of Republicans to the state legislature to support both the constitution and the governor.<sup>84</sup>

With the 1868 Republican victories in North Carolina, Jonathan Worth finally and completely realized that the political meaning of "Unionism" had irrevocably changed, as had American Nationalism. Feeling there was smaller political space for Conservatives, he railed against the progressive direction of American government as a betrayal of honesty and principles. "We have reached a period in human affairs when the nerve to be honest is so rare," he wrote to a confidant after the April elections, blaming "partisan rage" for the accelerated social and political changes brought about in just a decade by the Civil War and Reconstruction. He felt personally oppressed by the democratic turn, complaining "that the nominee of a party is thereafter to conform to the new principles his party may avow, and that he is to be deemed a traitor if he adhere to the principles he had avowed before such election." Furthermore, he sympathized with President Johnson, who was facing impeachment by a Republican-dominated Congress that viewed him as

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83. Jonathan Worth, "Letter to James R. Doolittle, May 11, 1868," in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1197-8.

84. Escott, *Many Excellent People*, 144, and Zuber, *Jonathan Worth*, 284.

an enemy of Reconstruction.<sup>85</sup> Worth saw Radical Reconstruction as deviant from “the government established by our wise and patriotic ancestors,” and he clung to his Unionist record and Constitutional Unionism as a way to resist it.

Worth had been granted the title of “provisional governor” for the time between the April election and when Holden would take office, which gave him ample time to reflect on the changes that had taken place during his tenure, despite his executive efforts to keep things the same. He compared 1865 to 1868, which revealed to him that “the Republican party has no respect for union antecedents,” and instead were directed by “*present* adherence to Radicalism.” In Worth’s estimation, this had allowed “inferior men having no moral principle” to rise to prominence while “good constitutional Union men” were excluded from politics for not being considered patriotic. These changes he chalked up to “the natural sequent of universal negro suffrage.” Realizing that he was on the wrong side of the political tide in 1868, Worth sought some reputational redemption and hoped that “Congress, when they white wash Holden, would white-wash me, as his late rival and presenting Union record infinitely better.”<sup>86</sup> While Worth waited to be removed from office, he expressed some regret that he had not given an inch as governor, because things had gone miles past what he thought was acceptable. In hindsight, he wished he had expanded suffrage to blacks and poor whites in voting for the lower House of

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85. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to B. S. Hedrick, May 17, 1868,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1203-4, and Foner, *Reconstruction*, 334.

86. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to B. S. Hedrick, May 22, 1868,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1207-8. By “white-wash,” Worth was referring to Congressional pardon for participation in the war as a Confederate.

Commons in the state, because he saw “the universal suffrage principle, for both branches of the law-making power... as undermining civilization.”<sup>87</sup>

Even though he seemed to privately accept the tide of Reconstruction as beyond his control, Worth made one last attempt to stave off complete Republican dominance in the state by questioning the legality of Holden’s election. As of April 1868, Holden was still technically barred from holding public office under the Fourteenth Amendment and needed to be pardoned by Congress in order to take office. Worth encouraged Conservatives in Washington to protest the election of Holden and several others who were likewise barred from office, but to no avail. He then entertained the idea of refusing to leave office “with the view of raising the question as to the constitutionality of the law under which he [Holden] claims to be elected,” before ultimately deciding that even if it prevented Holden from taking office, the Supreme Court would not walk back universal suffrage and it would all be in vain.<sup>88</sup> On July 1, when Holden was scheduled to take the test oath necessary to remove legal impediments to his ascension to office, Worth wrote a letter to the governor-elect informing him that he did “not recognize the validity of the late election” and he was vacating the office under military duress.<sup>89</sup>

On July 4, 1868, William Holden assumed his position as Governor of North Carolina. The date was symbolic, and marked the Republican party in the state as “truly”

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87. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to B. S. Hedrick, June 2, 1868,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1217-18.

88. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to William A. Graham, June 16, 1868,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1223.

89. “Jonathan Worth to Holden, July 1, 1868,” in Holden, W. W., Horace W Raper, Thornton W Mitchell, eds., *The Papers of William Woods Holden* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, N.C. Dept. of Cultural Resources, 2000), 317-18.

American and patriotic. “We are once more Americans all,” Holden declared in his patriotic inaugural address, reiterating that as Americans protected by the Constitution, “all men are equal in their political and civil rights.”<sup>90</sup> Jonathan Worth would never accept such basic but radical ideas, and he continued to resent Radicalism and denounce it as tyrannical and un-American.

After leaving office, Worth was able to express these beliefs more publicly than he had been as governor, and he wrote to newspapers in both the North and South with the hope of swaying public opinion. He even took to the road and campaigned for Democratic candidates in preparation for the normal fall election of 1868. He was disgusted when Grant won the election because it represented a nationwide “endorsement of the Reconstruction measures... those violations of vital principles of Republicanism and the Constitution of the United States.” Rather than symbolize reunification and reconciliation, however, Worth complained that it would “produce the very opposite of fraternity between North and South,” and that “the patriotism which once animated the people is fully merged in greed.”<sup>91</sup> Indeed, there would continue to be sectionalism, but Worth misplaced who was to blame for it. Conservatives in the South would use violence, racism, and New South Nationalism to regain control of the state’s politics as well as the transformative narrative of the Civil War and Reconstruction to justify their reversal of universal rights protections. Jonathan Worth died a little over a year after

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90. “Inaugural Address of Governor W. W. Holden,” in Holden, W. W., Horace W Raper, Thornton W Mitchell, eds., *The Papers of William Woods Holden* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, N.C. Dept. of Cultural Resources, 2000), 319-26.

91. Jonathan Worth, “Letter to William Clark, January 14, 1869,” in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth* (Raleigh, 1909), 1259-61.

leaving office, on September 5, 1869, but his legacy as both a Unionist and a Conservative would be foundational to Lost Cause ideology during the Jim Crow era in North Carolina.

## CHAPTER IV

### EPILOGUE

The Republican political victory of the Constitutional Convention of 1868 and the social changes it legalized unleashed a fury among Conservatives in North Carolina, including the ousted Jonathan Worth. Holden had created a strong coalition of black and white North Carolinians, and while the state's Republican Party drew strength from its racial diversity, it was also its main vulnerability. In response to the Progressive Unionist success, Conservatives quickly acted to undermine the new political alliances by taking advantage of "the deeply engrained disdain that most whites felt for blacks, especially the newly empowered blacks."<sup>1</sup>

Conservatives played on racial anxieties in highly visible public institutions, such as newspaper media and the state's political apparatus, but also employed more hidden tactics to regain social and political control of the state, including extralegal terrorism by violent hate groups. A major component of legitimizing this Conservative backlash to Republican progress in the state and cementing Conservative goals for political and social institutions was deciding the battle between Progressive Unionism and Conservative Unionism in the state. Conservatives pushed their "Constitutional Unionist" rhetoric during this time to counter the inevitable reality that Progressive Unionists were considered more patriotic and loyal by the federal government and that granting civil

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1. Victoria E. Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War: Southern Dissent and Its Legacies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 61.

rights to black North Carolinians was at the top of the national agenda. Worth's legacy was used by Conservatives defending their version of Unionism in the state as a codified explication of the limits of federal interference in policies involving race.

Newspapers were highly influential mediums in Reconstruction North Carolina, and the unbalanced influence of Conservative newspapers in the state was "one of the underlying problems of Reconstruction in North Carolina."<sup>1</sup> The *Sentinel* newspaper, which in 1868 had been bought by one of Worth's "original Unionist" Conservative allies Josiah Turner, undermined Reconstruction by crafting arguments to spread racialized fear as well as elevate these anxieties to include more sophisticated rhetoric than simply racism. No longer could the simple and false claim work that former slaves were incapable of integrating into society; Conservatives in the state needed more complex justifications for why the Republican plan was wrong. One of these justifications was economic. In an editorial called "What Radicalism Costs," the *Sentinel* jumped on the struggles of the white working class and blamed the slow economic recovery in North Carolina on black North Carolinians and the federal government. The article railed against high taxes that went "to support the Southern negroes in idleness [and] to keep the whites under the bayonets of a huge standing army," and encouraged sympathetic readers to "apply the remedy" to this problem at the polls the following November.<sup>2</sup> Numerous other articles portrayed the Republican-controlled state government as fiscally

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1. Jim D. Brisson, "'Civil Government Was Crumbling Around Me': The Kirk-Holden War of 1870," *North Carolina Historical Review* 88.2 (April 2011), 147.

2. "What Radicalism Costs," *The Sentinel*, August 4, 1868.

irresponsible, dishonest, lecherous, and misguided in its attempts to establish “Utopian schemes” such as public schools, charities, and scientific societies.<sup>3</sup>

Constitutional Unionist rhetoric was also a significant component of the Conservative strategy to legitimize reactionary politics under the gaze of a wide and mixed audience. Conservatives defended themselves against growing suspicions that they were attempting to organize “armed resistance to the present state government” and overthrow Republicans that had recently come to power. The *Sentinel* challenged Republicans to “prove, or to give the semblance of proof” that such fears were valid, and insisted that “the Conservatives and Democrats are friends of peace, of laws, of order.” The editor made sure to qualify that this did not mean Conservatives were giving up the Conservative Unionist fight to define reunion with the federal government on Conservative terms and thus win back the state. The article claimed that Conservatives were in favor of “a restored Union of the states, on equal terms,” and they would “support the laws and constitution of this state, though they regard them as illegitimately *forced* upon them, until they are lawfully repealed.”<sup>4</sup>

Despite such public confidence in the repeal of reconstruction laws in the state, Conservatives like Turner knew that publicly attempting to sway peoples’ outlook on politics through their “organ”, the *Sentinel*, would not be enough to reverse the Progressive victories in the state. Several hate groups in the state secretly organized to counter the success of the Republican Party, mainly through violence and intimidation of

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3. *The Sentinel*, August 5, 1868.

4. “The Army Bill,” *The Sentinel*, August 4, 1868.

black North Carolinians and white Progressives that supported the Republican Party. There were several factions of these secret societies in North Carolina in 1868, including the White Brotherhood, the Invisible Empire, and the Constitutional Union Guard. Eventually these factions would merge under what became known as the Ku Klux Klan. The rise of such organizations was a response to the federally-assisted Progressive Unionist victory in North Carolina in 1868. Supposedly the secretive nature of such organizations was inspired by the model of the Progressive Unionist organization known as the Red Strings, or Heroes of America, that had resisted the Confederacy in North Carolina throughout the war. During Jonathan Worth's term as governor, the organization continued to counter injustices against Union men in the state-- injustices that Worth ignored and undermined. When Reconstruction started to take a more radical turn and Holden formed the Union Party, which would later become the state's Republican Party, many of the Red Strings came out from the "underground" and joined these larger political organizations. In order to join the White Brotherhood, inductees not only had to swear that they had never been a member of the Red Strings organization but also that they would never reveal the name of the person by whom they were inducted.<sup>5</sup>

A letter from Joel Ashworth of Randolph County to Governor Holden in 1870 reveals how quickly the Conservative backlash was taking effect, even in places like Randolph and Alamance Counties that had been home to a powerful anti-Confederate coalition of Red Strings during the war. Ashworth reported to the governor that the Klan

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5. US Congress, Senate, *Alleged Outrages in the Southern States: Hearing before the Select Committee of the Senate* (42d Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., March 10, 1871).

was politically motivated, explaining “Randolph County is almost entirely governed by the Ku Klux Klan” and even before the election, “they paraded through several neighborhoods... in order to terrify the most timid Republicans and by threats &c make them stay away from the election.” But there was another, ironic, impact of Klan violence in Randolph County, and perhaps more important to the long-term political success of the Klan and evidence of the power of New South Nationalism-- some of the former victims of Confederate violence, men who had hid from the Confederacy and formed part of the “inner civil war” alliance against it, were now a part of the Klan. The Klan’s “object seemed to be to decoy as many as possible into the organization by making them believe it was not a very bad thing,” Ashworth wrote, continuing to say “I know a great many men who lay out during the war, who were whipped, kicked and handcuffed by the Rebels during the war who are now among the Ku Klux and voted for the men that abused them so badly.”<sup>6</sup> These men had never joined the Red Strings but had likely been assisted by members of the organization, or at least were in contact with some of them; in the battle to define Unionism, these men were being won over to the Conservative interpretation. Such a victory would shape local memory of the war for the next century.

Conservatives in North Carolina feared that Republicans were on to their game, especially when a series of laws were passed to allow the state executive to intervene militarily and put an end to Klan violence. In 1868, an act was passed that allowed the governor to assemble a state militia guided by the principles represented by “the flag of

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6. “Statements, Depositions, and Other Records Submitted by Gov. William W. Holden Relating to the Crimes of Crimes of the Ku Klux Klan Against Citizens of North Carolina, 1869-1871,” in *Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series), 1871-1880*, National Archives Microfilm Publication M666.

the United States [that] waves for the protection of all.”<sup>7</sup> Just a year later, state senator T. M. Shoffner sought to add teeth to the state militia when he proposed legislation that would allow the governor to declare counties in states of insurrection and suspend the writ of habeas corpus in such instances. Progressives hoped such legislation would make a strong public statement and frighten reasonable Klansmen to stop committing outrageous and unjustified acts of violence in communities across the state.<sup>8</sup>

The Conservative response to each of these state laws was to create an uproar that they were unconstitutional. Employing a Constitutional Unionist interpretation of United States law, the *Sentinel* bellowed that the 1868 militia law was “unconstitutional, in that it provides for the organization of a volunteer force by the governor, to be employed by him to execute the laws, just such a force as the Constitution of the United States forbids.”<sup>9</sup> Conservatives in the state were not only using Constitutional Unionist rhetoric to resist federal reconstruction policies, but also employing it to protect them from the state policies that they considered unfavorable to their cause. When the Shoffner Act made it to the floor of the state legislature, Conservatives allowed its passage only after lawmakers removed the provision allowing the governor to suspend the writ of habeas corpus. Conservatives successfully used the United States Constitution to their advantage to achieve this compromise, claiming that allowing the state’s executive to suspend the writ of habeas corpus was a violation of their rights as guaranteed by the federal

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7. William Woods Holden, "A Proclamation by His Excellency, the Governor of North Carolina," October 12, 1868, in *Memoirs of W. W. Holden*, (Durham: The Seeman Printery, 1911), 119.

8. Brisson, "The Kirk-Holden War of 1870," 132.

9. "The Army Bill," *The Sentinel*, August 4, 1868.

government.<sup>10</sup> This rhetoric would eventually allow Conservatives to impeach Holden and ultimately end Republican-led Reconstruction in the state, and with it the Progressive Unionist interpretation of Reconstruction would end as well.

Not only was Constitutional Unionist rhetoric showing up in highly visible outlets like newspapers and political debates, but it was also fueling an early faction of the North Carolina Ku Klux Klan, the Constitutional Union Guards. The purpose of this organization, as explained by a former member, was “the reestablishment of the Constitution as it was, without the amendments...brought about by the reconstruction policy.”<sup>11</sup> Despite such a heavy emphasis on the Constitution, this former member of the Constitutional Union Guards, who had also been a member of the White Brotherhood, said that members did not swear to uphold the Constitution of the United States. This ideology not only justified the politically motivated vigilante violence of the Klan faction, but it also enabled the group to recruit men who were perhaps desirous for the state to return to a respected position in Union but who were also not keen on sharing social and political power with black North Carolinians. Several members from Alamance County who were initially enticed to join because of the Constitutional Unionist rhetoric became disillusioned with the group when they realized that it employed violent and dishonest means to secure “the advancement of the interests of the conservative party.” Two men in particular were galled by their first task--- to make a

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10. Brisson, “The Kirk-Holden War of 1870,” 132.

11. US Congress, Senate, *Alleged Outrages in the Southern States: Hearing before the Select Committee of the Senate* (42d Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., March 10, 1871), 13.

coffin to place outside the home of a political enemy--but realized they faced death if they refused.<sup>12</sup>

Social and political death were more realistic fears for those higher profile members of Klan affiliate organizations who found themselves wanting to break away from the organizations. Josiah Turner, editor of the *Sentinel*, was particularly instrumental at enabling this element of Klan power. Several former Klansmen testified that the *Sentinel* had slandered them once they had ended their participation in the organization and spoke out as witnesses to Klan violence, actions that could potentially lead to prosecution of Klansmen. One such man, James E. Boyd, had been a candidate to represent Alamance County in the state legislature, but he claimed that after providing unfavorable testimony against the Klan, “the Sentinel, published in Raleigh, by Mr. Turner, which is recognized as the leading organ of the conservative party,” had published very unfavorable articles that “abused” him and “consigned” him to “infamy,” in the eyes of his own party of Conservatives.<sup>13</sup> When Boyd confronted Turner in person about his unfair newspaper coverage and told him again the truth about illegal and immoral Klan activities, including his knowledge that the Klan had plans to be active the night before the election, Turner told him that “everything is fair in elections.”<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, Turner legitimized violent Klan outrages by crafting narratives that justified the violence for his newspaper. When Wyatt Outlaw, a black leader in Alamance County, was lynched by Klansmen just outside the county courthouse in February of

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12. Ibid., 61.

13. Ibid., 9.

14. Ibid.

1870, newspapers claimed that Outlaw had shot at Klansmen and thus had it coming. According to a former member of the organization, this account was totally false.<sup>15</sup> Shortly after the murder of Outlaw, which went unpunished, state senator John Walter Stephens of Caldwell County was stabbed to death in the middle of the day by Klansmen in the basement of the crowded courthouse of his home county.<sup>16</sup> This murder also failed to see justice at the hands of local authorities, prompting Governor Holden to intervene.<sup>17</sup>

Holden declared Alamance and Caldwell counties to be in a state of insurrection, suspended the writ of habeas corpus, and sent Colonel George W. Kirk to Alamance and Caldwell counties to arrest Klansmen connected with the murders. Holden suspected that this intervention would cost him politically, but he was frustrated by the lack of initiative at the federal level to deal with the detrimental and rapidly spreading Klan violence in the state.<sup>18</sup> Conservative newspapers in the state, including the *Sentinel*, immediately jumped on Holden's decision as a "reign of terror" in which Kirk's men harassed innocent citizens" and spread the story of an outlier incident where Klansmen were tortured while in custody.<sup>19</sup> According to testimony from former Klan members, the "Kirk-Holden War" as it would be termed, initially seemed to succeed in abating extralegal Klan activities in

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15. US Congress, Senate, *Alleged Outrages in the Southern States: Hearing before the Select Committee of the Senate* (42d Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., March 10, 1871), 6.

16. Brisson, "The Kirk-Holden War of 1870," 139-140.

17. Mark Emory Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice : Albion Tourgée and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 156-7.

18. Brisson, "The Kirk-Holden War of 1870," 143.

19. *Ibid.*, 147.

the state.<sup>20</sup> But coverage of the Klan roundup in the Conservative press “helped turn many white North Carolinians against Holden and his party, while it steeled those who already opposed the governor.”<sup>21</sup> This shift in public opinion would have a long-lasting impact in the state by justifying Holden’s successful impeachment in 1871, the first of its kind in the United States, and ultimately ending the short reign of Republicans and Progressive Unionism in the state.

Holden’s impeachment signaled the unquestionable victory of Conservative Unionism in the state. This interpretation of Unionism not only influenced how North Carolinians viewed the state’s relationship to the federal government, but also how they would remember the Civil War and Reconstruction. The Conservative Unionist interpretation of Reconstruction officially made Holden the state’s villain, and so naturally, his rival Jonathan Worth became its champion. State legislators scoffed at Holden during the impeachment proceedings for questioning Worth’s actions as Governor, causing his counsel to explain that Holden’s remarks were “not intended to charge, that the distinguished deceased had any connection with, or, knowingly, gave any countenance to the secret organizations” in North Carolina. But Holden’s defense attorney made a last-ditch effort to clarify that Worth’s objection to the Reconstruction acts as unconstitutional and illegal as well as his public insistence that he was removed from office under “military duress” were used as “the pretext by bad and misguided men,

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20. US Congress, Senate, *Alleged Outrages in the Southern States: Hearing before the Select Committee of the Senate* (42d Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., March 10, 1871).

21. Brisson, “The Kirk-Holden War of 1870,” 143.

to unite others with themselves, in their treasonable associations.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, Jonathan Worth had abandoned Progressive Unionists and opened the door for Klan violence to cement the Conservative Unionist vision of the state.

Jonathan Worth’s legacy became an important model for elite whites during the New South era, when a new generation of Southern industrialists professed to put sectional differences aside in order to pursue economic “progress.” Several historians have pointed out that, despite their talk of reconciliation and emphasis on “progressive” measures, including an increased state interest in public schooling, these New South Nationalists depended on white supremacy to unite wealthy and poor whites against black North Carolinians. Furthermore, they used racism to keep poor whites in a perpetual subordinate position just as they had done during the antebellum era, and thereby keep control of the state’s social, political, and economic structures for themselves.<sup>23</sup>

The Fusionist political movement that combined Populists and Republicans in the state from the mid-1890s to 1900 threatened the comfortably powerful elites in the state, and part of their strategy to counter the movement included using the Conservative Unionist experience of Reconstruction to maintain white supremacy and New South Nationalism. In 1894, when the Fusionist movement began, the *Sentinel’s* successor paper the *Raleigh News and Observer*, printed a weekly column in the Sunday paper by

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22. North Carolina Court of Impeachments, *Argument in the Impeachment Trial of W. W. Holden, Governor of North Carolina*, ed. James H. Moore, (Raleigh: State Printer, 1871): 1048. Holden would later find himself defending his executive actions against the narrative portrayed by James Moore, the editor of his impeachment trial arguments, in a textbook he wrote called “School History of North Carolina” that was adopted as the standard in history education by the State Board of Education in 1881. See “A Letter from Governor Holden” in the *Raleigh News and Observer*, November 30, 1881.

23. See Paul D. Escott’s *Many Excellent People*, Glenda Gilmore’s *Gender and Jim Crow*, Michael Honey’s *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights*, David Roediger’s *The Wages of Whiteness*

Daniel R. Goodloe.<sup>24</sup> Like Worth, Goodloe is another excellent example of a Conservative Unionist; despite supporting abolition and Unionism before the war (Goodloe even worked for Abraham Lincoln's administration during the war and attempted to help establish the Republican Party in the state during Presidential Reconstruction), he came to despise Reconstruction because of the complicated politics it created. Goodloe was a moderate and an idealist, and while he supported abolition and some rights for black North Carolinians, he did not favor social and political equality and he was disgusted by political corruption during Reconstruction.<sup>25</sup>

Goodloe survived to reinterpret his experience of Reconstruction in the New South era, and his Conservative Unionist perspective became very useful to North Carolina's elites as they attempted to harness the past to serve their own interests. His interpretation of Reconstruction portrayed Jonathan Worth as "an honest man, of sound sense, a good officer, and universally respected," while he essentially blamed Holden for unscrupulously bringing Radical Reconstruction on North Carolina. In an installment of his column called "The Dark Days of '60," Goodloe claimed that he had suggested to the North Carolina legislature during the winter session of 1865-66, the first session under Worth's leadership, a "mild form of negro suffrage offered in the way of vaccination," which would have allowed only black North Carolinians that could read and write to

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24. It is worth noting that the *News and Observer* was taken over in 1894 by Jonathan Worth's grandson-in-law, Josephus Daniels. Funded by wealthy Democrats, Daniels bought the struggling paper that year with the express purpose of supporting the party's interests in the state. See "Company History," *Raleigh News and Observer*, April 16, 2013, (Accessed 7/10/2018 <https://www.newsobserver.com/advertise/market-data/article10350698.html>).

25. D. A. Yanchisin, "Goodloe, Daniel Reaves," in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

vote. Such a solution, he argued, would have appeased the federal government enough to stave off “the re-reconstruction of 1867-’68, with the deluge of illiterate negro suffrage, led by the carpetbaggers.”<sup>26</sup> What prevented this concession in the state legislature, according to Goodloe, was not Worth’s influence, but rather Holden’s paper the *Standard*, which he recounted as falsely representing “the true Union sentiment” to be against black suffrage. In another installment Goodloe argued that of the states that seceded, North Carolina was the only one that submitted for popular approval an ordinance to repeal secession and abolish slavery, making it seem like the state had acted on its own to reconcile with the federal government and regain admission to the Union, thus making Reconstruction an unfair punishment.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to popularizing Conservative Unionist accounts of the Civil War and Reconstruction in newspapers, North Carolina’s elite class became active in physically memorializing the Confederacy during the 1890s and early 1900s.<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Worth’s daughter, Elvira Moffitt, was one such elite. Moffitt was a member of numerous Ladies Associations, including the Daughters of the American Revolution, the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, the Colonial Dames, the North Carolina Peace Society, and the Raleigh chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, of which she was named an honorary president for life. She was responsible for the erection of a

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26. Daniel R. Goodloe, “The Dark Days of ’60,” *The News and Observer*, December 9, 1894.

27. Daniel R. Goodloe, “Born of the Bayonet,” *The News and Observer*, December 16, 1894.

28. Numerous historians have written about this movement and the incredible influence of Southern women on monument building in the South. Karen L. Cox’s work *Dixie’s Daughters* (2003) is an excellent study of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and William Fitzhugh Brundage’s book *The Southern Past* (2005) shows the deeply contested battle over memory of the Civil War between black and whites in the South’s public spaces.

monument to the Confederacy in her home county of Randolph, an original Unionist stronghold, as well as in Raleigh and Virginia. In 1897, she and her siblings donated a portrait of Worth to the state's executive mansion that was described in the *News and Observer* as portraying the face of a prominent North Carolinian with "great honesty" and "a rugged conviction swept as with a certain music by a broad benevolence."<sup>29</sup>

After the initial portrait dedication in 1897, Moffitt's memorial work shifted to figures other than her father, but in the 1920s she once again sought to re-insert Worth's legacy into the larger Lost Cause narrative. In 1923 she and her sister, Adelaide Worth Bagley, mother-in-law to *News and Observer* editor Josephus Daniels, dedicated another portrait of their father to be displayed in the Governor's office. At the ceremony, state Supreme Court Justice Hoke delivered the dedication speech, praising Worth's "unswerving devotion... to the Union until he was confronted with the higher duty of loyalty to his state" and imagining Worth's term as particularly challenging because he "was charged with the duties of conducting a government in the presence of a victorious hostile government and of a dominant, watchful, and suspicious people." Despite these challenges, Hoke claimed that "so well did he [Worth] conduct himself that he won over and held the confidence of the government at Washington." Secure in New South Nationalism and Jim Crow structures, Democrat Governor Cameron Morrison accepted the portrait, and said that Worth inspired him because "it was through Governor Worth's

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29. "Portrait of Late Governor Worth," *The News and Observer*, March 14, 1897.

influence that the state came through the terrible period of Reconstruction, and made way for the strong and hopeful North Carolina of today.”<sup>30</sup>

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30. “Worth Portrait Given to State,” Folder 37, Scan 26, in the E. E. Moffitt Papers, #519, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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