POLITICS, POLITICAL PARTIES, AND VOTER PARTICIPATION IN TIDEWATER VIRGINIA DURING RECONSTRUCTION, 1865 - 1900

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
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JOSEPH PATRICK HARAHAN
1973



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presented by

Joseph Patrick Harahan

has been accepted towards fulfillment of the requirements for

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ABSTRACT

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By

Joseph Patrick Harahan

Politics during Reconstruction in Tidewater Virginia operated within a set of assumptions on voting and voter participation. Framed by the suffrage requirements stipulated in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U. S. Constitution, incorporated into Virginia law by the Underwood Constitution of 1868, and reinforced by extensive participation by voters of both races in state elections in 1867 and 1869, universal manhood suffrage was a reality in Tidewater Virginia. For twenty-five years after Radical Reconstruction had formally ended in Virginia in 1869, Tidewater citizens, local politicians, reporters, and editors witnessed and recorded extensive voter turnouts in all elections, federal, state, or county.

Negroes voted in Tidewater elections for more than twenty-five years after the gubernatorial election of 1869. Neither rumors of violence, published lists

of white vigilante groups, petty larceny laws, poll tax requirements, bad weather, extra police at the polls, or Conservative-Democratic election officials, deterred Tidewater blacks from voting. Generally blacks voted for Republicans in national elections, for Republicans, Readjusters, or Populists in state elections, and for Republican, Independent, or fusion candidates in city or county elections. A strong correlation existed between counties which registered black majorities in the federal census and Republican victories in federal and state elections. In the 1869 gubernatorial election Republicans won seventeen of the eighteen counties with black majorities. And this pattern of Republican victories in black counties continued; in the 1876 presidential election seventeen counties went Republican; in 1880 nineteen; in 1888 twenty-three of the region's twenty-seven counties.

Political party leaders in the Tidewater knew the reality of universal manhood suffrage. Candidates for office, particularly congressional and state senatorial nominees, crisscrossed the Tidewater region in search of votes. Competition and racial polarization produced tension at the polls, but few men turned to either intimidation or coersion to force the results. Evidence from all Tidewater's disputed elections brought before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the House of Representatives and the respective committee in the

Virginia General Assembly reveals an absence of violence between 1869 and 1894. Also Federal Election Supervisors observing Tidewater elections between 1872 and 1893 reported little violence or corruption.

Instead of violence, Tidewater elections during Reconstruction witnessed extensive voter participation. Specifically, the number of males over twenty-one residing in each county at the time of the federal census was compared with voting totals in the official returns in four presidential elections, five gubernatorial contests, a state-wide poll tax referendum, and numerous county elections between 1865-1900. In the Reconstruction years (1867-1876) between 70-80 per cent voted; in the Readjuster-Republican decade (1879-1889) participation increased, and between 75-85 per cent voted. Voting declined in the 1890's, the Populist-Democratic era, when only 50-60 per cent of Tidewater's electorate went to the polls.

The major conclusion of this study that Tidewater Virginia experienced universal manhood suffrage throughout the Reconstruction years contradicts accepted historical opinion. Charles E. Wynes and C. Vann Woodward argue that Virginia's society was not rigidly segregated between 1870 and the 1890's since Virginia's Negroes could ride trains unsegregated, eat in restaurants and hotels, and attend theaters without encountering Jim Crow

segregation. However, Wynes asserts Conservative-Democratic white politicians disfranchised the Negro between 1873-1878 and 1884-1902. The present study for the Tidewater counties finds no evidence to support Wynes' conclusion of a two-phase disfranchisement of blacks. Instead the decline in black voting in the 1890's was coincidental with the demise of Virginia's Republican Party, the rise of a white supremacist Populist Party, and passage of the Walton Act of 1894, an election law which stimulated corruption instead of retarding it.

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By

Joseph Patrick Harahan

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Department of History

1973

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decade historians have studied post Civil War Virginia with an intensity unmatched by previous generations. They have uncovered the nature of Radical Republicanism in Virginia, the complex motivations of Conservative politicians, the impact of industrialization on an agrarian state, and the twisted political and social history of the Negro in Virginia society.[1] By necessity, most of these scholars limited their research to a defined period; Radical Reconstruction 1867-1869, the Conservative years, 1869-1879, the Readjuster movement, 1879-1884, Democratic Ascendency 1885-1902, or the Progressive Era, 1890-1920.[2] In addition, a recent synthesis, Allen W.

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[1]Richard G. Lowe, "The Republican Party in Virginia 1856-1870" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1968); Douglas C. Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction, 1865-1870" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1960); Jack P. Maddex, Jr., The Virginia Conservatives 1867-1879 (Chapel Hill, 1970); Robert R. Jones, "Conservative Virginian: The Post War Career of Governor James Lawson Kemper" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1964); Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902 (Charlottesville, 1968).

[2]In addition to those works listed above Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930 (Charlottesville, 1968); Andrew Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1902-1965 (Charlottesville, 1967); William F. Cheek, "Forgotten Prophet: The Life of John Mercer Langston" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1961).

Moger's Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd 1870-1925 (Charlottesville, 1970), incorporated most of the new monographic studies into a balanced presentation.

Yet this new wealth of scholarship has resulted in some confusion and controversey in interpretation, particularly in the areas of suffrage, voter participation, and the nature of politics during Reconstruction.[3] According to scholars Virginia's political society, as in all ex-Confederate states, experienced rapid change in the first decade after the war. Beginning with an electorate which included only adult white males, Virginia's voting laws changed after 1867 when the Reconstruction Amendments to the U. S. Constitution forced expansion of the electorate to include all adult men in the state, regardless of race. When Virginia's Conservatives won power in the gubernatorial election of 1869, they set out over the next decade to disfranchise Negro voters. Restrictive constitutional amendments, a poll tax, and an amendment stipulating loss of suffrage rights for conviction of petty larceny were enacted by the Conservatives, who also used intimidation on election day, and economic reprisals. By 1877 the composition of Virginia's political society had returned to the white male electorate in power prior

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[3]By 1970 Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902 had replaced Julian A. C. Chandler, The History of Suffrage in Virginia (Baltimore, 1901) as the standard history of suffrage for the Reconstruction years.

to Radical Reconstruction.[4]

While scholars differ on the intentions and even the effectiveness of the Conservative policies toward the Negro, few disagree that the next political wave, the Readjuster movement (1879-1883) constituted a period of liberal reforms which enlarged Virginia's electorate. Led by William Mahone, the dynamic and dominant political figure of the 1880's in Virginia, the Readjusters repealed the poll tax, encouraged voting, and built a political machine based on the principal of universal manhood suffrage, which Mahone translated into using black votes to make the Virginia State Republican Party strong in state and national councils.

Hostility greeted the Readjuster-Republican's attempt to expand the electorate. Native whites, ex-Conservatives, former Whigs, and old line Democrats combined to defeat the Mahone apostacy in the 1883 state elections. Once in control of the General Assembly the Democrats moved to stop the rise of any future insurgents by enacting the Anderson-McCormick Election Law of 1884 which placed all subsequent elections under the control of the Democratic Party.[5] Consequently, the Democrats won

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[4]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, p. 14. An influential earlier work which came to a similar conclusion about the timing of Negro disfranchisement was V. O. Key, Jr.'s Southern Politics (New York, 1949), pp. 533-554.

[5]Allen W. Moger, "The Origin of the Democratic

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[6]Pulley

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all state and national elections by resorting to fraud, corruption, and often intimidation to secure the victory. Faced with certain defeat, the Republican Party and its constituency, the Negroes, withdrew from politics in the late 1880's; and, by 1889 white Virginians had once again reduced the electorate to only those men of the white race.

The decade of the 1890's witnessed an intense struggle for power between competing factions within the Democratic Party. Ambitious white politicians used corruption, bribery, and fraud to secure office, and the General Assembly, controlled by Democrats, refused to supervise or sanction the Electoral Boards which it had established in 1884. Thus in 1900 a constitutional reform movement began to eliminate from the electorate those men who were selling their votes to competing Democratic factions. And the constitutional convention of 1901-1902 accomplished that purpose by reimposing the poll tax and placing an "understanding" clause which county registrars used to eliminate Negroes and poor white men from the voting rolls.[6]

Machine in Virginia" Journal of Southern History, VIII (May, 1942), pp. 183-209; Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, p. 40.

[6]Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, 1870-1930, pp. 66-91; Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1902-1965, pp. 22-24.

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This study challenges the above interpretations on three major grounds. First, previous histories of suffrage did not use election returns to establish definitively the extent of voter participation in national, state, and local elections. As a result their generalizations are imprecise and often misleading to the point that other scholars, using accepted studies, have misinterpreted the political behavior of groups within the electorate. In particular, two elements suffered: black voters who were depicted as lazy, corruptible, and incapable of organization; and white politicians of the Conservative Party who were villified for their legislative attempts to disfranchise black voters.

Next, previous interpretations concentrated on the results of a particular election (for example, the gubernatorial elections of 1869) without looking to the record that the voters made in their respective counties and cities. The meaning of Reconstruction in Virginia lies not at the state level, but in political activities at the regional or county level. There many characteristics associated with Radical Reconstruction--black voter participation, Republican victories, and competitive politics--continued long past the "redemption" election of 1869. Finally, recent scholars have assumed that all elections during the post-Reconstruction years, 1877-1901, were fraudulent and corrupt. There is ample evidence in official documents, newspaper accounts, editorials, and in

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the official returns to suggest a different interpretation.

This work aims to discover the meaning of Reconstruction in one region of Virginia, Tidewater, between 1869 and 1900. Covering the eastern half of Virginia, the Tidewater region in 1869 contained twenty-seven counties and two cities, Norfolk and Portsmouth. During the Reconstruction years the Tidewater region had many characteristics of interest to historians: a predominance of blacks over whites in two-thirds of the region's counties; a strong competitive two party system that ran candidates for office at all levels; and a white community that did not resort to violence when Republican candidates, often black men, won office in local elections. Indeed in some counties Republicans succeeded in winning every election from the selection of delegates to the Underwood Constitutional Convention of 1868 to McKinley's election of 1896. Competitive democratic politics was present in Tidewater Virginia between 1867 and 1900, and it permeated society permitting opportunities in economic and social areas as well.

The history of suffrage in Tidewater Virginia during Reconstruction stands in stark contrast to the record compiled in the first six decades of the twentieth century. By turning to an electorate essentially limited to middle-class whites, by supporting a Byrd

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dominated Democratic political machine, and by persisting in an almost fundamentalist belief in conservatism, Tidewater's twentieth century citizens rejected the rich heritage of democratic competitive politics so prevalent during the Reconstruction years.

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CHAPTER I

PERSPECTIVES ON TIDEWATER VIRGINIA: GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHY

History, geography, and race helped define and shape the character of Tidewater Virginia after the Civil War. Tidewater's geography decreed a series of peninsulas separated by broad, deep rivers which led to a degree of isolation; its history told of continuous farming that had exhausted the soils, necessitating expensive fertilizers and intensive rather than extensive farming; its racial composition revealed more blacks than whites and produced a consciousness which shaped men's attitudes towards political and social institutions. The specific geographic and demographic patterns of the Tidewater region, as discussed in this chapter, provide a perspective for measuring the dimensions of change during the Reconstruction years, 1865-1900.

Geography

In 1868 Matthew Fontaine Maury, the noted geographer, defined Tidewater Virginia as the area lying east of the fall line, west of the Atlantic Ocean, south of the Potomac River, and north of the political border

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separating North Carolina and Virginia.[1] Its area, some 11,000 square miles, was divided into six distinct peninsulas through an extensive system of rivers and bays. For eons the tidal action of the Chesapeake Bay reverberated up the rivers for about one hundred miles and produced the tidal effect which gives the region its name, Tidewater. The river system, the land surface, the soils, and the forests were natural geographical conditions which influenced Tidewater society in the years 1865-1900.

Four major rivers, the Potomac, Rappahannock, York, and the James transverse the region, and provide transportation routes from the coast into the interior. By the nineteenth century all of these rivers were navigable by commercial shipping to the fall line. Although the Piankitank and the Elizabeth Rivers both lay within the region, only the latter, flowing between the port cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, was significant in the nineteenth century since it served as a broad highway for inter-city commerce. These six rivers and the Chesapeake Bay break the land surface into a series of peninsulas, all running in an east to west direction with one exception, the Eastern Shore Peninsula between the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay (Figure 1). The length of

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[1]Matthew Fontaine Maury, Physical Survey of Virginia (Richmond, 1878), pp. 31-32. Maury wrote the report in 1871 to publicize the state's natural resources and, it was hoped, to attract industry and immigration. It was not published until 1878 by the State Board of Immigration.



Figure 1

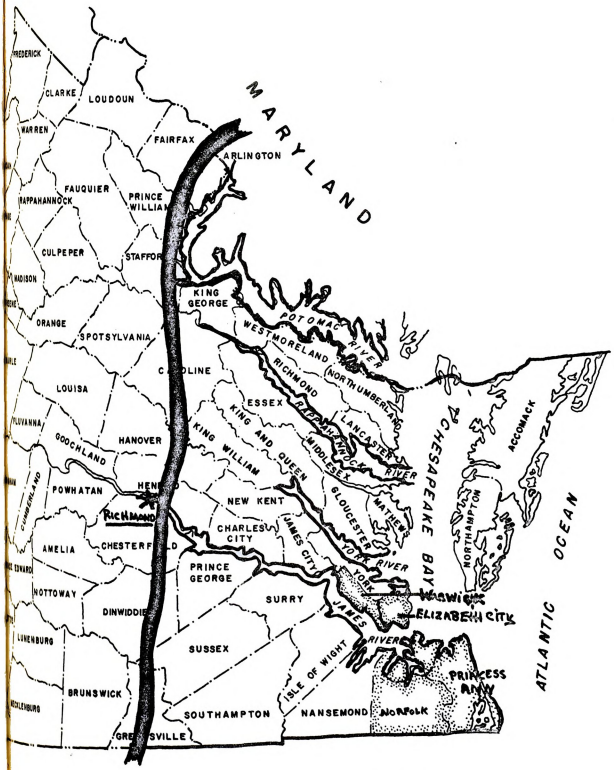


Figure 1. Tidewater Virginia, Rivers and Peninsulas

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the interior peninsulas vary greatly, but they all begin at sea level and rise gradually in a series of steps to an elevation of about two hundred feet above sea level at the line.[2]

According to contemporary geologists the Tidewater region is a tertiary region with alluvial deposits which give its soils a light, thin, sandy texture.[3] The lands along the rivers and streams of the peninsulas, called "firsts" or "bottoms," contain the best soils for farming. Above these lands are the second bottoms or "rich lands" and on the third tier, often running along a broad ridge that bisects the peninsulas, are the "ridge lands." Considered only fair for farming these ridge lands were the last cleared and settled.

The Tidewater region was an excellent location for settlement and growth, however, its soils became exhausted during the colonial period from successive crops of cotton, tobacco, and corn. Not until the 1840's and the acceptance of the ideas of Edmund Ruffin, who

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[2]Jedediah Hotchkiss, Virginia: A Geographical and Political Summary (Richmond, 1876), p. 12. Hotchkiss was a cartographer with the Stonewall Brigade, C.S.A. during the Civil War, after which he became the editor of a monthly journal, Virginia, a publication advocating the state's mining, industrial, and scientific advantages. In his writings, Hotchkiss followed the New South gospel of Richard H. Edmonds, editor of the Manufacturers' Record of Baltimore, Maryland.

[3]Ibid., p. 30.

advocated using marl and other fertilizers, did the region's soils regain their original productivity.[4] During the ante-bellum years Virginia farmers introduced new crops, peanuts, vegetables, potatoes, in an attempt to diversify their production. One area of the Tidewater, that lying south of the James River between the cities of Norfolk and Suffolk, contains soils particularly suited to truck or vegetable farming; and in the Reconstruction years a major truck farming industry developed there employing as many as 22,000 workers during the picking season.[5]

Forest covered approximately sixty per cent of the land surface of the Tidewater region,[6] and although it was not as extensive as in other areas of Virginia and other southern states, the forests did support a small lumbering industry. Within the Tidewater area forests of pine, oak, cypress, cedar, and locust served as the basis for a lumber industry which expanded gradually until by 1900 more than 5,000 men worked in lumbering.[7]

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[4]Avery O. Craven, Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia and Maryland, 1608-1860 (Urbana, Illinois, 1926), pp. 161-164.

[5]Eleventh Census: 1890, Agriculture, pp. 596-597.

[6]Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 88.

[7]Philip Alexander Bruce, The Rise of the New South (Philadelphia, 1905), pp. 80-81. In 1899 woodlands comprised 74% of Tennessee, 73% of North Carolina, and 74% of Alabama.

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Demography

When the Civil War ended Tidewater's area and population was located in twenty-seven counties and two cities.[8] Once fixed, the county divisions remained constant to the end of the century, however, the Virginia General Assembly created in 1890 four independent autonomous cities, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Hampton, Newport News.[9] This legislative action caused a statistical drop in population for certain urban counties in the year 1900. For example, Norfolk County registered 77,038 in 1890 but only 50,780 in 1900; a population loss wholly attributable to the creation of the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth.

According to the Census of 1860 most of the twenty-seven Tidewater counties were sparsely populated, rural, and predominantly agrarian in their economy (Table 1). Specifically, twenty-one of the counties, all rural, had populations ranging between 5,000 and 10,500 each; while only two counties, Warwick and York, had less than 5,000 people. The counties of Southampton, Nansemond, and

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[8] H. R. McIlwaine, Grand Division of Virginia (Richmond, 1930), pp. 3-4. This study by the Virginia State Librarian in 1929 coincided with the traditional historical divisions very closely. Both of the cities, Norfolk and Portsmouth, lay wholly within Norfolk County.

[9] See Table I, pages 14-15, for the population of all of the Tidewater counties between 1790 and 1900.

TABLE 1

POPULATION OF STATE, TIDEWATER COUNTIES, 1790 TO 1900[10]

	1790	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
State: Virginia	691,737	1,219,636	1,225,163[A]	1,512,565	1,637,606	1,854,184
Counties:						
[illegible]	13,969	18,586	20,409	24,408	27,277	32,570

TABLE 1

POPULATION OF STATE, TIDEWATER COUNTIES, 1790 TO 1900[10]

	1790	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
State:						
Virginia	691,737	1,219,636	1,225,163[A]	1,512,565	1,637,606	1,854,184
Counties:						
Accomack	13,959	18,586	20,409	24,408	27,277	32,570
Charles City	5,588	5,609	4,975	5,512	5,066	5,040
Elizabeth City	3,450	5,798	8,303	10,689	16,168	19,460
Essex	9,122	10,469	9,927	11,032	10,047	9,701
Gloucester	13,489	10,956	10,211	11,876	11,653	12,832
Isle of Wight	9,028	9,977	9,320	10,572	11,313	13,102
James City	4,070	5,798	4,425	5,422	5,643	8,688
King & Queen	9,377	10,328	9,709	10,502	9,669	9,265
King George	7,366	6,571	5,742	6,397	6,641	6,918
King William	8,128	8,530	7,515	8,751	9,605	8,380
Lancaster	5,638	5,151	5,355	6,160	7,191	8,949
Mathews	---[B]	7,091	6,200	7,501	7,584	8,239
Middlesex	4,140	4,364	4,918	6,252	7,458	8,220
Nansemond	9,010	13,693	11,576	15,903	19,692	23,078
New Kent	6,239	5,884	4,381	5,515	5,511	4,865

A. Less West Virginia
B. Mathews population in 1790 counted with Gloucester County.

[10] Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900, I, Population, pp. 43-44.

TABLE 1 (continued)

	1790	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
Norfolk	14,524	36,227	46,702	58,657	77,038	50,7800
Northampton	6,889	7,832	8,046	9,152	10,313	13,770
Northumberland	9,163	7,531	6,863	7,929	7,885	9,846

TABLE 1 (continued)

	1790	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
Norfolk	14,524	36,227	46,702	58,657	77,038	50,780[C]
Northampton	6,889	7,832	8,046	9,152	10,313	13,770
Northumberland	9,163	7,531	6,863	7,929	7,885	9,846
Prince George	8,173	8,411	7,820	10,054	7,872	7,752
Princess Anne	7,793	7,714	8,273	9,394	9,510	11,192
Richmond	6,985	6,856	6,503	7,195	7,146	7,088
Southampton	12,864	12,915	12,285	18,012	20,078	22,848
Surry	6,227	6,133	5,585	7,391	8,256	8,469
Sussex	10,549	10,175	7,885	10,062	11,100	12,082
Warwick	1,690	1,740	1,672	2,258	6,650	4,880[D]
Westmoreland	7,722	8,282	7,682	8,846	8,399	9,243
York	5,233	4,949	7,198	7,349	7,596	7,482

C. City of Norfolk, population 46,624; and Portsmouth population 17,427 counted separately.
D. City of Newport News, population 19,635 counted separately.

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Accomac, each had large rural populations of between 12,500 and 19,000 inhabitants. Only Norfolk County contained sufficient population, industry, and commercial life to classify as an urban or semi-urban county. And Norfolk County held this distinction only because Tidewater's two cities, Norfolk and Portsmouth, were located inside the boundaries of the county. Of all the region's counties Norfolk had the largest population, 36,227 in 1860.

During the decade of the 1860's historic events--war, emancipation, economic depression, and military occupation--produced significant shifts in Virginia's population. Twenty Tidewater counties lost population during the decade,[11] and only Norfolk County, with its important cities of Portsmouth and Norfolk, experienced real growth.[12] The influx of people into those two cities and to smaller towns like Williamsburg or Hampton, began the rural to urban movement so prevalent in the twentieth century.

Unlike later migrations the one following the war had social as well as economic motivation behind it. For

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[11]These counties were Charles City, Essex, Isle of Wight, Gloucester, James City, King and Queen, King George, King William, Nansemond, New Kent, Mathews, Northumberland, Prince George, Richmond, Southampton, Surry, Sussex, Warwick, Westmoreland, and York.

[12]Norfolk County population increased from 36,227 in 1860 to 46,702 in 1870, an increase of 22.4%.

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many Freedmen in 1865-1866 opportunity and a taste of freedom lay in the towns and cities, so Tidewater blacks migrated quickly and in large numbers to Norfolk, Portsmouth, Hampton, and Williamsburg.[13] According to the Ninth Census (1870) each of these cities showed considerable gain in population, virtually all of which can be traced to an increase in the black population.

TABLE 2

POPULATION OF TIDEWATER CITIES AND TOWNS BY RACE, 1860 TO 1870[14]

	1860			1870		
CITIES	W	B	B% OF TOTAL	W	B	B% OF TOTAL
Norfolk	10,290	4,330	30%	10,462	8,766	45%
Portsmouth	8,011	1,485	15%	6,874	3,618	34%
Hampton	79	25	24%	460	1,840	80%
Williamsburg	947	137	12%	893	499	35%

[13]The standard interpretation of Reconstruction in Virginia is Hamilton J. Eckenrode's The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction (Baltimore, 1904), p. 55. Others who provided evidence for this position are John P. McConnell, Negroes and Their Treatment in Virginia From 1865 to 1867 (Pulaski, Virginia, 1910), pp. 3, 19, 20; Raymond B. Pinchbeck, The Virginia Negro Artisan and Tradesman (Richmond, 1926), p. 68; A. A. Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia (Washington, 1926, pp. 32-34. The first three historians took a derogatory view of the black migration to the cities as revealing the shiftless, wandering side of the Negro. Taylor, a Negro historian, saw it as a natural outgrowth of emancipation.

[14]Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 278-283. Hampton and Williamsburg were classified by the Census Bureau as towns.

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Each of those cities and towns saw the number of Negroes double within the decade. In the case of Hampton the increase was phenomenal (from 25 to 1,840); but, in 1866 the federal government made Hampton the location of a hospital for Freedmen and a dispersal center for the Freedmen's Bureau and thus many blacks emigrated there from the more isolated counties. While the ratio of black to white population in Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Williamsburg never reached as high a proportion as in some Tidewater counties (Table 3) the increase in urban blacks was real, and furthermore, it was widely publicized throughout the state. The urban press, particularly in Richmond, led a chorus of negrophobia which reached levels of hysteria at times.[15]

While many blacks moved away from their rural homes to the cities and towns after the war, apparently whites did not. Before the war the census showed that one-half of the Tidewater counties with predominantly black populations (more than 60 per cent black), but the same ratio was present in only eight counties ($\frac{1}{4}$) in 1870 (Table 3). When the racial division fell between 60 per cent and 40 percent, as it did in three-fourths of the Tidewater counties, cities, and towns after 1870, exchanges between the two races often

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[15]Richmond Whig, July 10, 1865; Alexandria Gazette, August 2, 1865; Richmond Times, July 14, 1865; Richmond Enquirer, May 22, 1866. Richmond was the most conservative area of the state between 1865-1870.

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TABLE 3

POPULATION OF STATE, TIDEWATER COUNTIES BY RACE, 1860 AND 1870[16]

	1860			1870		
	W	B	B% OF TOTAL	W	B	B% OF TOTAL
State:						
Virginia	691,773	527,763	43%	712,089	512,841	41%
Counties:						
Accomack	10,661	7,925	43%	12,567	7,842	38%
Charles City	1,806	3,803	68%	1,822	3,153	63%
Elizabeth City	3,180	2,618	45%	2,832	5,471	66%
Essex	3,296	7,173	68%	3,277	6,650	67%
Gloucester	4,517	6,439	59%	4,782	5,429	53%
Isle of Wight	5,037	4,940	49%	4,874	5,429	58%
James City	2,167	3,631	63%	1,985	2,440	55%
King & Queen	3,801	6,527	63%	4,227	5,488	56%
King George	2,501	4,061	62%	2,927	2,815	49%
King William	2,589	5,941	69%	2,943	4,455	59%
Lancaster	1,981	3,170	62%	2,198	3,157	59%
Mathews	3,865	3,226	45%	4,104	2,096	34%
Middlesex	1,836	2,501	58%	2,459	2,322	51%
Nansemond	5,732	7,961	58%	6,059	5,517	48%
New Kent	2,145	3,738	63%	2,005	2,316	53%
Norfolk	24,357	11,807	33%	24,380	22,320	48%
Northampton	2,998	4,834	62%	3,198	4,848	60%
Northumberland	3,870	3,661	49%	3,808	3,054	44%
Prince George	2,899	5,512	65%	2,774	5,046	65%
Princess Anne	4,333	3,381	44%	4,369	3,902	47%
Richmond	3,570	3,286	48%	3,475	3,028	46%
Southampton	5,173	7,202	56%	5,468	6,795	55%
Surry	2,334	3,799	62%	2,393	3,192	57%
Sussex	3,118	7,057	69%	2,692	4,923	62%
Warwick	662	1,078	62%	620	1,052	62%
Westmoreland	3,387	4,895	59%	3,531	4,151	54%
York	2,342	2,607	53%	2,507	4,691	65%
Totals:	114,157	132,737	54%	118,546	130,203	52%

[16] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 68-70.


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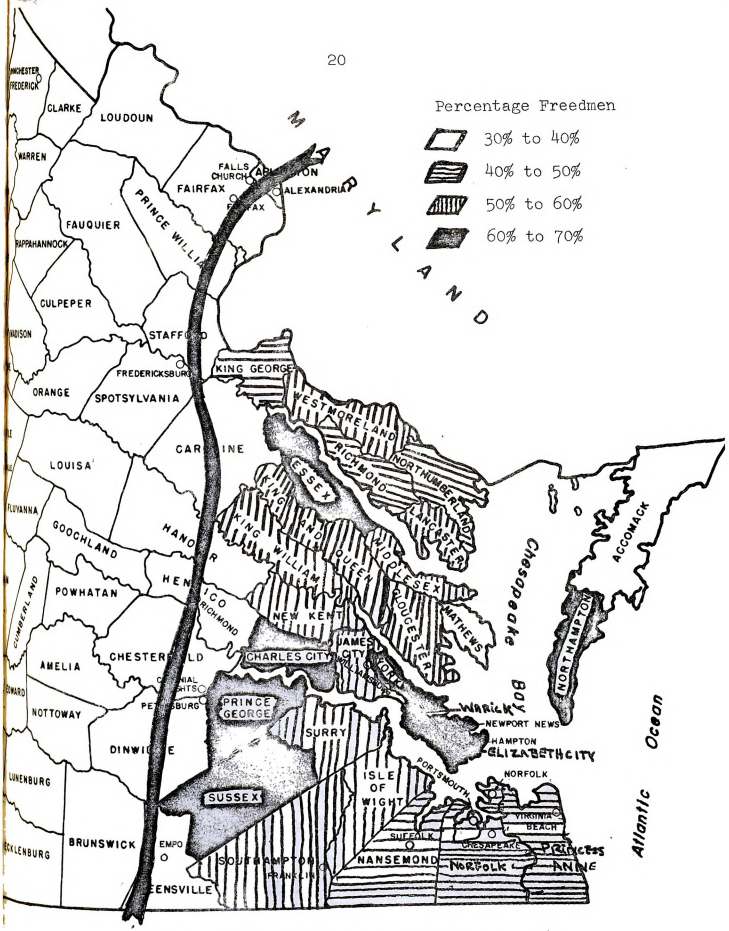


Figure 2. Ratio of Freedmen in Total Population in Tidewater Counties, 1870

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produced tensions. Men generally voted for candidates and parties identified by race: whites for Conservatives or Democrats, and blacks for Republicans or Readjusters. And Political control of a county often turned on the extent of participation at the polls by the men of either race. A failure of twenty per cent of a party's voters to attend the polls was sufficient to switch the county's affiliation from one party to the other.

From 1870 to 1900 the racial composition of the Tidewater grew very slowly in the direction of a numerical equalization between the two races. For instance, in 1870 there were more blacks than whites, 130,203 to 118,546 and in nineteen of the twenty-seven counties blacks outnumbered whites. By 1900 the black population had risen to 213,191 while the white population stood at 209,203.[17] In that year seventeen of the twenty-seven Tidewater counties still had black majorities, but in the urban areas of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Newport News whites were more numerous.

For the state as a whole the percentage of Negroes to the total population steadily declined during the same period. In 1870 Negroes constituted 33 per cent of Virginia's population, in 1890 28 percent, and in 1900 26 per cent.[18]

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[17] Twelfth Census: 1900, I, Population, pp. 561-562.

[18] Eleventh Census: 1890, Statistical Atlas, p. 18; Twelfth Census: 1900, Statistical Atlas, plate 54.

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Thus the total state population increased its white to black ratio significantly, but Tidewater's ratio remained relatively stable. Blacks always outnumbered whites in the region as a whole, but in certain counties and in the major cities whites held a majority.

After the Civil War the United States experienced an enormous influx of immigrants, primarily from the continent of Europe.[19] Throughout the South many newspaper editors and political leaders encouraged, often vociferously, immigration into the region.[20] In Virginia the General Assembly created and funded in 1867 a State Immigration Board to attract foreigners to the state.[21] Local activity in Norfolk saw the creation of an immigrant aid society, but it functioned almost exclusively as a promoter of land sales.[22]

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[19]Donald J. Bogue, The Population of the United States (Glencoe, Illinois, 1959), pp. 348-358. Of 13,089,017 immigrants between 1865-1900, Europe accounted for 11,694,980.

[20]Paul Gaston, The New South Creed (New York, 1970), pp. 75-78. Also see Debow's Review, July, 1869, pp. 586-592.

[21]Acts of the General Assembly, 1865-66, Ch. 142, 143. The Board appointed Gaspar Tochman its agent in Europe for immigration. In 1868 a book, Virginia: A Brief Memoir for the Information of Europeans (Richmond, 1868), by Tochman was published in German and French editions.

[22]In April, 1872 the Norfolk Settlers and Immigrants Aid Society was founded with Jonathan Goode, Jr. as President. The society published a pamphlet, America: Homes for Englishmen in the State of Virginia (Norfolk, 1872).

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The net effect of all of this publicity and propaganda was minimal as very few immigrants moved into the South, Virginia, or the Tidewater region. In 1870, less than 2,500 men were foreign born out of a total Tidewater population of almost 250,000.[23] Over the next thirty years intensive publicity about the state and the region attracted some settlers, primarily Irish, German, and English, but the number was very small. Table 4 shows that although the number of foreigners increased the percentage of foreign born always remained extremely miniscule in the Tidewater.

TABLE 4

FOREIGN BORN, 1870 TO 1900[24]

	1870	1880	1890	1900
Foreign born	2,352	3,294	5,735	3,903
% of total population	.942	1.08	1.67	.910

In 1894 a Virginia State Immigration Convention met in Richmond to issue another call for new immigrants, explain the advantages of living in Virginia, and analyze reasons for so little immigration up to that time. In a

[23] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 374-375.

[24] Ibid.; Tenth Census, 1880, I, Population, pp. 444-445; Eleventh Census, 1890, I, Population, pp. 512-513; Twelfth Census, 1900, II, Population, pp. 207-208.

report to the Convention J. F. Jackson, editor of the magazine Southern Planter, noted that in his travels in the countries of Northern Europe and in the Northern United States there was a widespread feeling that one's life was not secure in the South because of the publicity surrounding the large number of lynchings.[25] In addition, many Northern men believed that capital for new industries was insecure in the South, a fact which Jackson rejected as unfortunate and on the whole untrue. Yet Jackson criticized Southern farmers who tried to promote immigration by making extravagant claims about the productivity of the soil, the availability of markets, and the opportunities for profit. He noted that every time a foreigner appeared in a Southern county and tried to buy a farm, every farm in the area was immediately put up for sale, an action which did not inspire confidence in the claims of prosperity for that region. Whether Jackson's arguments were valid or not, the record is clear: few foreign immigrants came into the South, Virginia or the Tidewater region between 1865 and 1900.

If foreigners did not migrate into Tidewater Virginia, did people move from other sections of the nation into the region? Yes. According to traditionalist historians many Northern men, labelled "carpetbaggers",

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[25] Proceedings of the State Immigration Convention, 1894 (Richmond, 1895), pp. 71-74.

entered Virginia in the summer and fall of 1865 seeking land, business opportunities, and in some instances political office.[26] If we put aside for the moment the motivation of these northern men for entering Virginia, an examination of their numbers can provide a perspective on their activities. The Ninth Census (1870) recorded the state of birth for every inhabitant in the state, and and a tabulation of the Tidewater counties show that the number of persons "northern born" did not exceed 2 per cent of the population.[27] Furthermore, the controversy over the "carpetbaggers" refers only to northern men, not women and children, so their percentage was probably less than 1 per cent of the total male population.[28] Since age and sex were the only legal criteria for voting and officeholding according to the Underwood Constitution of 1868, reference to "large" numbers of "carpetbaggers" in the Tidewater region is simply inaccurate.

Throughout the Reconstruction years people

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[26]Eckenrode, Virginia During Reconstruction, pp. 60-61. Richard L. Morton, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1865-1902 (Charlottesville, 1919), pp. 42, 43n, 81, 87. Both works assume that northern men went south only to defraud and take unfair advantage of the disfranchised native white population.

[27]Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 374-375.

[28]Ibid., p. 637. Tabulation for the Tidewater counties and cities shows that in 1870 some 55,786 met the qualifications to vote, but only 497 were listed as natives of northern states.

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migrated from the farms to towns and cities of the region. Between 1860 and 1900 Census Records revealed a distinct trend of rural counties losing in population while the cities were growing steadily (Tables 1 and 5). Prior to 1865 people leaving the Tidewater region and the state of Virginia, black and white, migrated towards the deep south and southwest;[29] but after the war they moved to the urban areas, and generally to those cities within close proximity, either Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond, or Washington. For example, in 1881 the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad created a new town, Newport News, and by the year 1900 it had a population of 19,635. In the state of Virginia as a whole the proportion of urban to rural population steadily increased so that by 1890 14 per cent of the state's population was classified as urban.[30]

The urban migration of the Tidewater, as elsewhere in the nation, included blacks as well as whites. Between 1860 and 1890 all of the cities and towns of the Tidewater experienced an increase in black population each decade (Table 5); but with the exception of the town of Hampton, none of the region's urban areas had a black majority. In addition, during the Reconstruction years many Negroes

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[29]Clement Eaton, The Growth of Southern Civilization (New York, 1961), pp. 44-45. Charles S. Sydnor, The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819-1848 (Baton Rouge, 1948), p. 258.

[30]Eleventh Census: 1890, Statistical Atlas, p. 15.

POPULATION OF SELECTED TIDEWATER TOWNS AND CITIES, 1960 TO 1980, WITH PERCENT CHANGE

Place	1960	1970	1980	Percent change 1960-1970	Percent change 1970-1980
Alexandria	91,000	110,900	103,217	21.9	-6.9
Annapolis	23,000	29,600	31,740	28.7	7.2
Baltimore	939,000	905,800	786,775	-3.5	-13.1
Bowie	3,000	7,000	33,695	133.3	381.4
Chesapeake	89,000	89,600	114,486	0.7	27.8
Chevy Chase	3,000	2,700	2,625	-10.0	-2.8
College Park	24,000	26,000	24,580	8.3	-5.5
Colonial Heights	15,000	16,500	16,508	10.0	0.0
Columbia	0	0	30,930	0.0	0.0
Cumberland	37,000	29,000	23,377	-21.6	-19.4
Dale City	0	0	31,000	0.0	0.0
Dundalk	0	0	65,000	0.0	0.0
Fairfax	3,000	6,000	19,390	100.0	223.2
Fairfax City	3,000	6,000	19,390	100.0	223.2
Falls Church	10,000	10,000	9,578	0.0	-4.2
Frederick	22,000	27,000	28,086	22.7	4.0
Gaithersburg	3,000	5,000	26,000	66.7	420.0
Hagerstown	36,000	35,000	34,132	-2.8	-2.5
Hampton	89,000	120,800	122,617	35.7	1.5
Hyattsville	15,000	15,000	14,964	0.0	-0.2
Kensington	2,000	2,000	2,242	0.0	12.1
Laurel	9,000	12,000	16,760	33.3	39.7
Lexington Park	0	0	11,000	0.0	0.0
Manassas	3,000	5,000	9,609	66.7	92.2
Manassas Park	0	0	6,734	0.0	0.0
Martinsburg	14,000	14,000	14,073	0.0	0.5
Newport News	113,000	138,200	144,903	22.3	4.8
Norfolk	305,000	307,900	266,979	1.0	-13.3
Oxon Hill	0	0	36,000	0.0	0.0
Petersburg	36,000	36,000	36,103	0.0	0.3
Portsmouth	115,000	111,000	104,577	-3.5	-5.8
Prince George	0	0	32,000	0.0	0.0
Richmond	220,000	250,000	219,214	13.6	-12.3
Rockville	3,000	5,000	26,090	66.7	421.8
Roland Park	3,000	3,000	2,500	0.0	-16.7
Salisbury	16,000	16,000	20,591	0.0	28.7
Silver Spring	3,000	3,000	76,046	0.0	2,434.9
Suitland	0	0	32,000	0.0	0.0
Takoma Park	3,000	3,000	16,700	0.0	456.7
Virginia Beach	0	0	172,106	0.0	0.0
Waldorf	0	0	10,000	0.0	0.0
Wheaton	3,000	3,000	48,000	0.0	1,500.0
Williamsburg	9,000	9,000	9,870	0.0	9.7
Winchester	15,000	15,000	15,498	0.0	3.3

TABLE 5

POPULATION OF SELECTED TIDEWATER TOWNS AND CITIES, 1860 TO 1900[31]

	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
Cities:					
Norfolk	14,620 10,290-W 4,330-B	19,229 10,462-W 8,766-B	21,966 11,898-W 10,068-B	34,871 18,617-W 16,244-B	46,624 26,317-W 20,230-B
Portsmouth	9,496 8,011-W 1,485-B	10,492 6,874-W 3,618-B	11,390 7,554-W 3,829-B	13,268 9,231-W 4,018-B	17,427 11,782-W 5,625-B
Towns:					
Hampton	104 79-W 25-B	2,300 460-W 1,840-B	2,684	2,513 1,135-W 1,330-B	2,764
Williamsburg	1,084 947-W 137-B	1,392 893-W 499-B	1,480	1,831	2,044 1,366-W 678-B
Newport News	---	---	---	4,449 1,903-W 2,546-B	19,635 12,789-W 6,798-B

[31] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 278-283; Tenth Census: 1880, I, Population, pp. 356-362; Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, pp. 407-414, 577-578; Twelfth Census: 1900, I, Population, pp. 396-402, 561-562. According to the Bureau of Census cities had populations of 8,000 or more, while towns and villages whether incorporated or not had less than 8,000 population.

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left Virginia and settled in other areas of the country. While no figures exist for county or regional migration, the Twelfth Census (1900) enumerated 878,104 Negroes native to Virginia, of which only 660,722 were still living in the state in 1900.[32] Over 217,000 blacks, or about 25 per cent of the total, had emigrated to other states; two-thirds went to the North and West, while most of the rest settled in North Carolina. So the origins of Negro migration northward during the twentieth century extends back into the Reconstruction years.

In a rural society a large family was an asset, particularly in an agricultural area where virtually no capital existed for farm machinery. Statistically, the average Tidewater family had slightly more than five members each.[33] Generally, the size of the adult male electorate is approximately 20 per cent of the population of any city or county. But in the Tidewater region's counties this generalization was not always true.

A comparison of four rural counties, Accomac, Charles City, King William, and Southampton, with two urban counties, Norfolk and Elizabeth City County, in 1880 indicated adult males of voting age resided in the towns and cities at a greater than one to five ratio.

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[32] Twelfth Census: 1900, I, Population, p. cixiii.

[33] Eleventh Census: 1890, Statistical Atlas, plate 8.

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TABLE 6

RATIO OF ADULT MALES TO TOTAL POPULATION IN SELECTED COUNTIES[34]

COUNTIES	1880 TOTAL	ADULT MALES	%
Accomac	24,408	5,487	23%
Charles City	5,512	1,224	22%
King William	8,751	1,920	22%
Southampton	18,012	3,915	21%
Norfolk	58,657	15,141	26%
Elizabeth City	10,689	3,284	31%

In summary the population of the Tidewater region increased between 1865-1900, but not as fast as the nation's. It was a biracial society, Negro and Caucasian, in which racial patterns of population established in 1870 remained in 1900. Substantial numbers of Freedmen migrated to the Tidewater cities and towns in the years immediately following the war; yet a majority of ex-slaves stayed on farms in their rural counties. Neither immigrants nor northerners came into the region in large numbers; indeed the number of people born in the state always exceeded 95 per cent of the total population, and consequently, the region was one of the most insular in the nation. Throughout the period a steady migration of both blacks and whites

[34] Tenth Census: 1880, I, Population, p. 665.

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occurred from the rural areas to the urban centers of Norfolk, Postsmouth, and Newport News. Coincidental with this rural-urban pattern was the movement of blacks out of the region and out of the state to the Northern and Western states and to North Carolina. Finally large families predominated in the region, particularly in rural areas rather than in the cities where the number of adult males of citizenship age was relatively high.

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CHAPTER II

PERSPECTIVES ON TIDEWATER VIRGINIA: AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The economic structure of Tidewater society provides another essential key to understanding politics and political parties between 1865 and 1900. Since a majority of Tidewater's population (in twenty-six of the twenty-seven counties) lived in a rural, often sparsely populated, agrarian setting, questions about agriculture predominate. Did white farmers adapt to a free labor market following the Civil War, or did they turn to a sharecropping system so prevalent in the Deep South? Did white planters sell their lands because of the economic pressures of high labor costs, rising prices of seed and fertilizer, escalating transportation rates, and pressing competition, or did they reduce their land-holdings for a profit to the surplus population, white and black, who wanted farm land after 1865? And how did Tidewater farmers compare with farmers in other sections of Virginia, the South, or the nation with respect to wealth, tenancy, indebtedness, and the size of their farms? This chapter continues the analytical study initiated previously but it will attempt to compare

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Tidewater's economic growth, particularly in agriculture, with developments in the south, the east, and the United States.

Agriculture, however, was not the only sector of the economy, for both commerce and industry experienced substantive growth between 1865 and 1900. New developments in steamships, railroads, and shipbuilding caused a fundamental shift in wealth, power, and population towards the cities. Analysis of Tidewater's industrial and commercial growth provides a perspective to view movements of agrarian discontent, like the Populist protest of the 1890's, or the Readjuster Party of the 1880's.

Agriculture

Between 1865 and 1900 the character of Tidewater's agricultural economy was more eastern than southern. No staple crop predominated in the region, as in many states in the deep south, and every county produced a wide variety of farm products. In 1889, a survey of the principal money crops in the twenty-seven Tidewater counties showed a wide diversity, as corn, peanuts, vegetables, wheat, and potatoes led in different counties (Figure 3).[1]

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[1]Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture, Handbook of Virginia, 1889 (Richmond, 1889), pp. 12-31.


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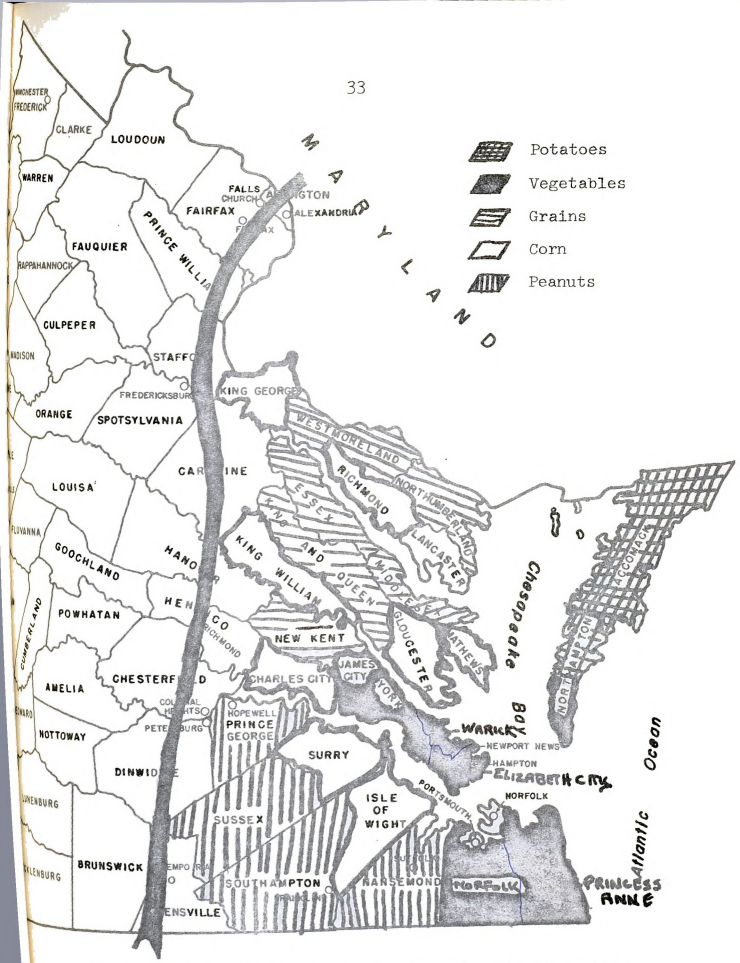


Figure 3. Principle Crops in the Tidewater Counties, 1889.

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Truck farming, or growing vegetables for market, became an important new force in the economy particularly when additional railroad lines were built linking the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth with the midwestern and northern states. By 1889 the New York, Philadelphia, and Norfolk Railroad had been completed to Cape Charles on the Eastern Shore Peninsula and connected to Norfolk by barge which meant that the produce of the truck farmers in Norfolk County was only twelve hours from New York City.[2] Steamers ran daily from Norfolk and Portsmouth to the major market cities, Baltimore, Washington, New York, and Richmond.[3] In addition, in the 1890's the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad began a fruit and vegetable train to Cincinnati and the northwest. Indeed, during the post-war years truck farming was the region's fastest growing agricultural industry.

At first the most successful truck farmers were those whose farms were closest to the cities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Hampton, along the James River. In fact, the river counties were the only ones in Virginia east of the Blue Ridge, with the exception of Fairfax County, to

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[2]Allen W. Moger, Rebuilding the Old Dominion (Columbia University, 1940), p. 49.

[3]Thomas J. Wertenbaker, Norfolk, Historic Southern Port (Durham, North Carolina, 1931), p. 312.

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show an increase in farm values between 1860 and 1890.[4] For example, in 1890 the farmers of Norfolk County planted over 45,734 acres in vegetables and employed more than 22,000 laborers in their fields. And they paid good wages, $300 to $600 per year.[5] In 1890 that wage was excellent, particularly for the black laborers who had acquired agricultural skills while in bondage. Drawn by the hope of steady jobs thousands of Negroes emigrated in the post-war years to Norfolk and other truck farming counties, like Elizabeth City and York Counties, to work in the fields.

Peanuts and cotton became cash crops for Tidewater farmers after 1865. Peanuts came to America from Africa where they were used as staple food on the slave ships. At first there was no market in America for this commodity, so Virginia's crop remained small and peanuts were grown only in small quantities in the wet sandy soils of Southampton, Nansemond, Surry, and Sussex counties. Then in the Civil War Federal soldiers stationed in Norfolk discovered the roasted nuts, and local farmers responded by increasing production. In the post-war period the demand for peanuts continued and

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[4] Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville, 1968), p. 81.

[5] Eleventh Census: 1890, Agriculture, pp. 596-597.

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Tidewater farmers increased their crop to the point that by 1888 they harvested over two million bushels.[6]

Cotton production went through an unusual cycle in Virginia. When it was first introduced in the early 1790's production skyrocketed to over five million pounds by 1801, and although the rate of growth slowed, it continued upward reaching a highwater mark of twenty-five million pounds in 1826.[7] Thereafter production gradually declined until in 1860 it reached a level approximating that of 1801. Suddenly, in the first two decades after the war, cotton production in the state rose spectacularly, leaping from 79,000 pounds in 1869 to 8.9 million pounds in 1879. Yet this level could not be sustained and by 1890 only 2.5 million pounds were harvested.[8] The cyclic nature of cotton belied its importance to the economic reconstruction of the region. Cotton in the 1870's helped to spur the post-war recovery in the southernmost counties of the region; and, since farmers in those counties, Southampton, Nansemond, and Sussex, moved into peanut farming when cotton fell off, their income remained relatively stable.

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[6]Liberty H. Bailey, ed., Cyclopedia of American Agriculture, vol. II (New York, 1907), p. 514.

[7]Eleventh Census: 1890, Agriculture, p. 60.

[8]Ibid., p. 61.

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The other staple crops of the Tidewater region, corn, wheat, and potatoes, held economic importance as seasonal replacements for the more lucrative cash crops, or possibly as the only income producing crop in some counties. In fact, in counties where corn and wheat predominated subsistence farming was more the rule than the exception, and between 1865 and 1900 many of those same counties declined both in farm values and in population.[9]

In most of the Tidewater counties land could be purchased cheaply and in quantity, if one had the capital. Immediately after the war, unimproved land in some sections of the state, such as Nelson County, sold for as little as $.25 an acre; but in the more accessible Tidewater region prices ranged from $5.00 to $15.00 an acre.[10] The U.S. Commissioner of Agriculture's Report for 1867 noted that land was sold at $6.00 an acre in King William, Norfolk, York, and Middlesex Counties.[11] Furthermore,

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[9] Twelfth Census: 1900, V, Agriculture, Part I., pp. 696-697. In 1860 the total value of all of the farms in Virginia was $371,761,661. When the value of all of the farms in West Virginia for 1870, $81,283,505, is discounted, the value of Virginia's farms in 1860, $290,498,056, was more than the reported value for 1900, $271,578,200.

[10] Report of the U. S. Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867 (Washington, 1868), p. 112.

[11] Ibid. The Commissioner estimated that land values in Virginia declined approximately 28 per cent between 1860 and 1867 (p. 104).

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land prices remained low in most Tidewater counties for the next three decades. In 1885 county agricultural agents reported land for sale in Essex County at $5.00 an acre, in James City County at $1.00 to $10.00 for unimproved land, and $10.00 to $25.00 for improved land, in New Kent County at $2.00 to $24.00, and in Westmoreland County at $3.00 to $30.00.[12] Land values in Prince George County, lying on the south bank of the James River, decreased each decade from 1860 to 1900. There, when the value of the land went down, more men purchased it, so that by the end of the century almost three times as many men owned land as in 1860.

Prince George County: Land Prices and Landholding[13]

Year	Value of an acre of land	Number of farms
1860	$13.19	351
1870	$ 9.01	478
1880	$ 8.45	807
1900	$ 5.42	1,134

Thus, throughout the region land was continually offered for sale, and at very reasonable prices. Many men, black and white, purchased farm land during the

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[12] Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture, Handbook of Virginia, 1885, pp. 16, 20, 24, 30.

[13] Writer's Project of the WPA, Inventory of County Archives of Virginia, No. 75, Prince George County (Richmond, Virginia, 1941), pp. 31-32.

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period, increasing the number of farms in Virginia from 56,572 in 1860 to 167,886 in 1900.[14] Though not all buyers of farms were farmers, a substantial number of men listed as owners worked their own land, thus classifying that group as farmers.[15] Furthermore, most of those persons who owned farms generally were free from any financial encumbrances on their lands. In 1890, more than 90 per cent of the farm owners in twenty-two of twenty-seven Tidewater counties owned their farms outright, and in the five counties where the number of farm owners free from mortgages fell below 90 per cent, four were above 85 per cent free, while the remaining county, Northampton, was 73.97 per cent free (Table 7). Since state mortgage rates by law were set at 6 per cent, those farmers in debt generally had a very small indebtedness. The report on Farms and Homes in the Eleventh Census (1890) stated that 80 per cent of all mortgages in the state were for less than $1,500 and for a duration of

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[14] Twelfth Census: 1900, V, Agriculture, Part I., p. 688. In 1860 Virginia contained 92,605 farms, but in 1863 the state of West Virginia was carved out of Virginia. Discounting those farms in West Virginia, the total number of farms in Virginia was 56,572, a figure accepted by William Seldon, Populism in the Old Dominion (Princeton, 1935), p. 8, and Allen Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925, p. 80.

[15] In 1900 in Virginia 116,290 farms were operated by their owners or 69 per cent of the total number of farms. Twelfth Census: 1900, V, Agriculture, Part I, p. 689.

State:
Virginia

Counties:
Accomack
Charles City
Elizabeth City
Essex
Gloucester
Isle of Wight

James City
King & Queen
King George
King William
Lancaster

Mathews
Middlesex
Nansemond
New Kent
Norfolk

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Princess Anne
Richmond

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Surry
Sussex
Warwick
Westmoreland
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Hall, pp. 202

TABLE 7

TIDEWATER FARM OWNERSHIP IN 1890--
FREE AND ENCUMBERED[16]

	Total Families Owning Farms	% Owning Free	% Mortgaged
State:			
Virginia	82,330	96.8%	3.1%
Counties:			
Accomack	853	90.42	9.58
Charles City	316	96.21	3.79
Elizabeth City	262	86.26	13.74
Essex	942	98.72	1.28
Gloucester	1,055	95.73	4.27
Isle of Wight	693	90.99	9.01
James City	262	96.98	3.02
King & Queen	916	98.49	1.51
King George	497	95.21	4.79
King William	576	98.09	1.32
Lancaster	657	96.04	2.93
Mathews	915	98.79	1.21
Middlesex	693	93.91	6.09
Nansemond	1,145	97.01	2.99
New Kent	441	95.69	4.31
Norfolk	545	94.14	5.86
Northampton	239	73.97	26.03
Northumberland	750	95.09	4.91
Prince George	452	97.79	2.21
Princess Anne	574	87.39	12.61
Richmond	421	97.85	2.15
Southampton	831	92.39	7.61
Surry	475	87.66	12.34
Sussex	496	87.75	12.25
Warwick	131	99.24	.76
Westmoreland	542	95.92	4.08
York	393	97.70	2.30

[16] Eleventh Census: 1890, Report on Farms and Homes, pp. 282-283.

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In 1889 the report of the Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture had an indirect comment on landholding. After evaluating white farm labor as "fairly remunerative" the Commissioner observed that "with economy the laborer of to-day can easily become the small farmer of tomorrow, for land is so cheap and the terms of the purchase so easy that any reputable, energetic, intelligent man can buy on long credit and at low rates."[18] While the Commissioner's comments illustrated the ease of acquiring land between 1865 and 1900, many farmers, large and small, became trapped in a thirty year pattern of falling prices and rising costs. When the price of wheat, cotton, corn, and peanuts declined on national and international markets the cost of fertilizer, supplies, and capital rose, and the result not only squeezed the farmer's profits, but caused the value of farm land to drop as saleable property.[19] A comparison of the valuation of farms in Virginia with other states between 1860 and 1890 reveals the continuing effect of this depreciation.

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[17] Eleventh Census: 1890, Report on Farms and Homes, pp. 107, 117, 772-773, 775.

[18] Report of the State Board of Agriculture of Virginia, 1889 (Richmond, 1889), p. 23.

[19] Arthur G. Peterson, Historical Study of Prices Received by Producers of Farm Products in Virginia, 1801-1927. Virginia Polytechnical Institute, Technical Bulletin, no. 37, pp. 16, 22, 25, 31, 40, 41.

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TOTAL VALUE OF FARMS 1860, 1890[20]
(Figures in millions of dollars)

State	1860	1890
Virginia	$308	$294
Maryland	164	200
New Jersey	202	182
Ohio	776	1,195
Kentucky	360	428
Missouri	293	786
Georgia	202	189

The impact of this prolonged depreciation in Virginia affected other areas of the agricultural economy. For example, many of Virginia's farmers failed to purchase new machinery and by 1890 the value of machinery on Virginia farms fell below that of 1860. Since during the same thirty-year period the other states of the Union, particularly in the midwest and west, registered a marked increase in farm machinery, Virginia's farmers not

COMPARISON OF THE VALUE OF FARM MACHINERY 1860, 1890[21]

(Figures in millions of dollars)

State	1860	1890
Virginia	$9.3	$6.5
Maryland	4.0	6.5
Ohio	17.5	29.5
Kentucky	7.4	10.9
Missouri	8.7	21.8
Georgia	.9	1.1

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[20] Eleventh Census: 1890, Agriculture, pp. 84-115.

[21] Ibid., pp. 84-115. Farmers in other states owned more machinery, but they also had a higher level of indebtedness. Nevertheless, Virginia's farmers did not mechanize between 1865 and 1890.

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only suffered a loss in the value of farm machinery, but many of the machines they owned became outdated. In states where values increased farmers purchased newer equipment, and thus competed for national and world markets from a stronger position. Conversely, these statistics indicate the importance of manual labor in Virginia's agricultural economy. In the Tidewater region the agricultural sectors which grew the fastest--vegetables, cotton, peanuts, and potatoes, relied heavily on manual labor. By 1890 the number of hired laborers on the truck farms in Norfolk County alone exceeded 22,000 at the harvest time.[22]

While the number of farms in Virginia increased between 1865-1900, the acreage per farm decreased by more than one-half. When the Trans-Allegheny territory which became the state of West Virginia in 1863 is discounted, the number of farms in the state still increased while the average size decreased.[23]

Year	Number of farms	Average size of farms
1860	56,572	324 acres
1870	78,849	246 acres
1880	118,517	167 acres
1890	127,600	150 acres
1900	167,886	118 acres

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[22] Eleventh Census: 1890, Agriculture, pp. 596-597.

[23] Twelfth Census: 1900, V, Agriculture, Part I, pp. 688-689.

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Many historians use these statistics to indicate the destruction of the old large plantation system in Virginia; while others have concluded that by 1900 Virginia had experienced a "virtual revolution in landholding."[24] In fact, neither of the two conclusions is correct. The first presupposed the existence of a large plantation system prior to the Civil War, but in Virginia over 95 per cent of all the farms in the state in 1860 were less than 500 acres in size. Within the Tidewater

FARM SIZE IN VIRGINIA, 1860[25]

	1000 acres or over	1000 to 500	500 to 100	100 to 50	50 to 20	20 to 3	Total
1860	641	2,882	34,300	21,245	19,584	7,916	86,468
% of total	.7%	3%	40%	24%	23%	9%	100%

the same pattern of landholding was present in 1860. Clearly the region was not characterized by the romanticized old tobacco plantations. One scholar has calculated that in 1860 farms of under 200 acres comprised 73 per cent

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[24]Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925, pp. 3, 80; George M. McFarland, "The Extension of Democracy in Virginia from 1850-1895" (unpublished, Ph. D. diss., Princeton University, 1934), pp. 19, 26, 38; Philip Alexander Bruce, Virginia, Rebirth of the Old Dominion (New York, 1929), pp. 220-221; William E. Hemphill, Cavalier Commonwealth (New York, 1963), p. 358.

[25]Ninth Census: 1870, III, Wealth and Industry, pp. 340-341.

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of all landholdings in the Tidewater counties, and that there were only twenty-one large farms of over 1,000 acres with slave labor in all of the Tidewater.[26] His and other studies lead to the same conclusion, that for Virginia and the Tidewater the farm rather than the plantation was more characteristic in the ante bellum period.[27] Consequently, since no plantation system existed, its destruction is a myth built on quicksand.

Nor was there a "revolution" in agricultural landholding in the period after the war. The increase in farmers and decrease in size of farms in Virginia was part of a nationwide pattern. Perhaps Virginia experienced a more substantial change, but when placed in the context of change which occurred in all of the states of the Union after the Civil War, the statistics are not "revolutionary."[28] Furthermore, in Virginia the

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[26]Emmett B. Fields, "Agricultural Population of Virginia, 1850-1860" (unpublished Ph. D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1953), p. 94. Fields calculated that in the Tidewater section in 1860 most men (67 per cent) owned land, worked their own lands without slaves, or resorted to rented slaves for supplemental labor, and that men of the propertyless class were acquiring lands between 1850 and 1860.

[27]See the introductory remarks by Kathrine S. Perry, "A History of Farm Tenancy in the Tobacco Region of Virginia, 1865-1950" (unpublished Ph. D. diss., Radcliffe College, 1956).

[28]Explanations for the changes ranged from the infusion of large numbers of Negroes and immigrants into the farm land market to the method of enumerating farms and farm owners by the census takers.

	179,248 (1890)	91%	115 (1890)	
Missouri	92,792 (1860) 238,043 (1890)	156%	215 (1860) 129 (1890)	44%

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29 Eleventh Census: 1890. Agriculture. pp. 84-115.

TABLE 8

COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER AND SIZE OF FARMS IN VIRGINIA AND OTHER SELECTED STATES[29]

Area	Total No. Of Farms	% Increase	Average Size of farms	% Decrease
United States	2,044,077 (1860) 4,564,641 (1890)	123%	199 (1860) 137 (1890)	31%
Virginia	56,572 (1860) 127,600 (1890)	127%	336 (1860) 150 (1890)	55%
Maryland	25,494 (1860) 40,798 (1890)	60%	190 (1860) 121 (1890)	36%
New Jersey	27,646 (1860) 30,828 (1890)	8%	108 (1860) 86 (1890)	20%
Ohio	179,889 (1860) 251,430 (1890)	39%	114 (1860) 93 (1890)	18%
Kentucky	90,792 (1860) 179,246 (1890)	97%	211 (1860) 119 (1890)	44%
Missouri	92,792 (1860) 238,043 (1890)	156%	215 (1860) 129 (1890)	44%

[29] Eleventh Census: 1890, Agriculture, pp. 84-115.

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trend towards more farms began prior to the Civil War when the number of farms increased 20 per cent between 1850 and 1860.[30]

Virginia's farms decreased in size between 1860 and 1890, but not to the extent to have the label "revolution" applied to landholding patterns. In fact, a comparison of all farms in the state in 1860 and 1890 found the percentages of farms in each category surprisingly similar. From the data of 1890 over 94 per

FARM SIZE IN VIRGINIA, 1860 AND 1890[31]

	1000 acres or over	1000 to 500	500 to 100	100 to 50	50 to 20	20 to 3	Total
1860	641	2,882	34,300	21,245	19,584	7,916	86,468
% of Total	.7%	3%	40%	24%	23%	9%	100%
1890	1,395	5,077	54,903	24,667	21,708	19,850	127,600
% of Total	1%	4.9%	43%	19%	17%	15.5%	100%

cent of all of the farms was less than 500 acres, which approximated the 96 per cent in 1860. Both in 1860 and 1890 approximately 65 per cent of the farms fell between 50 acres and 500 acres, and thus could support a farmer

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[30] Twelfth Census: 1900, V, Agriculture, Part I, p. 702.

[31] Eleventh Census: 1890, Agriculture, p. 118.

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and his family. Of course, by 1890 there were many more farms under 50 acres, for after the war thousands of Freedmen with very limited means entered the land market. It seems clear that most blacks could not purchase more than a few acres, not because the land was not available, but because of economic circumstances. In conclusion, one finds no "revolution" in landholding patterns in Virginia in the thirty-five year period after the war. In 1900 more farms existed and they were smaller in size, but the pattern of change was neither sudden nor extensive.

Indeed the shift towards smaller landholdings was encouraged by state officials, by other farmers, and by economic forces. In 1890 the State Commissioner of Agriculture in his annual report called on Virginia farmers to reduce their landholdings and to cultivate their remaining lands at an even greater degree.[32] Since the cost of fertilizer to the farmer remained high for thirty years after the war, and the price received for wheat, cotton, corn, and peanuts declined on national and world markets, Tidewater landholders had considerable economic pressure on them to reduce their land holdings. Apparently considerations over labor costs did not influence their decision, for the cost of hiring a laborer, whether by the day or the month, remained very

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[32]Report of the State Board of Agriculture of Virginia: 1890 (Richmond, 1890), p. 16.

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low for over forty years after the war.[33] In the Tidewater counties farmers had a supply of experienced agricultural workers, predominantly black, which they employed regularly.

In many Southern states after the Civil War farm ownership evolved into an owner-tenant-sharecropper arrangement. According to some scholars the abolition of slavery resulted in a short period of chaos, 1865-70, during which both owners and laborers tried a wage system, but it failed because of a dearth of capital and farm owners turned to a system of tenant labor. Under this system the Freedman and his family became sharecroppers, or contract farm workers, who supplied all of the labor and one-half of the seed and in return received one-half of the value of the crop. On the other side of the contract the planter furnished the land, the woodstock, one-half of the seed, and in some instances machinery. It was a system whereby the farm workers earned subsistence without wages, and the land owners secured workers without cash. From this framework scholars concluded that most Freedmen became sharecroppers, and inversely most sharecroppers were

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[33]Peterson, Historical Study of Farm Products in Virginia 1801-1927, pp. 40-41.

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Freedmen.[34] Consequently, the post-war tenancy system resembled the ante bellum slavery system in that it perpetuated the planter - master - laborer arrangement. Paul Gaston in the New South Creed maintains that this paternalistic economic relationship helps to explain the development of the South's present segregated system of race relations.[35]

Perhaps the description above is accurate for the deep South, but it is not true for the state of Virginia and the Tidewater region. Nearly three-fourths of the farms throughout the state were worked by their owners, and on the remaining farms either cash tenants or sharecroppers contracted to work the crops. Compared with other states Virginia's farm system resembled Northern states more than Southern ones (Table 9). According to the Eleventh Census (1890) Virginia had fewer tenant farmers than any of the states of the Old South, and a larger percentage of working farm owners than such

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[34]Oscar Zeichner, "The Transition from Slave to Free Agricultural Labor in the Southern States," Agricultural History, XIII, no. 1, (1939), pp. 22-30; John P. McConnell, Negroes and Their Treatment in Virginia from 1865 to 1867 (Pulaski, Virginia, 1910), p. 31; William Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, p. 8; Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 79-80; William Hemphill, Cavalier Commonwealth, pp. 344-345. The latter two a authors, Moger and Hemphill, writing in 1968 and 1963 respectively perpetuated the stereotype description and projected it over the entire state.

[35]Paul Gaston, The New South Creed (New York, 1970), p. 125.

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states as Illinois, Kansas, Texas, and Maryland, and the nation as a whole.[36]

TABLE 9

COMPARISON OF FARM OWNERSHIP AND TENANCY IN SELECTED STATES, 1890[37]

Area	% worked by owner	% rented for cash	% rented for sharecropping
U. S. A.	71.6	10	18.4
Virginia	73	9	17.5
Maryland	69	7	23
New Jersey	72.8	11	16
Ohio	77	7.5	15
Illinois	66	12	21.8
Missouri	73	9.8	17
Mississippi	47	21	31.8
Texas	58	9	33

Within the Tidewater region a county by county breakdown of farms according to tenure revealed essentially the same results (Table 10). Variations occurred among counties, from a high of 92 per cent of all farms in Mathews County to a low of 42 per cent in Northampton

[36] Eleventh Census: 1890, Agriculture, pp. 120-197.

[37] Ibid.

TABLE 10

COMPARISON OF FARM OWNERSHIP AND TENANCY IN TIDEWATER VIRGINIA COUNTIES, 1890-38

	No. of Farms	% worked by owners	% rented for money	% rented for share of crops

TABLE 10

COMPARISON OF FARM OWNERSHIP AND TENANCY IN TIDEWATER VIRGINIA COUNTIES, 1890[38]

	No. of Farms	% worked by owners	% rented for money	% rented for share of crops
State: Virginia	127,600	73.13	9.39	17.48
Counties:				
Accomack	2,292	43.28	39.18	17.54
Charles City	411	76.89	10.46	12.65
Elizabeth City	179	78.21	19.55	2.24
Essex	1,309	78.84	2.06	19.10
Gloucester	1,271	86.94	7.95	5.11
Isle of Wight	1,095	70.50	11.42	18.08
James City	370	77.30	12.70	10.00
King & Queen	1,487	79.08	3.97	16.95
King George	873	66.32	8.82	24.86
King William	836	76.80	14.71	8.49
Lancaster	888	82.66	13.85	3.49
Mathews	1,028	92.12	6.23	1.65
Middlesex	937	82.82	12.38	4.80
Nansemond	1,726	77.64	14.02	8.34
New Kent	625	75.36	15.36	9.28
Norfolk	1,173	51.49	19.95	25.56
Northampton	705	42.41	20.99	36.60

[38] Eleventh Census: 1890, Agriculture, pp. 190-193.

TABLE 10 (continued)

No. of Farms	% worked by owners	% rented for money	% rented for share of crops
			44.70

TABLE 10 (continued)

	No. of Farms	% worked by owners	% rented for money	% rented for share of crops
Northumberland	1,136	68.66	16.55	14.79
Prince George	745	68.86	17.58	13.56
Princess Anne	900	71.89	21.00	7.11
Richmond	702	71.94	7.83	20.23
Southampton	1,523	69.01	14.77	16.22
Surry	823	78.25	8.77	12.98
Sussex	931	69.28	21.59	9.13
Warwick	212	66.21	30.19	3.30
Westmoreland	802	77.18	7.98	14.84
York	625	61.44	15.84	22.72

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County, but generally seven out of every ten farmers worked their own land. As in the midwest, the north, and far west, yeoman farmers predominated and sharecroppers were in the minority.

In Virginia sharecropping was most extensively practiced in the tobacco counties south of Petersburg, and a description of the system there is applicable to the other regions of the state. William Sheldon, historian of Populism in Virginia, explained that in most of Southside Virginia's sharecropping agreements "the owner furnished the land, farm implements, and work animals; paid half of the taxes and half of the cost of fertilizing and marketing, and then shared the returns with the tenant-cultivator."[39] While the system appeared fair to both parties external pressures corrupted it soon after its inauguration. Owners and merchants demanded that the cropper's produce only cash crops, like tobacco, since diversified farming did not yield large profits. Furthermore when prices fell on the staple crops of wheat, corn, and cotton, the croppers' share of the profits approached zero and he was forced to go into debt at tne county store to purchase his subsistence staples. Thus the sharecropper was squeezed from all sides, and he lived his life in perpetual debt.[40]

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[39] Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, p. 8.

[40] Ibid., p. 10.

Exploited and often hopelessly trapped, the croppers were not adverse to chicanery against absentee owners. A Southampton County Farm Agent remarked in his annual report in 1894: "The tenant system here is awful in its results. The owners of the land tenant it out, and early in the year they sell largely to the tenants on credit, and then when the crop is made it takes all to pay them. This has led to a system of running off the crops at night by the tenant."[41]

Although historians often portray sharecropping as a postwar development, the institution had a long history in Virginia. Tenancy in the state developed in the colonial period and grew rapidly in the years following the Revolutionary War.[42] Most large planters and farmers knew the tenant system well, and some even experienced problems similar to the farmers of Southampton County in the 1890's.[43] Moreover, within the Tidewater both blacks and whites served as tenants prior to the Civil War. Free

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[41] Report of the State Board of Agriculture, 1894-1895 (Richmond, 1896), p. 93.

[42] Willard F. Bliss "The Rise of Tenancy in Virginia," Virginia Magazine of Biography and History, LVIII, no. 4 (October, 1950), pp. 427-441.

[43] Ibid., p. 436. In 1783, George Washington returned to Mt. Vernon to find that during his absence many of the tenants of his valley lands had run off "into the western country" and most of his rents for those years went uncollected.

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Negroes contracted their labor to white farmers and merchants on a crop lien system very similar to the one that developed after the war.[44] Also, cash tenancy existed in the ante bellum period, and apparently many farmers preferred that arrangement to sharecropping. It was possible for a white man to progress from laborer to tenant to owner before the war, but racial barriers prohibited men of the Free Negro class from such an accomplishment.[45]

After the war the racial composition of tenancy in the Tidewater counties did not conform to the Southern stereotype of white owners and poor black sharecroppers (Table 11). A breakdown of the cash tenants and share tenants in the Tidewater according to race in 1900 showed many counties in which white tenants outnumbered blacks and some counties in which cash tenants outnumbered share tenants. Many of those white tenants were cash tenants who through savings or loans probably became farm owners

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[44] Luther P. Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 1830-1860 (New York, 1942), p. 104.

[45] Ibid., p. 107. One free Negro, William Epps, of Halifax County in twelve years (1830-1842) advanced from owning one horse to 595 acres of land and other equipment worth $2,966. But Jackson found Epps' progression almost unique in the state.

TABLE 11

FARM OWNERSHIP AND TENANCY BY RACE FOR SELECTED TIDEWATER COUNTIES, 1900[46]

Number of Farms	White Owners*	Black Owners	Cash Tenants	Share Tenants

TABLE 11

FARM OWNERSHIP AND TENANCY BY RACE FOR SELECTED TIDEWATER COUNTIES, 1900[46]

	Number of Farms	White Owners*	Black Owners	Cash Tenants	Share Tenants
State:					
Virginia	167,886	123,052	44,843	9,758-W 6,891-B	23,808-W 11,139-B
Counties:					
Accomack	2,772	1,966	806	630-W 440-B	356-W 257-B
Isle of Wight	1,511	988	523	112-W 126-B	180-W 112-B
Norfolk	1,447	817	630	183-W 149-B	122-W 196-B
Northampton	975	584	391	70-W 102-B	213-W 169-B
Richmond	1,101	725	376	62-W 34-B	120-W 121-B
York	1,139	501	638	48-W 2-B	6-W 123-B

*Owners represent totals of owners and mortgagees.

[46]Twelfth Census: 1900, V, Agriculture, Part 1, pp. 132-133.

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While the number of white farm owners always exceeded the number of blacks, a considerable number of black men purchased farms after the war. In 1900 blacks owned 13.5 per cent of all farms in the state, and in the Tidewater region the percentage was higher.[48] Yet a man did not need to have complete ownership of a farm to control it; he could be a part owner, a farm manager, or an owner and a tenant. However the size of the black man's farm was generally smaller than that of his white counterpart. In 1900 the average size of all farms in the state was 118 acres, a combination of the average white farmer's landholding of 144 acres and black's average farm of 50 acres.[49]

Yet actually, most blacks in the counties of the Tidewater did not own a farm or have even tenant status; instead they worked as agricultural laborers. With the abolition of slavery white farmers turned to hiring black farm workers through individual labor

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[47]Perry, "Farm Tenancy in the Tobacco Region of Virginia, 1865-1950" discussed the possibility of a farm ladder operating in Virginia. She concluded that the depressed prices during this period operated against upward mobility to the point that made it only partially possible.

[48]Twelfth Census: 1900, V, Agriculture, Part 1, p. 133.

[49]Ibid., p. 2.

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contracts.[50] Verbal at first, the contracts changed during the winter of 1865-66 as the system broke down when many blacks apparently stopped working and went to the cities to find other work, to visit, or simply to experience their freedom. Conversely, white planters and farmers were not without sin as they divided the profits from that first crop heavily in their own favor, which upset the Freedmen's Bureau agents.[51] By the spring of 1866 most white farmers and Bureau agents demanded written contracts, which, if necessary, could serve as the basis for court action. Although the average wage stipulated in the contract varied by county within the Tidewater region, generally it fell between five dollars and ten dollars per month with rations.[52] Since the farm owners consistently reduced wages offered to emancipated women and children, their contracts often stipulated only a minimal salary and a suit of winter clothes and a suit of

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[50]Freedman's labor contracts have been extensively researched by scholars. See McConnell, Negroes and Their Treatment in Virginia 1865 to 1867, pp. 33, 41, 54; A. A. Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 15, 16; Douglas C. Smith, "Virginia during Reconstruction, 1865-1870" (unpublished, Ph. D. diss., University of Virginia, 1960), pp. 201-204.

[51]Zeichner, "The Transition from Slave to Free Labor," Agricultural History, p. 27; Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, p. 16.

[52]McConnell, Negroes and Their Treatment in Virginia 1865 to 1867, pp. 41-43.

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summer clothes.[53] Thus, somewhat haltingly both blacks and whites moved into a new labor system after Appomatox although neither party seemed satisfied with the particulars as white farmers resented the written contracts and black laborers felt restricted to their farms.

According to scholars by 1870 the South had abandoned the contract labor system because it was too expensive for the Southern white farmers and planters, most of whom lacked capital; and they switched to the sharecropping system. Yet in some states and regions, like Virginia and the Tidewater, the wage system continued long after 1870. In both 1870 and 1880 laborers constituted more than half of the total population of the Tidewater's agricultural workers.[54] Most of those laborers were ex-slaves who had worked as field hands in the ante bellum period, and after 1865 continued working in the fields for white farmers under annual labor contracts. In 1893 the Virginia Commissioner of

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[53]In January 1868, William R. Aylett of Prince William County recorded this contract in his Day Book, 1868. He stated he had, "engaged Robert at Nelson's wages, $1.25 per month and two suits of my old clothes per annum--one summer and one winter." Aylett Family Papers, 1776-1945, (Virginia Historical Society), Richmond, Virginia.

[54]Ninth Census: 1870, III, Wealth and Industry, p. 813; Tenth Census: 1880, I, Population, p. 724. of 244,550 in agriculture in 1870, 162,604 were laborers. Ten years later of 254,550 in agriculture 132,820 were laborers.

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Agriculture commented that "in Virginia, most laborers contract themselves out under an annual wage system."[55] So the annual contract wage system continued to operate in Virginia many years after its decline in the Deep South.

Furthermore, the wages paid out by the Virginia farmers to their laborers did not increase for the entire thirty-five year period.[56] In 1865 and 1866 laboring Freedmen received between five and ten dollars per month with rations.[57] Twenty-eight years later the report by the Commissioner of Agriculture listed the following monthly wage scale for laborers with rations: Accomac County, $10 per month; Westmoreland County, $9; Mathews County, $10; King William County, $10; Charles City County, $11; and Southampton County $9.[58] The per day wage which included board ranged from $.75 in Mathews County of $.40 in Southampton County, with the average at $.50 per laborer per day. Clearly, the reason for such a stagnant wage level was the large number of black farm laborers who remained in the Tidewater region after 1865.

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[55] Report of the State Board of Agriculture of Virginia, 1893 (Richmond, 1893), pp. 20-21.

[56] Peterson, Historical Study of Farm Prices, 1801-1921, p. 41.

[57] McConnell, Negroes in Virginia, 1865-1867, pp. 41-43.

[58] Report of the State Board of Agriculture, 1893, pp. 76-86.

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In some counties white farmers lamented the scarcity of white farm laborers, and complained about the inferiority of the Negro laborers they were forced to employ. The State Commissioner of Agriculture explained that the scarcity of white laborers was due to the growth of industries, railroading, manufacturing, lumbering, and shipbuilding, and, refusing to admit that Negro labor was inferior in any way, he discussed the matter in his annual report of 1893:

> This /the inferiority of Negro labor/ is untrue, for when promptly paid, and properly directed and controlled, no better laborer for the farm can be found . . . . Negro labor is cheap . . . and he can be obtained at wages, and live comfortably upon the same, that in Northern and Western states it would be impossible to obtain hands at.[59]

Although few white farmers would admit it, the black farm laborer played an essential role in the region's agricultural economy. He was a trained, experienced farm laborer and he worked for wages that were lower than in any other section of the nation. The attitude of the white farmers in Virginia towards his black laborers did not stem from economic circumstances. Without an extensive tenure system to produce subservient black sharecroppers, the Virginia white farmer held many

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[59] Report of the State Board of Agriculture, 1893, pp. 20-21.

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of his ante bellum attitudes concerning the inferiority of the Negro as a laborer. The agricultural economy of Virginia unquestionably resembled that of Northern states, but in race relations it fell in line with the Old South.

In conclusion, the Tidewater's agricultural economy, and in many respects Virginia's, exhibited many characteristics associated with eastern states rather than southern ones during this thirty-five year period, 1865-1900. The region had many more yeoman farmers than planters, more farm owners than tenants, and in most counties more white tenant farmers than black ones. No staple crop dominated the region as a diversity of farm products was raised in almost every county. While land prices continued in a depressed state, and farm machinery became dated, labor remained cheap for the farmer.

Generally the period between 1865-1900 was not a prosperous one for the American, Virginian, or Tidewater farmer. Caught up in a vicious web of falling prices for his staple crops, arbitrary transportation rates, and rising costs for supplies of fertilizer, seed, machinery, and capital, farmers throughout the nation experienced a decline in relative prosperity. Furthermore, as the average size of farms decreased many more men attempted to farm, and subsistence farming became the norm rather than the exception in many areas of the country. In 1860 agriculture and the farmer had dominated Tidewater's

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economy and society, but by 1900 the farmer's position had declined and the forces of commerce and industry were increasing in wealth and power.

Commerce and Industry

Between 1865 and 1900 the industrial revolution came to the Tidewater region and it developed most rapidly in the cities at the mouth of the James River, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Newport News. The creation of new industries followed the development of a modern transportation network based on the railroad and the steamship. The Tidewater region's west to east pattern of rivers precluded any north-south rail construction, so all railroads built after 1865 went south of the James River and connected Norfolk and Portsmouth with Richmond, Petersburg, Lynchburg, Danville, and all points south and west.[60] Once established this transportation system attracted into the area new industries, such as ship-building and ship repairing.[61] In fact, transportation played such a preponderant role that almost no manufacturing developed in Norfolk that did not relate to the area's

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[60]Wertenbaker, Norfolk, Historic Southern Port, pp. 300-315.

[61]Both the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company and the Norfolk Naval Yards were established during this period.

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After 1870 new technological developments in transportation enabled Tidewater's commercial economy to surge ahead of the other sections in Virginia. For example, deep draft steamships could not go up the shallow waters of the James River to Richmond, consequently, the cities in the lower Tidewater, specifically Norfolk and Portsmouth, became the state's only deep water ports. In addition the railway network of the state, centered in Richmond and Petersburg until 1865, shifted to Norfolk as new railroad construction made that city the focal point for both Virginia and North Carolina. Two other developments in the 1880's helped to solidify the area's commercial pre-eminence. When high grade coal fields opened up in Southwest Virginia and West Virginia, the extracted coal was sent by rail to Norfolk and there loaded into steamships bound for European and Northeastern markets.[63] Then beginning in 1889, the region's economy leaped ahead when private industry in Newport News and the United States Navy in Portsmouth started construction on two large ship

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[62]In 1893, the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce reported that there were only two cotton mills and one grain elevator in the city. "A City by the Sea," Norfolk Chamber of Commerce (Norfolk, 1893), p. 35.

[63]See Report on Virginia prepared by General J. D. Imboden, C.S.A. in Report on the Internal Commerce of the United States, 1886, House Executative Documents, 49 Cong., 2 Sess., 1886-1887, XVIII, pp. 38, 39, 98.

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repair and shipbuilding facilities.[64] By the late 1890's the two yards were employing over 9,000 men daily.

Tidewater's commercial developments changed the nature of its agricultural economy. The cotton and truck vegetable farmers of Eastern Virginia and North Carolina increased production since products could be shipped to distant markets much quicker than before. In 1870 truck farming was centered in Norfolk County, but by the end of the century it was found in almost every Tidewater county. Also, Tidewater farmers shipped vegetables and fruits by steamer and rail to New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, and, beginning in the 1890's, by rail to the midwestern cities of Cincinnati and Chicago.

Tidewater's extractive industries, lumber, seafood, and coal, also owed their prosperity to the transportation system. For example the lumber industry, centered around Norfolk, employed 5,000 men and produced cut wood primarily for the coastal trade along the Atlantic Seaboard.[65] Since seafood was plentiful and available to local population, virtually all of the industry's production went to markets elsewhere. As production increased so did employment and by the 1890's the oyster

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[64] Allen W. Moger, "Industrial and Urban Progress in Virginia, 1880-1900," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXVI, no. 2 (July, 1958), pp. 327-329.

[65] Norfolk Journal of Commerce, Nov. 16, 1889, p. 4.

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industry was providing work for over 20,000 men.[66] While coal was not mined in the Tidewater region, it was shipped there, unloaded, and transferred to steamers bound for Europe. By 1900, Norfolk had become the largest coaling station in the world with coal exports valued at over $37 million dollars.[67] Annually after 1898 some three thousand ships per year used the area's coaling facilities.[68]

Employment opportunities existed in other new industries after the war as well. The peanut industry grew out of a demand for roasted peanuts by Union soldiers stationed in Norfolk during the Civil War. Centered in Norfolk, the peanut industry built four processing plants and provided employment for eight hundred people, mostly Negro women and children.[69] By 1900, Norfolk was the largest peanut market in America.[70] Railroad expansion saw men employed in the areas of construction, repair, and

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[66] Norfolk Journal of Commerce, Nov. 16, 1889, p. 4, P. A. Bruce, The Rise of the New South, p. 103.

[67] Moger, "Industrial and Urban Progress in Virginia, 1880-1900," V.M.H.B., XVI, no. 2, p. 328; Wertenbaker, Norfolk, p. 311.

[68] Descriptive Handbook of the Norfolk and Western Railway (Roanoke, 1898), p. 55.

[69] "The City by the Sea," Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, (1893), p. 11.

[70] Moger, "Industrial and Urban Progress in Virginia, 1880-1900," V. M. H. B., LXVI, no. 2, p. 327.

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general shop work. Progressing from two railroads in 1870 to eight in 1890 the Norfolk-Newport News terminus experienced a significant amount of new construction.

By 1900 the largest employer in the Tidewater region and in Virginia was the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company owned by Collis P. Huntington former president of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company.[71] Opened in 1889, this ship construction company won contracts from the federal government to modernize the Navy and the Merchant Marine fleets. Moreover, in the decade of the 1890's the United States became an imperialistic nation, acquiring Hawaii, the Phillippines, and small coaling stations in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.[72] By the end of the decade the Newport News Shipbuilding Company was constructing a new U. S. Navy, and it regularly employed more than 5,000 men, a figure which increased to 7,000 in peak times.[73]

As in most societies workers wages varied greatly, depending upon skill, experience, sex, and race. A comparison of wages in Tidewater industries showed that

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[71]Annie L. Jester, Newport News Virginia, 1607-1960 (Richmond, 1961), pp. 108-113.

[72]Victor S. Clark, History of Manufacturers in the United States, 1861-1928 (New York, 1929), p. 142.

[73]P. A. Bruce, The Rise of the New South, p. 223.

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laborers in shipbuilding received higher pay than any other group (Table 12). For the entire state the average annual wage of an industrial worker in 1890 was three times greater than the wage of an agricultural laborer. Although the disparity between industrial and agricultural wages probably was greater for black men and women, a change from agricultural work to industrial labor represented real increases for these people too.

TABLE 12

WAGES IN SELECTED TIDEWATER INDUSTRIES, 1890[74]

Trade/Industry	Monthly Wage	Annual Wage
Shipbuilding (skilled)	$58	$670 (11½ mo.)
Lumber	$24	$192 (8 mo.)
Longshoremen	$1-2 per day	---
Day Laborers	$1-1.25 per day	---
Sailors	$20	$240
Peanut processors	$9	$108
Agricultural laborers	$9-10	$100 (10 mo.)
All industrial workers	$25-30	$330

[74]Figures for shipbuilding, lumber, and the industrial average from Eleventh Census: 1890, VI, Manufacturers, Part 1, p. 23, Part 2, pp. 642, 572-573; Figures for longshoremen, day laborers, and peanut workers from Norfolk Chamber of Commerce Pamphlet, 1893, pp. 45, 11; Figures for agricultural laborers, Peterson, Historical Study of Farm Prices in Virginia, 1801-1927, p. 41.

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Thus, the growth of commerce and industry in the years following the war brought changes to the Tidewater. The region's economy became more balanced between agriculture, commerce, and industry. In agriculture advances of truck farming, peanut-growing, peanuts, and to a certain extent the culture of cotton were enormously stimulated by improvements in the transportation system. After 1870 farmers relied so much on the railroad and steamship that their mode of farming changed. Cities became important as urban centers of transportation, population, and wealth. In the past Tidewater cities were few in number and small in population and they had produced only manufactured goods for the surrounding rural population; however, between 1865-1900 cities grew in population and wealth to the point where the countryside revolved around the city. At times there were clashes and conflicts of interests on matters of state and national policy, specifically taxation, tariffs, and railroad legislation, but those disputes were symptomatic of more fundamental change.

Not all of the changes resulting from the growth of commerce and industry were advantageous. The staple farmer became dependent on the railroads and their discriminatory rate policies, and the prices a farmer received for his crops were based on a world market scale, often to his disadvantage. Also the

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United States Navy directly or indirectly controlled a large portion of the region's industrial economy, and a reduction in peace time curtailed employment.

While many of the changes were difficult to measure quantitatively, industrial and commercial growth had a profound impact on Tidewater society. By 1890 the problems of the region differed sharply from those of 1860, a change that cannot be attributed solely to the Civil War.

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CHAPTER III

THE TIDEWATER ELECTORATE: WHO COULD VOTE?

In the postwar years responsibility for defining citizenship, the franchise, registration, and election procedures was the provence of the state legislature. Yet events, particularly the passage of Radical Reconstruction legislation by Congress in 1866-1868, forced Virginians to liberalize their concepts of citizenship and civil liberties. After the emotion of the Reconstruction years subsided, some Virginians tried to constrict citizenship rights once again by proposing restrictive amendments to the state constitution. Thus the question of who could vote is a legal one, and its solution involves a careful tracing of the activities and motives of Virginia's state legislators between 1865 and 1900.

For two years after the Civil War the suffrage requirements remained the same as in the ante-bellum period: all free white persons, native and alien, were classified as citizens, with the franchise granted to all white male citizens. In addition potential voters had to register and meet two requirements: age, at least twenty-one years; and residency, two years in the state and twelve months in the

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city, town, or county.[1] Men were registered by the County Commissioner for Elections with the assistance of the County Commissioner of Revenue and County Clerk.[2] The 1851 Constitution, still in effect in 1865-66, contained no freehold or monetary requirement for exercising the franchise.[3]

Thus, Virginians elected their first postwar legislatures under suffrage laws established in the ante-bellum decades, and once in session they proceeded to deny the emancipated slaves all citizenship rights including suffrage. Indirectly, however, the question of extending the franchise did arise in charters and incorporation acts for immigrant aid societies. And there the legislators showed their true colors.[4] For example, in 1865 the legislature set up the State Board of Immigration, which hired Gaspar Tochman as its agent in Europe to publicize

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[1] Code of Virginia, 1860, pp. 73, 78, 79.

[2] Ibid., p. 78.

[3] Julian A. C. Chandler, The History of Suffrage in Virginia (Baltimore, 1901), p. 52.

[4] James Douglas Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction, 1865-1870, a Political, Economic, and Social Study" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1960), p. 208. During 1865 the Virginia legislature gave charters to seven immigration companies capitalized between $500,000 and $5,000,000.

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and encourage immigration to the Old Dominion.[5] In his publicity pamphlets Tochman extolled the economic virtues of the state and the political advantages inherent in Virginia citizenship and assured prospective immigrants that they would receive all of the rights and benefits of free white men, adding that Virginia wished to increase its population of "free white citizens."[6]

The state's infant Republican Party led the fight to widen the suffrage and citizenship to include all Virginians regardless of race. Beginning in June 1865 Republicans formed political clubs in Tidewater and northern Virginia,[7] and in the fall those clubs and individual leaders advocated Negro suffrage at both the state and national level. They pointed out the paradox of boasting about Virginia's democracy in foreign countries while denying citizenship to one-half of the adult male population on the basis of race.

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[5]Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, 1865-66, pp. 235, 236.

[6]Gaspar Tochman, Virginia: A brief Memoir for the Information of Europeans Desirous of Emigrating to the New World (Richmond, 1868), p. 14. Tochman had this pamphlet translated into German and published in 10,000 copies. See also Tochman, Emigration to the United States (New York, 1869).

[7]Richard G. Lowe, "Republicans, Rebellion, and Reconstruction: The Republican Party in Virginia, 1856-1870" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1968), pp. 201-204.

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Within the Tidewater region activity for Negro suffrage centered in the towns and cities.[8] In Williamsburg Dr. Daniel M. Norton, A Negro physician with a considerable following, organized and led a local Republican Club.[9] Norfolk had a strong Democratic-Republican Association with black and white leadership.[10] Late in 1865 activity increased when D. B. White, a former Union Army Officer living in Hampton, began publishing the True Southerner, Virginia's first Republican newspaper.[11]

Yet those first efforts to enfranchise Negroes were crushed when the election returns for state officials in October 1865 showed Conservatives and ex-Confederates victorious in all sections of the state. The Conservatives proceeded immediately to legislate the Negro permanently into a non-citizenship position by enacting a

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[8]Lowe, "The Republican Party in Virginia, 1856-1870", p. 205.

[9]Luther P. Jackson, Negro Office holders in Virginia, 1865-1895 (Norfolk, 1945), p. 30. Dr. Norton and his brother Robert Norton were born slaves in Williamsburg. They escaped in the 1850's, went to New York State, became educated, and returned to Williamsburg after the war. Dr. Norton had a long political career, in both state and federal offices. In 1865-66 he was a judge on a Freedman's Court under the Freedmen's Bureau.

[10]Lowe, "The Republican Party in Virginia, 1856-1870," p. 204.

[11]I. Garland Penn, The Afro-American Press and its Editors (Springfield, Mass., 1891), pp. 174-175.

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series of new state laws, the Black Codes, which placed the Negro in a rigid caste with few if any social, economic, or political rights.[12] The Black Codes set off an immediate storm of protest from within and without Virginia.

Republicans and Negroes in the Tidewater went into action. On November 28, 1865, a mass meeting in Hampton requested that Congress act on behalf of the disfranchised Negroes.[13] Dr. Gillet F. Watson of Northampton County drafted a letter explaining the mass meeting and its purposes and sent it to Thaddeus Stevens leader of the Radical Republicans in Congress.[14] Over the next few months in 1866 Virginia Republicans took the leadership in corresponding with Congress on conditions in Virginia. Indeed, many Tidewater men testified before the Joint Committee on Reconstruction calling for Negro suffrage.[15]

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[12]Hamilton J. Eckenrode, Virginia During the Reconstruction (Baltimore, 1904), pp. 44-45.

[13]True Southerner, November 30, 1865.

[14]Ibid.

[15]U. S. Congress. Joint Committee on Reconstruction, Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction, 39th Cong., 1st sess., Part II, pp. 1-176. A total of 51 Virginians testified before this committee on conditions within the state.

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While some Tidewater Negroes were in the forefront in demanding political rights for all Freedmen, most blacks worried about other, more practical matters. For many the most pressing need was land, and this desire often took precedence over political or civil rights. To many Negroes emancipation from bondage meant freedom--freedom to have one's own church, to travel, to become educated, to refuse to work. But to some blacks victory signified much more: it meant land, confiscated land received from government agents. Within the Tidewater the desire for confiscated lands did not go unrewarded. In 1863 President Lincoln appointed John C. Underwood, a Virginia Republican, judge of the Eastern District Court of the United States in Norfolk.[16] Underwood acted with vigor bordering on vindictiveness in ordering the expropriation of so much property that by 1869 his court adjudicated 1,149 cases worth over $133,000.[17] During 1866 agents of the Freedman's Bureau became very active in the Tidewater area. Bureau officials established schools, set up food relief centers, converted army hospitals into medical centers for Freedmen, and advised individual blacks

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[16]Harry J. Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage (New York, 1943), p. 222.

[17]Lowe, "The Republican Party in Virginia, 1856-1870," p. 163. In both the number of cases and the value of the property expropriated, Judge Underwood led the nation during Reconstruction.

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as to their contract labor rights.[18] Thus many federal government officials, either agents of the District Court or Bureau officials, had contact with black men of the region in 1865 and 1866, and the Freedmen looked to them for assistance and advice.

At times the desire for land was so strong among the Freedmen that they were victimized by unscrupulous characters. A Freedman, Lewis Augustus Clarke of Chesterfield County, told of a man who came riding up to his church one Sunday in the summer of 1865:

> Had a badge an' ev'ything. Said de gov'ment sent him. Come walkin' into church one Sunday an' tole de colored people dat he come to see who needed land. 'Course dey all needed it, even de preacher. Opened up his bag an' showed us all de stakes de gov'ment had give him. Wanted to know where was de secesh lands in de county. Well, de next day most ev'body met him out on de lands b'longin' to Marse Jack Turner dat had died in de war. Took out dem pegs an' tole de Negroes to go 'haid pick dere land. Ev'ybody scrambled to git de bes' pieces, den he tole 'em dey would have to pay one dollar in United States money fo' dey pegs. Some did an' some didn't. Dem dat got de money staked off de land like he said, but it didn't do no good. One day Yankee troops come ridin' out from Richmond lookin' fo' dat 'bagger. Said he didn't belong to de gov'ment, an' didn't have no right sellin' no lan' or givin' it away. Don't know whether dey caught him or not, but dem colored folks dat had bought stakes sho' was achin' to git dey hands on him.[19]

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[18]William T. Alderson, "The Freedmen's Bureau and Negro Education in Virginia" North Carolina Historical Review, XXIX (January, 1952), pp. 64-90. Also George Bentley, A History of the Freedmen's Bureau (Philadelphia, 1955).

[19]Writers Project of the WPA, The Negro in

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While many black men acquired land in later years, it was not through the confiscation method for in the fall of 1867 President Johnson restored citizenship and confiscated property to most of the ex-Confederates.[20] Then in 1869, the United States Supreme Court ruled that property expropriated by any Federal Court could be removed or legally alienated from the family only for the life of the original owner.[21] Thus denied land by the judicial and executive branches of the national government, the Freedmen turned to Congress.

Although Congress rejected all land redistribution plans, it did listen to the Freedman's arguments on the franchise. In 1866 and 1867 Radical Republicans

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Virginia (New York, 1940), p. 220. While this account is a reminiscence taken many years after the event, it stands as a testament to the mood and desires of the black community in the first few months after the war.

[20]Johathan T. Dorris, Pardon and Amnesty under Lincoln and Johnson (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1953), pp. 354-355. Also, Eric L. McKitrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (Chicago, 1960), pp. 143-144. Using the Presidential pardoning power Lincoln and Johnson issued a series of proclamations granting amnesty to the ex-Confederates. After Johnson's Second Amnesty Proclamation of September 7, 1867 only about three hundred ex-Confederates remained unpardoned.

[21]Bigelow v. Forrest, 9 Wallace 339 (1869). This case turned on a Joint Resolution passed by Congress at Lincoln's insistence, which clarified the Confiscation Act of 1863 by stipulating that property seized from Confederates could not be held by the U. S. government for more than the owner's lifetime.

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set in motion the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments which guaranteed civil liberties for all United States citizens regardless of race or creed. Also Congress enacted the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, which struck down the existing state governments of the Old South. Virginia became Military District No. 1 commanded by a Major General of the United States Army with instructions from Congress to register all men, black and white, who could take a "test oath." The oath required a man to pledge that he never held office in the Confederacy, or in any way had given it aid, support, or comfort. In the general registration in 1867, 225,933 Virginians registered as voters; 120,101 white, and 105,832 black.[22]

Next the military commander in Virginia, Major General John Schofield, ordered elections to select representatives to a constitutional convention. For the first time, in October 1867, blacks voted as citizens of Virginia, and from contemporary accounts they were at the polls early and participated fully in the election for delegates.[23] Conversely, many whites abstained from

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[22] Eckenrode, Virginia During the Reconstruction, pp. 45, 52, 66, 67, 83.

[23] Ibid., p. 84. The poll for a constitutional convention showed 107,342 voters for and 61,887 against. A breakdown by race revealed 14,835 whites voted to hold the convention, and 638 blacks in opposition.

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voting in order to show their disapproval of Congressional Reconstruction. But the whites' inaction resulted in a phyrric victory, for when they counted the ballots the Radical Republicans won decisively with sixty-eight of the one hundred and five seats in the Constitutional Convention.[24] When the convention met in Richmond in the early months of 1868 the Radicals placed their candidate, Judge John C. Underwood in power as the presiding officer; consequently, the body bears his name, the Underwood Constitutional Convention.

Like all politicians of the Reconstruction years the Republican members of the Underwood Constitutional Convention sought to define the franchise for their own political benefit. Thus, the new provisions kept the same age requirement, twenty-one, as provided by the previous Constitution of 1851, but the residency requirement was reduced to one year in the state, and ninety days in a county, city, or town,[25] and most significantly, the new law made no racial distinction in defining state citizenship. Since citizenship was the basis of all suffrage rights the potential electorate virtually doubled in size. The Radical Republicans,

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[24]Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1968), p. 6.

[25]Virginia Constitution, 1868, Art. III, sec. I.

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however, inserted into the constitution (Section I, Article 4) an article disfranchising "any elective officer of the federal, state, or local government, and any judicial officer or executive officer who engaged in insurrection against the United States." Removal of the penalty and a restoration of the individual's franchise could come only after an affirmative three-fifths vote in the House of Delegates.

In addition the Underwood Constitution defined requirements for officeholding in state and local government. Article III, Section 7, of the Constitution excluded from public office all men who could not, or would not take a "test oath." Similar in content to a loyalty oath, but applied not to future activities but to past transgressions, the oath was extremely restrictive.[26] Apparently, the Radical Republican leadership realized that fact when they inserted the "test oath" into the document.[27]

On April 17, 1868 the Underwood Constitutional Convention completed its work, but because of intense opposition the new constitution was not submitted to the

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[26]Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902 (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1961), p. 2.

[27]Lowe, "The Republican Party in Virginia, 1856-1870," p. 311. Lowe stated that virtually all of the Radicals admitted the test oath had to remain in the constitution if they were to govern in the future.

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voters for approval until July 1869. Several elements combined to delay the vote. Foremost were the activities of the disfranchised former Confederates who spoke out strongly against the new constitution's test oath and its officeholding provision.[28] Next, the editors of Virginia's newspapers denounced the new constitution as a whole and the proscriptive provisions in particular.[29] Additional opposition came from the white electorate who met the requirements of the "test oath" and who during 1867-68 had registered in sufficient numbers to defeat the constitution in any test vote.[30] Even Major General John Schofield, the commanding general of the military district, objected to submitting the new constitution to the voters in its completed form.[31] He distrusted the motives of the

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[28]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, p. 2; Eckenrode, Virginia During the Reconstruction, pp. 107-109.

[29]Richmond Enquirer, December 1868, January 1869; Richmond Dispatch, January 1869; Norfolk Day Book, April 1869; Norfolk Virginian, June 1869.

[30]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, pp. 2, 3.

[31]James L. McDonough, "John Schofield as Military Director of Reconstruction in Virginia," Civil War History, XV, no. 3 (Sept. 1969), pp. 251-253. In writing to President Grant Schofield commented on the motives of the Radicals and the intense white opposition. He recommended that Congress permit Virginia to vote separately on the Constitution and its objectionable clauses. See John M. Schofield, Forty-six Years in the Army (New York, 1897), pp. 400-404.

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Radical Republicans and since he held the reins of power he suspended the constitutional election during the remaining months of 1868 and the first six months of 1869.[32]

Between January 1868 and January 1869 a paradoxical stalemate developed over the Underwood Constitution. White native Virginians wanted to end the onus of military rule as quickly as possible, but they refused to live under the provisions of the Underwood Constitution, which not only disfranchised whites on the basis of participation in a defeated government, but enfranchised blacks without regard to property or educational requirements. The Republican Party leaders also faced a paradox since both black and white leadership within the party wanted to end military reconstruction, but not at the price of having the Underwood Constitution with its special "test oath" provisions defeated by a hostile white majority of the electorate. With neither native whites nor Radical Republicans in a mood to compromise, the stalemate lasted for over a year.

A resolution to the dilemma came when a group of former Whig politicians appealed directly to President Grant. These men, led by Alexander H. H. Stuart, a former Whig congressman and Secretary of Interior under President

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[32]McDonough, "James Schofield as Military Director of Reconstruction in Virginia," Civil War History, p. 251.

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Millard Fillmore,[33] proposed that the main body of the Underwood Constitution, including its provisions for Negro suffrage, be separated from the two articles proscribing the rights of ex-Confederates. Grant accepted the partitioning of the issues and on April 7, 1869, he recommended that Congress authorize the Army Commander in Virginia to conduct an election; and when Congress agreed the election was scheduled for July 6, 1869.

After a long, tense, and exciting campaign which included a gubernatorial race, most Virginians voted to approve the main body of the Underwood Constitution, but to defeat the two articles restricting the political rights of the former Confederates. Both black and white voters overwhelmingly supported the main constitution, which passed 210,585 to 9,136; however, they rejected the disfranchisement clause 84,410 to 124,360, and the "test oath" provision 83,458 to 124,715.[34]

The approved Underwood Constitution established suffrage requirements for the state's citizens for thirty-three years, from 1869 to 1902. Negroes were citizens and had the right to vote if they qualified according to the law. While in some southern states registrars

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[33]Eckenrode, Virginia During the Reconstruction, pp. 109-110.

[34]Julian A. C. Chandler, The History of Suffrage in Virginia, p. 69.

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imposed unreasonable qualifications, or interpreted existing requirements arbitrarily, in Virginia they did not.[35] Furthermore, those men already registered by the military commissioners were not removed from the list of qualified voters after the troops withdrew from the state in January 1870.

The 1869 elections brought victory to the Conservatives in the General Assembly and shortly thereafter they began to devise amendments to circumvent the Underwood Constitution's liberal suffrage provisions, and thereby curtail black voting strength. The amendment procedure stipulated that if two consecutive legislatures approved an amendment, then it would be submitted to the voters for final decision. This procedure first was used after the 1873 gubernatorial elections which saw the return to power of the old pre-war Democracy, led by ex-Confederate General James L. Kemper.[36] The new conservative legislature approved an amendment to the constitution prohibiting any man from voting who had not paid a capitation or poll tax before election day.[37]

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[35]See Chapter IV, V, for analysis of voting between 1870-1900 in all counties and cities of the Tidewater. High voting percentages meant, by inference, a high percentage of registrations.

[36]Allen Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925, pp. 21-24.

[37]Chandler, History of Suffrage in Virginia, p. 69.

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A poll tax, Conservatives argued, would bring in revenue and insure adequate financial support for the public schools.[38] But their explanations had the ring of expedient political rhetoric, for the tax was obviously timed at poorer Negroes who could not or would not vote if they had to pay for the privilege.[39] First proposed in 1874, the voters approved the amendment in the election of November 1876.[40]

Other changes in the suffrage laws came about at the insistence of Governor Kemper. He thought it cowardly to cast one's vote by secret ballot rather than the old viva voce way, and persuaded the legislature to return to that method of voting.[41] For the next eighteen

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[38]Robert R. Jones, "Conservative Virginian: The Post-War Career of Governor James Lawson Kemper" (unpublished Ph. D. Diss., University of Virginia, 1964), pp. 234-235. Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925, is in agreement with this assessment.

[39]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902, p. 13; Tipton Ray Snavely, The Taxation of Negroes in Virginia (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1916), pp. 15-16; Chandler, The History of Suffrage in Virginia, pp. 69-70.

[40]J. N. Brenaman, A History of Virginia Conventions (Richmond, 1902), p. 122.

[41]Jones, "Conservative Virginian: James Lawson Kemper," pp. 291-296, 310. Kemper's motivation is open to question. Jones viewed it as a personal quirk, while others, including this author see it as part of a pattern of paternalistic racism. See Jack P. Maddex, Jr., The Virginia Conservatives 1867-1879 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1970), pp. 118, 119, 120.

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years Virginians voted by voice method, although registration of voters still was kept on separate lists--one white and one black.[42] Also, during Kemper's term as governor the legislature added petty larceny to the list of crimes which upon conviction would result in the loss of ones voting privileges.[43]

Thus by 1877 the Conservatives had added the poll tax, voice voting and a petty larceny prohibition to the suffrage laws. Designed to reduce black voting strength, the Conservatives' proscriptive package produced some unusual and unexpected results at election time. For example, since the Conservatives had linked the poll tax to wealth and not race it worked to disfranchise both blacks and poor whites. At election time there were thousands of men who qualified as voters except for the payment of the one dollar poll tax, and ambitious candidates purchased votes by paying the taxes which in turn caused those men who could afford to pay the tax to wait until a politician or political organization paid it for him.[44] Elections became an expensive undertaking

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[42]Jane P. Guild, Black Laws of Virginia (Richmond, 1936), p. 142; Code of Virginia, 1873, p. 148.

[43]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902, pp. 14-15.

[44]Ibid., pp. 24-25; Chandler, History of Suffrage in Virginia, p. 70.

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and widespread corruption developed. Politicians from both parties, and all sections of the state turned colorblind in search of registered voters who would trade votes for cash.[45]

In the late 1870's a new independent political movement, the Readjusters, swept men into state office pledged to end those corrupt practices. Since the Readjusters viewed the poll tax as a Bourbon scheme designed to keep wealthy Conservatives in power,[46] they introduced a constitutional amendment to repeal the tax as a prerequisite for voting. After passing two consecutive legislatures, in 1882 the voters of Virginia adopted it by a large majority.[47]

From 1882 to the end of the century there were no further changes in the suffrage requirements in Virginia, although the Democratic dominated state legislature continued throughout the period to try and circumscribe the franchise. In the 1890's the General Assembly considered three proposals to change the Constitution, but only one amendment passed both Houses. It called for

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[45]Chandler, History of Suffrage in Virginia, p. 70; and Snavely, Taxation of Negroes in Virginia, p. 19.

[46]Charles C. Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia (New Haven, 1917), p. 146; Nelson Morehouse Blake, William Mahone of Virginia (Richmond, 1935), pp. 210-213.

[47]Chandler, History of Suffrage in Virginia, pp. 70-71.

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a reimposition of the poll tax, but died, failing to carry either House the following year.[48] In 1896 the Virginia legislature passed a resolution directing a popular referendum on the issue of calling a new constitutional convention, ostensibly to disfranchise the blacks, yet once again the voters rejected it, 83,435 to 38,326.[49]

Four years later, in 1900, Virginia's voters finally approved a constitutional convention. Racism was in the air as white Virginians combined their attitudes on white supremacy with their knowledge of the Jim Crow systems in the deep south to legislate in the Constitutional Convention of 1901-02 the removal of the Negro from Virginia politics. Specifically, the new constitution stated that after January 1, 1904 all men registering to vote had to pay a poll tax of $1.50, and make a written application in the presence of the registrar stating one's personal, occupational, and past voting history. Furthermore after the first registration year the poll tax payment became retroactive for three previous years, which in reality meant that those blacks who did not have the cash for the first year or who were disqualified for reasons of education or an

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[48] Journal of the House of Delegates, 1897-98, p. 693.

[49] Chandler, History of Suffrage in Virginia, p. 72.

improper "understanding" of the new constitution had little chance of ever voting since the fees tripled in short order. In order to permit poor white men to vote a clause was inserted allowing "veterans" or "sons of veterans" to register prior to the 1904 cut-off date.[50]

Since blacks knew, through discussions in the press and in person, that the new constitution's proscriptive provisions were directed at them they did not even attempt to register in 1904. Also, both blacks and whites acknowledged that Virginia was a one party state with leaders committed to racism. For many blacks the purpose of registering to vote simply evaporated, so it is not surprising to find that the number of black registrants dropped significantly after 1904.[51]

With the approval of the Constitution of 1902 and the subsequent drawing up of new voter registration lists the liberal suffrage provisions of the Underwood Constitution of 1868 passed into history. In retrospect, those suffrage laws were very liberal since they defined

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[50]Ralph C. McDanel, The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902 (Baltimore, 1928), pp. 38, 39, 43, 45, 48, 49; Andrew Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics 1902-1965 (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1967), pp. 17-18.

[51]Ibid., Buni stated that the number of Negroes registered to vote declined from 147,000 to 21,000 after the first registration in October, 1902 (p. 24). County and city registrars were under an unwritten but expressed mandate from the Constitutional Convention delegates not to permit blacks to register.

citizenship broadly and extended the franchise to all adult males regardless of race, education, or economic class. At first there was no property qualification or tax-prepayment qualification, and in 1876, when the poll tax was imposed, politicians corrupted it so thoroughly that the voters repealed it in 1882. After 1884 Conservative white politicians made numerous other attempts to restrict the liberal suffrage provisions of the Constitution of 1868, but their efforts always fell short. Thus in 1900, as in 1868, the law granted the franchise to all male citizens of the state who were twenty-one years of age or older and a resident in the state for one year.

Registration

Eligible voters were always registered in the county or city of their residence, but not always by the same official, because politicians and political parties constantly tampered with the registration process to benefit their purposes. In the "white men only" period, 1865-67, the County Commissioner of Revenue made annual lists of eligible voters and submitted them to the Clerk of the County Court for permanent keeping. Ten days prior to the election the Clerk of the County Court corrected and sealed the lists and sent them to the election judges at the polling places.[52]

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[52] Code of Virginia, 1860, p. 78.

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In 1867 when Congress struck down the unreconstructed state governments and constitutions, new registration procedures were instituted. Congress directed the District Military Commanders to prepare registration lists which would include all citizens, especially the newly freed Negroes, and exclude anyone who served in the Confederacy and could not take an "iron clad" oath.[53] Three-man registration boards were set up and sent into the counties and cities to register qualified men. Generally a Union officer commanded these boards but men of many differing backgrounds, ex-Union officers, loyal Virginians, carpetbaggers, or Negroes, served as board members.[54] By October 1867 a total of 224,376 men had registered--121,271 white and 106,105 black.[55] General Schofield estimated that in the entire state the number of ex-Confederates disfranchised by the "iron clad"

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[53]McDonough, "James Schofield as Military Director of Reconstruction in Virginia," Civil War History, p. 242.

[54]Ibid., p. 243. Schofield wrote to his superiors in Washington that he had exhausted the supply of white loyal Virginians and he would have to use carpetbaggers on the boards. Very few Negroes served on these boards or as registrars.

[55]Ibid., p. 245. When the press complained about the large number of men being registered, Schofield had a study made comparing registration figures for one ward in Richmond with the tax roll. He found the tax rolls to be out of date and inaccurate, and his registration list correct.

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oath or who failed to register was approximately 19,000.[56]

On October 6, 1867 the new voters went to the polls to choose representatives for a state constitutional convention. In the election Radical Republicans won a majority of the seats, and subsequently the Radicals placed into the new constitution an "iron clad" provision similar to the one used by the military to exclude ex-Confederates from registering.[57] Specifically, the iron clad provision prevented registration of any executive, elective, or judicial official "who had engaged in insurrection against the United States."[58] This article, along with one other restricting officeholding to loyal citizens, was opposed by native white men who could still qualify to register. Since the registered whites constituted a majority of the electorate in the state, in the July 1869 election on the Underwood Constitution they were in a position to reject the proscriptive provisions on registration and officeholding. In a vote that was largely racial the "test oath" provision for registration of voters was defeated, although the main body of the

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[56]William A. Russ, "Registration and Disfranchisement under Radical Reconstruction," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXI (September, 1940), p. 178.

[57]Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, p. 6.

[58]Virginia Constitution, 1868, Article I, section 7.

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constitution won approval.[59]

After the Underwood Constitution went into effect, the General Assembly enacted laws setting up the election machinery. In each county and independent city registrars were directed by law to register all qualified voters on the second Tuesday in May between sunup and sundown.[60] But the lawmakers modified this rigid requirement considerably by amending the statute to read: "And the registrar shall, at any time previous to the regular day of registration register any voter who may apply to him to be registered."[61] In practice, registration in the Tidewater counties was not restrictive and most men, regardless of race, were on the registrar's books on election day.

By law the registrar could not register certain categories of men, lunatics, felons, or members of the U. S. armed forces.[62] The principle of restricting the franchise was included in the Underwood Constitution and expanded by state legislatures in later years. Thus in

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[59]Eckenrode, Virginia During the Reconstruction, pp. 124-125.

[60]Code of Virginia, 1873, p. 149.

[61]Ibid., pp. 149-150.

[62]Ibid., p. 148.

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1873 when the Conservatives came to power, they added petty larceny to the list of disqualifications for registering.[63] The poll tax was tied to voting and not registration during its brief lifetime.

With the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment another group of Virginians, white ex-Confederates, had their civil rights circumscribed. In 1870, the Fourteenth Amendment became law and certain ex-Confederates lost their right to hold federal or state office, whether elective or appointive.[64] Virginians, especially the press, were severely critical of this amendment with its proscriptive provision, although the number of men affected was not large. The Ninth Census (1870) enumerated the number of ex-Confederates disfranchised for each city and county in the state; and the total, 2,562, was less than 1 per cent of the eligible electorate.[65] In the Tidewater counties the number disfranchised ranged from a low of one man in Accomack County

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[63] J. A. Brenaman, A History of Virginia Conventions, p. 109. Some historians have insisted this provision was anti-Negro in its purpose. See Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, p. 13; Key, Southern Politics, p. 536. Both men attribute part of the decline in Negro voting in the late 1870's to this amendment.

[64] U. S. Constitution, Amendment XIV, sec. 3.

[65] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, p. 637. In Virginia 2,562 men were disfranchised out of a total adult male population of 266,680.

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to 87 in Norfolk County.[66] Consequently, within the Tidewater region those disfranchised ex-Confederates never constituted even a significant minority of the white electorate in any county (See Appendix, Table 27). And by 1872 Congress, following steps prescribed in the Amendment, had restored the full franchise to almost all ex-Confederates. After that year only 750 high ranking elective and appointive ex-Confederates still remained under the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment; and the rights of those men were restored individually by special acts of Congress until universal amnesty came in 1896.[67]

Intimidation of eligible citizens, black or white, in the registration process was not a serious problem in Virginia. A student of Klu Klux Klan activity during Reconstruction, Stanley F. Horn, concluded that "in Virginia the Klan does not seem to have been active at all."[68] A more recent study, White Terror by Allen W. Trelease, uncovered some Klan activity in Virginia in March and April 1868, but none after that

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[66] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, p. 631. See Appendix, Table 27 for a county by county breakdown of the number of men over twenty-one eligible to vote in comparison with the number of men disfranchised by the Fourteenth Amendment.

[67] Dorris, Pardon and Amnesty under Lincoln and Johnson, pp. 362-389.

[68] Stanley F. Horn, The Invisible Empire (Boston, 1939), p. 281.

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date. Like Horn, Trelease concluded that in Virginia the Klan died "stillborn."[69] In Virginia the press discouraged such activity and with Major General John M. Schofield, a strong military governor enforcing law and order, the Klan never reappeared. After Reconstruction had formally ended election fraud, not intimidation, was the greatest problem Virginia black voters faced.

Prior to the General Assembly of 1884 local county officials, sheriff, county clerk, registrars, judges, and the commissioners of elections, shared responsiblity in conducting elections. In carrying out their respective duties county officials received little or no interference or influence from the state officials from 1869 to 1884. Then the General Assembly of 1884, controlled by Conservative-Democrats, rewrote the election laws and placed control of the election machinery into new hands.[70] An electoral board, consisting of three qualified voters of each county selected by the General Assembly for four year terms, was created to supervise and conduct

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[69]Allen F. Trelease, White Terror (New York, 1971), pp. 65-68, 185.

[70]Moger, "Origin of Democratic Machine in Virginia," Journal of Southern History, VIII (May, 1942), p. 207. As the title suggests Moger finds the first gleanings of the Democratic machine in this electoral law. This thesis is tested in Chapters four and five from the election returns.

elections.[71] Each county and city had an electoral board which had the power to appoint all registrars, judges, and election commissioners; and, with General Assembly approval, the power to order new registrations of voters. The latter power was potentially the most significant for if a county board wanted to eliminate voters, specifically black men, from its registration lists a new registration provided an excellent opportunity to conduct such a purge. Yet, in the Tidewater counties electoral boards seemed not to have abused the power, for in county after county when the General Assembly authorized a reregistration and updating of the books, subsequent elections produced large voter turnouts, often larger than previously. For example, in 1884 the city of Norfolk was authorized to set up new registration books and to purge from the old lists men who had died or left the city.[72] In the presidential election of 1888, 5,136 men voted out of a total of 9,767 men residing in the city, a turnout of 60 per cent of the electorate[73] and a higher percentage than in 1884 prior to the reregistration.

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[71] Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1808-1936, pp. 146-151.

[72] Virginia Senate Journal and Documents, 1883-84 (Richmond, 1883), pp. 36, 84-86, 112, 145, 166.

[73] Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, p. 766. W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892 (Baltimore, 1956), p. 841.

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From 1884, the year the electoral boards took control, until the adoption of the new state constitution in 1902 the legislature enacted no substantive changes in the registration process. Although fewer men voted in state and local elections in the late 1890's there is no evidence to show any concerted effort to exclude citizens from registering to vote.[74]

Unfortunately, there are no registration records extant prior to 1902,[75] but evidence is available from other sources, returns from the elections, testimony from investigations of fraudulent elections, and observations of contemporaries, to permit certain judgements about the number and kind of men who registered during this period. The most conclusive evidence comes from the election returns themselves, for if most men went to the polls and voted, then certainly those men's names were on

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[74]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, p. 53, reports one instance of a Democratic county chairman having the registrar question closely blacks attempting to register, but this evidence is drawn from a county in the Valley of Virginia and not the Tidewater. Also, no indication in this evidence is present to indicate the blacks did not register in that county.

[75]Constitution of Virginia, 1902, Registration Ordinance of the Constitutional Convention, sections 3, 4. The convention authorized the county clerk to destroy the old registration books, and apparently they complied, for I could find none present in the courthouses of the Tidewater counties and cities.

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the missing registration books. The following chapters examine the results of federal, state, and local elections in the twenty-seven counties and two cities of the Tidewater region from the standpoint of registration, election conduct, and discrimination.

CHAPTER IV

THE TIDEWATER ELECTORATE IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS: VOTER PARTICIPATION AND PARTY ALIGNMENT

Central to any interpretation of Reconstruction in the southern states are questions of voting rights and voter participation. To what extent were voting rights proscribed by the arbitrary action of state or local election officials on election day? Was intimidation of black voters in Virginia as pervasive as in other ex-Confederate states? Did sufficient men vote in Tidewater's twenty-seven counties and two cities to maintain a two party system during Reconstruction? And if a competitive two party system did exist, when and how did politics reach the point of developing into a one party state? Also, did white Bourbon politicians rely on the Negro's vote in return for patronage and protection?

Answers to these questions about Reconstruction have come from the works of three distinct groups of historians, traditionalists, revisionists, and Woodwardians.[1] Each of the historical schools contains a

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[1]Traditionalists: William A. Dunning, Essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction and Related Topics (New York, 1898); and Reconstruction Political and Economic, 1865-1877 (New York, 1907); H. J. Eckenrode, The Political

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broad regional or national interpretation, through which historians of Virginia have viewed events in the Reconstruction years.

Traditionalist historians of the South and Virginia began by assuming that political control meant racial dominance. Victory by the Radical Republicans represented more than a changing of the political guard; it was a moral wrong against a superior race of "civilized" peoples. Conversely, Democratic or Conservative election victories brought forth accolades on the merits of enlightened government, the restoration of justice, and praise for the capable, true leadership of the white Bourbon politicians. The traditionalists saw white supremacy as a necessary ingredient for good government and it became the central theme in Southern race relations during Reconstruction. State and local histories, including Virginia's, became chronicles of the path from sordid black Republican Radicalism to enlightened, good, Democratic government. Furthermore, traditionalists depicted blacks as lazy, shiftless,

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History of Virginia during the Reconstruction (Baltimore, 1904). Revisionists: Francis B. Simkins, "New Viewpoints on Southern Reconstruction," Journal of Southern History, V (February, 1939), pp. 49-62; Jack P. Maddex, Jr., The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879 (Chapel Hill, 1970). Woodward School: C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge, 1951), and The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York, 1955); Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902 (Charlottesville, 1961).

ignorant men who blindly followed both carpetbaggers and scalawags to the polls to elect Radical Republicans to national, state, and local offices. Virginia's traditionalist historian, Hamilton J. Eckenrode, entitled his final chapter "The Restoration of Virginia," and therein described the native whites' triumph in July 1889 over "political subjugation" and the ideas of "racial equality."[2]

Revision of the traditionalist interpretation began with an intensive investigation of national politics under Andrew Johnson,[3] and then moved ahead in a series of regional and state monographs.[4] The Negro, his behavior and treatment, became the central theme although there was an almost complete reversal in characterization as blacks became noble, hardworking, law abiding, loyal citizens and native whites were the uneducated, lawless, ruthless men who could not escape the deadening system of

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[2]Hamilton J. Eckenrode, The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction (Baltimore, 1904), pp. 104, 127.

[3]Howard K. Beale, "On Rewriting Reconstruction History," American Historical Review, XLV (1940), pp. 807-827; Francis B. Simkins, "New Viewpoints on Southern Reconstruction," Journal of Southern History, V (1939), pp. 49-61; T. Harry Williams, "An Analysis of Some Reconstruction Attitudes," Journal of Southern History, XII (1946), pp. 469-486.

[4]Thomas B. Alexander, Political Reconstruction in Tennessee (Nashville, 1950); Vernon L. Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi, 1865-1890 (Chapel Hill, 1947); John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction after the Civil War (Chicago, 1961).

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white racism.[5] Furthermore, the Revisionists looked past Radical Reconstruction to the period after 1877 when President Hayes removed the remaining federal troops garrisoned in the south permitting the native whites to prevail, and to institute later the Jim Crow system of segregation.

In the 1950's another thesis appeared in the works of C. Vann Woodward.[6] Writing in Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 and The Strange Career of Jim Crow, Woodward did not find southern society rigidly segregated between 1870 and 1890's. Both blacks and whites had the right to vote, and they exercised their franchise rights frequently. Also Negroes held elective office at the state and national level, received appointments to patronage positions, and in general participated without discrimination in a large number of civil activities. According to Woodward, it was not until the 1890's that Jim Crow became a Southern institution. Then a series of

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[5]In addition to the Wharton book above, see Joel Williamson, After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction (Chapel Hill, 1965); Joe M. Richardson, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877 (Tallahasse, 1965); Jack P. Maddex, Jr., The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879 (Chapel Hill, 1970). An older but valuable work is A. A. Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia (Washington, D. C., 1926).

[6]C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge, 1951); The Strange Career of Jim Crow, 3 rev. ed. (New York, 1967).

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events caused the South's "capitulation to racism." Woodward felt that three parallel developments hastened the process: the implementation of the Mississippi Plan, the failure of the Federal government including the Supreme Court to protect black voters, and the failure of the Southern Populists to unify poor whites and poor blacks into a new political movement. Moreover, the threat of Populism in the 1890's caused many southern Democratic party leaders to advocate outright disfranchisement of the Negro and to call for the enactment of their white supremacy mores into law. By 1910, Woodward felt that the South had gone from a twenty-five year period of paternalism in race relations into a period of capitulation to Jim Crow racism and white supremacy doctrines.

For Virginia, Charles E. Wynes, in Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, found Woodward's interpretation of a fluid southern society "essentially sound," although "confusion and inconsistency" rather than Bourbon paternalism was the reason why Virginians failed to enact a Jim Crow system earlier than the first decade of the twentieth century.[7] Wynes emphasized that Virginia's Negroes experienced social progress between 1870 and 1902 since they could ride the trains unsegregated, eat in

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[7] Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902 (Charlottesville, 1961), p. 149.

most restaurants and hotels, drink in many bars, and attend theaters and other places of amusement without meeting a wall of Jim Crow discrimination.[8] But social progress did not mean political progress, and Wynes disagreed with Woodward on the timing of the disfranchisement movement in Virginia.[9] Instead of Woodward's interpretation that the South capitulated to racism in the last decade of the nineteenth century or the first decade of the twentieth century, Wynes cited two periods 1873-1878, and 1884-1902 when the Virginia Negro lost his right to vote. In those years politicians of both parties, Republican and Democratic, used, abused, and literally "drove the Negro from the polls" in order to keep the stakes of power for themselves.[10]

Support for Wynes' position on Negro disfranchisement comes from recent state histories by Allen Moger, David Pulley, and Andrew Buni.[11] Those historians cited, as Wynes did, three proscriptive state constitutional

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[8]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, p. 149.

[9]Ibid., p. 148.

[10]Ibid., p. 149.

[11]Allen Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1926 (Charlottesville, 1968); Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored 1870-1930 (Charlottesville, 1968); Andrew Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1902-1965 (Charlottesville, 1967).

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amendments: the poll tax (1876), the inclusion of petty larceny as a bar to voting (1876), and the return to voice voting (1876), as evidence of legal attack on the Negro's franchise.[12] As proof of the effectiveness of the constitutional amendments the 1877 gubernatorial election is singled out because the Democratic candidate won without opposition, and his vote total was half the normal turnout. In Wynes' second disfranchising phase, 1884-1902, a reconstituted state Democratic party took control of the county electoral boards (1884) and through fraudulent methods, duplicate ballots, tissue ballots, mislabled ballots, and miscounting of the results, secured Democratic victories in all subsequent elections.[13] Fraud became so pervasive that its elimination became a major reason for convening in 1901 a constitutional convention to revise the Underwood Constitution of 1868.[14] The new constitution disfranchised the Negro, the victim of the fraudulent elections, and kept the electoral boards, the cause of the corruption. Since each of those three historians supported Wynes, his thesis has become the

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[12]Buni, Negro in Virginia Politics, p. 3.

[13]Ibid., p. 7; Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, pp. 44-45.

[14]Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, pp. 66-67; Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 182-184; Buni, Negro in Virginia Politics, pp. 11, 12, 13.

accepted interpretation for Reconstruction in Virginia.[15]

V. O. Key, Jr. in Southern Politics provided one other broad interpretation of the post-war South.[16] He explained the voting behavior of southern electorates in the twentieth century by projecting his studies back into the nineteenth century. There he found a two-phased disfranchisement movement against the Negro voter. In the first phase, 1865-1877, native whites regained control of southern state governments and proceeded to legislate, as Virginians did restrictive electoral qualifications and voting requirements, such as the poll tax, in order to discourage blacks from voting. To those lawful measures, Key added the exodus of white Republican leaders from the south, intimidation by native whites, and Negro apathy at the polls, particularly after Grant's election in 1872.[17] Key concluded from his studies of voter participation that by the end of Radical Reconstruction in 1877 the Negro had been effectively disfranchised; and that the second phase of disfranchisement, the state constitutions of the 1890's, was only a legalization of the fait accompli prior to 1877.[18]

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[15] A newer work by Virginius Dabney, Virginia: The New Dominion (New York, 1971) is essentially a derivative work taken from the works of the scholars above.

[16] V. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics (New York, 1949), Chapter 25.

[17] Ibid., p. 536.

[18] Ibid., p. 539.

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The Tidewater region, with its twenty-seven counties and three independent cities, had within its electorate many characteristics, a racial composition ranging from 35 per cent to 70 per cent black, a rural population slowly migrating into the cities, a semi-literate population, and predominantly agrarian population, that make it an excellent testing ground for the above interpretations. Did the region experience V. O. Key's two-phase disfranchisement? How did the Conservative-sponsored constitutional amendments in 1876 affect the size of the Tidewater electorate? Also, can one use the Woodward thesis as a generalization for the racial history of a specialized section of one state? And, if voter participation was low in a specific election, for governor, congressman, or president, was it possible that factors other than racial discrimination accounted for the trend? Finally, how did the voting record of the Tidewater electorate compare with other states in the Union, South and North?

In analyzing Tidewater election returns for the years 1865-1900 the single most important characteristic was the racial composition of the electorate (Table 13). In 1870 blacks outnumbered whites in 19 of 27 Tidewater counties, although whites were more numerous in the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth. Since men generally voted by race, blacks for the Republican or Readjuster parties, and whites with the Conservative, and later Democratic party, the racial breakdown of a county or city often was a key

TABLE 13

RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE TIDEWATER ELECTORATE 1870-1900[19]

1870 % Black[a]	1880 % Black[b]	1890 % Black[c]	1900 % Black[d]

TABLE 13

RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE TIDEWATER ELECTORATE 1870-1900[19]

	1870 % Black[a] of Total Pop.	1880 % Black[b] of Total Pop.	1890 % Black[c] in Electorate	1900 % Black[d] in Electorate
State:				
Virginia	41%	40%	35%	32%
Counties:				
Accomack	38%	38%	31%	31%
Charles City	63%	68%	67%	65%
Elizabeth City	66%	61%	56%	30%*
Essex	67%	69%	59%	59%
Gloucester	53%	55%	50%	52%
Isle of Wight	58%	43%	44%	45%
James City	55%	59%	52%	62%

[19][a] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 69-70. Percentages calculated.

[b] Tenth Census: 1880, I, Population, pp. 412-413. Percentages calculated.

[c] Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, pp. 806-807. Percentages calculated.

[d] Twelfth Census: 1900, I, Population, pp. 1,003-1,004. Percentages calculated.

*In the 1890's the city of Newport News was founded in Elizabeth City

TABLE 13 (continued)

1870 % Black of Total Pop.	1880 % Black of Total Pop.	1890 % Black in Electorate	1900 % Black in Electorate

TABLE 13 (continued)

	1870 % Black of Total Pop.	1880 % Black of Total Pop.	1890 % Black in Electorate	1900 % Black in Electorate
King & Queen	56%	58%	48%	49%
King George	49%	51%	39%	44%
King William	59%	62%	55%	52%
Lancaster	59%	57%	49%	50%
Mathews	34%	33%	23%	26%
Middlesex	51%	58%	52%	51%
Nansemond	48%	51%	53%	53%
New Kent	53%	59%	59%	60%
Norfolk	48%	50%	48%	60%
Northampton	60%	58%	48%	49%
Northumberland	44%	44%	33%	35%
Prince George	65%	68%	62%	57%
Princess Anne	47%	45%	41%	47%
Richmond	46%	47%	40%	37%
Southampton	55%	59%	54%	55%
Surry	57%	62%	58%	57%
Sussex	62%	67%	64%	61%
Warwick	62%	65%	58%	77%
Westmoreland	54%	58%	48%	49%
York	65%	61%	58%	52%

County. The city was an industrial center which grew rapidly and attracted many workers, predominantly white, into the county. Thus, the statistical drop in black to white population.

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index in predicting success in any election. Indeed, one litmus test on voter participation is the ratio of Republican county victories to the number of counties with black majorities. Since cross-over voting was minimal, intimidation and coercion apparently not practiced, and election fraud only a problem in the 1890's, analysis of voting returns can provide a quantitative answer to questions about democracy during Reconstruction in the Tidewater counties.

Political parties in Virginia often sought to identify with a racial group within the population. During Reconstruction the Virginia Republican Party was considered the party of the black man since its primary constituency was black, many of its leaders were blacks, and its policy of supporting Radical Reconstruction primarily appealed to the black electorate.[20] Conversely, the Conservative Party insisted that it was for "white men only" and castigated whites in the Republican party as renegades.[21] Yet a few white party leaders did encourage blacks to vote Democratic in national elections

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[20]Richard G. Lowe, "The Republican Party in Virginia 1856-1870" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1968), p. 327. Lowe stated that some white Radical Republican leaders "tried to shed the mantle of Black Republicanism" but were unsuccessful in the end.

[21]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, pp. 4-5, 8, 11.

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and Conservative in state elections,[22] but their appeals fell on deaf ears, particularly when the Conservative platform continued to advocate white supremacy. Also the white conservatives' past association with the ardent defense of slavery before the Civil War caused many blacks to reject Conservative overtures.[23] After the 1876 presidential election the state Republican party collapsed from within and political lines became blurred with only one party, the Conservatives, functioning in the state.

In place of the defunct Republican party a new protest party, the Readjuster party, emerged in 1879.[24] In power between 1879-1884 the Readjusters were led by an able group of western farmers and eastern politicians opposed to the Conservatives. Throughout Virginia blacks supported Readjuster candidates at the polls, and in the Tidewater black voters were largely responsible for the party's success.[25] After 1882 the state Republican Party

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[22]Maddex, The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879, pp. 79-85, 195-196.

[23]This conclusion is based on my analysis of party voting totals in the election returns when compared with the racial composition of the counties. I find little deviation from the number of blacks in a county and the total vote for the Republicans. Jack P. Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879 disagrees and bases his conclusions on evidence taken from manuscript collections (pp. 195-196).

[24]Charles C. Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia (New Haven, 1917), is the standard interpretation.

[25]Ibid., pp. 130, 138, 173.

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was reconstituted through the activities of ex-Confederate General William Mahone and it became a serious threat to the Democrats in state and national elections throughout the 1880's.[26] After Mahone was defeated in the 1889 gubernatorial race, he returned to private life, and the Republican party returned to impotency.[27] But another opposition party, the Peoples Party, rose in Virginia running a candidate for governor in 1893.[28] The Peoples Party after limited success in state elections suffered a crushing blow in the presidential election of 1896 when the Democratic Party absorbed key aspects of their platform and captured their constituency.[29] After 1896 Virginia was a one party state, both in national and state elections.[30] Yet, the record is clear that in

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[26]Nelson M. Blake, William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond, 1935), Chapter IX.

[27]Ibid., pp. 251-254.

[28]William D. Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion (Princeton, New Jersey, 1935) is the standard interpretation of Populism in Virginia.

[29]William C. Woolridge, "The Sound and Fury of 1896, Virginia Democrats Face Free Silver," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 75 (January, 1967), pp. 97-108.

[30]Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 has become the accepted synthesis on this period. Virginius Dabney, Virginia: The New Dominion (New York, 1971) relies heavily on secondary sources for its synthesis of the period.

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Virginia an opposition or alternative political party existed to oppose the dominant Conservative-Democratic party for almost twenty years after Reconstruction formally ended in 1877.

If the record shows that a series of opposition parties survived in Virginia, then it is equally clear that the Conservative-Democratic Party dominated state and national elections. Between 1872 and 1900,[31] Virginia went Democratic in every presidential election, except the one in 1872 when the Democratic nominee Horace Greeley was rejected by many of Virginia's white voters.[32] In state elections Conservatives controlled the governorship for twenty-four of the thirty-two years between 1869 and 1901, losing only in 1869 and 1881.[33] With those two exceptions the Conservative-Democrats dominated state politics, and their election successes were transformed into political power as all appointments, judgeships, and election boards were controlled by that party.

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[31]Virginia had no legitimate state government in 1868, so no election was conducted for president in Virginia in 1868.

[32]Maddex, Virginia Conservatives 1867-1879, pp. 133-134.

[33]In 1869 a moderate Republican Gilbert C. Walker was elected as Virginia's first Reconstruction Governor. Then in 1881, an insurgent Readjuster Party saw its gubernatorial candidate, William E. Cameron, defeat John W. Daniel, the Conservative candidate.

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Between 1869 and 1900 Tidewater voters had many opportunities to vote in federal, state, and local elections. There were eight presidential elections, fifteen congressional elections, eight state-wide elections for governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general, and five state-wide referendums on constitutional amendments. In addition local elections for county or city officials, mayor, sheriff, county clerk, supervisor, constable, treasurer, and others, occurred frequently at regular intervals in the period. The extent of voter participation along with the results of party control produced a distinct pattern of political involvement resembling that of the midwest or north rather than the states of the lower south.

Federal Elections

During the first two presidential elections after the close of the Civil War Virginia experienced the pressures of Reconstruction. In 1868 the state could not participate in the election for President because it was under the provisions of the Reconstruction Acts and no valid, loyal civilian government existed. But by 1872 Virginia had returned to the Union, and the presidential campaign between U. S. Grant, Republican, and Horace Greeley, Liberal Republican and Democrat, saw a vigorous competitive two party system in operation throughout the state. Grant defeated Greeley, although the total vote was

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small, only 184,853, in comparison with the 220,739 polled in the gubernatorial campaign of 1869.[34] Why the reduction of almost 36,000 votes? Apparently many white voters refused to go to the polls because of their distaste for Horace Greeley, an old anti-slaveryite.[35] The returns show a decrease in the Conservative vote, not an increase in the Republican vote. So the Republicans were victorious in Virginia in 1872 not through nefarious means such as intimidation, coercion or fraud, but because of the stubborness of many white Democrats on election day.

Yet neither the 1868 nor the 1872 presidential contests represented the norm in postwar elections. Pre-war feelings and disgust with Congressional Reconstruction policies highlighted the presidential election of 1872 to the extent that many white men refused to participate in politics. The gubernatorial election of 1873, won by James L. Kemper, a native son, ex-planter, and ex-Confederate General brought the Conservatives back into

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[34] Richmond Daily Whig, November 19, 1872. Throughout the Tidewater vote was down but the decrease was biracial and bipartisan as both white Conservative counties and black Republican counties recorded fewer votes.

[35] Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, 1869-1879, p. 134. The editor of the Richmond Whig, Colonel Robert B. Withers wrote, "I thought . . . that we could carry the State, as I did not suppose 35 or 40,000 Conservatives would stay home," cited in Maddex (p. 134).

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politics with gusto.[36] After 1873 the Conservatives led by Governor Kemper participated in the national Democratic Party with enthusiasm.

The returns for the presidential election of 1876 established a pattern for the state and its Tidewater counties which continued into the decade of the 1890's (See Tables 14, 15, 16, 17 for the votes in presidential elections of 1876, 1880, 1888, 1896). In those presidential elections and the others, 1884, 1892, 1900, Virginia Democrats were victorious at the state level, but the Republicans consistently carried the Tidewater counties and cities. While the state election results frustrated Virginia's Republicans, within the Tidewater the party continued to hold its constituency and periodically elected its candidates to Congress.

The presidential election of 1876 was eagerly awaited by Virginia and Southern Democrats. The national Democratic party had won control of the House of Representatives in 1874, and the succeeding two years brought Republican incompetence and the nation's economic depression into sharper focus.[37] The national Democratic

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[36]Robert R. Jones, "Conservative Virginia: The Post-War Career of James Lawson Kemper" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1964), Chapter 8.

[37]Stanley P. Hirshson, Farwell to the Bloody Shirt (Bloomington, Indiana, 1962), pp. 22-23.

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Party nominated Samuel J. Tilden, a hard moneyman from New York State; and Virginia's Democrats, although inflationists, worked hard for him throughout the state.[38] Republican efforts, while energetic in a few counties, suffered from a depravity of leadership at the state level, and when the returns were tabulated, Tilden emerged the victor in Virginia by over 45,000 votes.[39]

A comparison of the presidential elections of 1872 with 1876 shows the Democrats progressing from a defeat by 3,000 votes to a victory by more than 45,000 votes. Did Virginia Democrats owe their victory to terroristic tactics on election day similar to those practiced in Mississippi, South Carolina and other states of the Deep South?[40] Or did the state Democrats rely on fraud and economic coercion to keep blacks from voting Republican in 1876?[41] The returns from the twenty-seven Tidewater counties for the 1876 presidential election

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[38]Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879, pp. 137-138.

[39]W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots 1836-1892 (Baltimore, 1955), p. 817. In Virginia the Democrat Tilden received 141,225 votes to the Republican Hayes' 95,764.

[40]John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction After the Civil War (Chicago, 1961), p. 211.

[41]Rembert Patrick, The Reconstruction of the Nation, p. 261.

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provide new evidence to answer the above questions (Table 14).

Throughout the Tidewater counties and cities men went to the polls in large numbers. Seven of every ten eligible voters cast a ballot that November day in 1876, a turnout which compared favorably with other sections of Virginia, but which exceeded the percentage of participation in such states as Massachusetts, California, Missouri, and Georgia.[42] Counties with large black populations, Charles City, Essex, Lancaster, and New Kent, experienced heavy voter turnouts (average 82 per cent); yet so did several counties with predominantly white populations, Accomac, Mathews, and Princess Anne counties. Voting in urban areas like Norfolk County exceeded 70 per cent of the eligible voters, but men in the more isolated rural counties went to the polls at a similar rate or better. Also, counties with a high ratio of farm owners to tenants or to laborers, like Gloucester and Mathews counties, experienced heavy voter turnouts, but so did those counties that had many black laborers, tenants, and few farm owners. Education, or lack of it, did not seem to be a factor in keeping men from the polls. Indeed, when all of the analytic comparisons are in, the

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[42]See Table 18, pp. 145-146, for a comparison of Tidewater and Virginia voting percentages with other states in the nation from the south, midwest, and north.

TABLE 14

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1876, VOTER PARTICIPATION IN TIDEWATER COUNTIES

	Total Pop.	Male Pop.	Total Vote	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious[d]

TABLE 14

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1876, VOTER PARTICIPATION IN TIDEWATER COUNTIES

	Total Pop. (1880)[a]	Male Pop. (1880)[b]	Total Vote Recorded[c]	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious[d]
State:					
Virginia	1,512,565	334,504	236,989	71%	D
Counties:					
Accomack	24,408	5,487	3,691	67%	D
Charles City	5,512	1,224	1,051	86%	R
Elizabeth City	10,689	3,284	1,758	54%	R
Essex	11,032	2,168	1,651	76%	R
Gloucester	10,211	2,643	2,020	76%	D
Isle of Wight	10,572	2,516	2,144	85%	D
James City	5,422	1,355	667	49%	R
King & Queen	10,502	2,090	1,673	78%	R
King George	6,397	1,371	1,070	78%	D
King William	8,751	1,920	1,386	72%	R

[a] Tenth Census: 1880, I, Population, pp. 82-83.

[b] Ibid., p. 665.

[c] W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892, pp. 816-843.

[d] Ibid., pp. 223-224.

TABLE 14 (Continued)

Total Pop. (1880)	Male Pop. (1880)	Total Vote Recorded	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious

TABLE 14 (Continued)

	Total Pop. (1880)	Male Pop. (1880)	Total Vote Recorded	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious
Lancaster	6,160	1,322	1,139	86%	R
Mathews	7,501	1,710	1,063	62%	D
Middlesex	6,252	1,335	1,137	85%	R
Nansemond	15,903	3,802	2,808	74%	D
New Kent	5,515	1,295	1,010	78%	R
Norfolk	58,657	15,141	10,675	71%	R
Northampton	9,152	2,125	1,705	80%	R
Northumberland	7,929	1,777	887	50%	D
Prince George	10,054	2,431	1,328	55%	R
Princess Anne	9,394	2,305	1,886	82%	D
Richmond	7,195	1,545	1,082	70%	R
Southampton	18,012	3,915	3,168	81%	D
Surry	7,391	2,040	1,232	60%	D
Sussex	10,052	2,323	1,855	80%	R
Warwick	2,258	589	444	75%	R
Westmoreland	8,846	1,842	1,279	69%	R
York	7,349	1,651	1,357	82%	R

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fact remains that in Tidewater Virginia in 1876 over 70 per cent of the adult male population voted for president.[43]

Since the disputed election of 1876 is often cited as the end of Reconstruction and the return to the solid south, the record of the Tidewater electorate in the 1876 election possibly was atypical. Tidewater men voted in large numbers, participation was biracial, and apparently the black man's voting rights were not restricted by fraud or intimidation. Moreover, the percentage of voter participation in the Tidewater counties compared favorably with that of Virginia as a whole, and with that of other states in different regions of the country.

Prior to the election, in October 1876, rumors of a black uprising spread among whites in many sections of the state.[44] Local officials and some militia officers sent to Richmond for additional arms, but

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[43]Registration books which contained the exact number of the total electorate in each precinct and county were destroyed at some time between 1902-1904. Then, a new general registration was ordered, and the old records destroyed. For that reason the census returns for 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900, which enumerated the number of males over twenty-one for each county and city in the nation, were used to establish a base figure.

[44]Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879, p. 192.

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Governor Kemper refused the requests.[45] Nevertheless the rumor was grist for possible intimidation or fraud by white Conservatives on election day. While it is impossible to state categorically that Tidewater voters did not receive threats or suffer some subtle form of intimidation, it is improbable from the evidence within the election returns. Voter participation was consistently high in all of the Tidewater counties which indicates that intimidation, if attempted, was unsuccessful. Four counties, Elizabeth City, James City, Northumberland, and Prince George, had a reduced turnout of below 60 per cent of the potential electorate, a fact which might signal some intimidation or coercion, except that three of the counties went Republican in 1876.[46] Indeed the Republican Party, a party whose constituency by 1876 was almost entirely black, won seventeen of the twenty-seven Tidewater counties in 1876. According to the Ninth Census (1870) blacks outnumbered whites in eighteen of twenty-seven Tidewater counties, a figure which closely correlated with the results of the election, and incidentally, provides additional evidence against intimidation.

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[45] Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879, p. 192. Governor Kemper discounted the rumor and pointed out to the white militia leaders that additional arms just prior to the election might produce federal intervention or inspire Negro violence.

[46] Those counties were Elizabeth City, James City, and Prince George.

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Charges of fraud by election officials were published in the newspapers,[47] but it is doubtful that fraud was very extensive, if it existed at all. For example, three counties in the Tidewater, Middlesex, Surry, and Westmoreland, recorded extremely close votes, so close that in one county less than eleven votes separated the two parties. If election officials, who generally were white and from the Conservative Party, acted fraudulently, then the Democrats should have won those three Tidewater counties. But they did not: two of the three went Republican: Middlesex by eleven votes (574-563) and Westmoreland by thirty-nine votes (659-620).[48]

In 1880 the Republican presidential nominee, James A. Garfield, had to run in Virginia against two slates of electors, one Democratic and the other Readjuster, both pledged to Winfield Scott Hancock, the candidate of the Democratic Party. Apparently the Readjuster party, composed of native white insurgents who were primarily interested in refunding the state debt and ousting the Conservatives from power in state politics, chose separate electors to show its constituency's strength

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[47] Richmond Whig, November 8, 9, 10, 1876; Norfolk Landmark, November 8, 1876. Often the press published unsubstantiated rumors just after the election.

[48] Richmond Whig, November 20, 1876. The Whig published official election returns as compiled and certified by the State Board of Canvassers.

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to the leaders of the Democratic Party.[49] But the ploy failed as most white voters in Virginia cast their ballots for the Democratic ticket of Hancock and English, who carried the state easily. Throughout the state fewer men went to the polls in 1880 than in 1876; still, based on the Tenth Census (1880), sixty percent of all men over twenty-one in Virginia cast ballots in 1880.[50]

Within the Tidewater region the 1880 presidential election saw a continuation of many trends established in 1876 (Table 15). Not only did sustained voter participation continue, but black voters united to a greater degree and succeeded in winning Republican majorities in four additional counties. When added to the seventeen counties the Republicans won in 1876, that party's victory total of twenty-one of the twenty-seven counties in the Tidewater provides powerful evidence against the ideas that black voters became apathetic and lethargic after Reconstruction ended in 1877. For example, Essex County had the highest percentage of blacks of any Tidewater County, yet 77 per cent of all adult males residing in Essex in 1880 went to the polls on election day. Other predominantly black counties experienced voter turnouts equally as large: King William 62 per cent black, 77 per cent voted; Lancaster 57 per cent black, 87 per cent

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[49]Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia, pp. 136-138.

[50]Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892, p. 817. Garfield received 83,634 to 96,594 Democrats for Hancock and 32,053 Readjusters for Hancock.

TABLE 15

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1880, VOTER PARTICIPATION IN TIDEWATER COUNTIES

TABLE 15

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1880, VOTER PARTICIPATION IN TIDEWATER COUNTIES

	Total Pop. (1880)[a]	Total Adult Male Pop. (1880)[b]	Total Vote Recorded[c]	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious[d]
State:					
Virginia	1,512,565	334,505	212,281	60%	D
Counties:					
Accomack	24,408	5,487	3,353	61%	D
Charles City	5,512	1,224	795	65%	R*
Elizabeth City	10,689	3,284	1,660	51%	R*
Essex	11,032	2,168	1,663	77%	R*
Gloucester	10,211	2,643	1,630	62%	R*
Isle of Wight	10,572	2,516	1,940	77%	D
James City	5,422	1,355	599	44%	R*

[a] Tenth Census: 1880, I, Population, pp. 82, 83.

[b] Ibid., p. 665.

[c] Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892, pp. 816-843.

[d] Ibid., pp. 223-224.

*Counties with over 50% black population.

TABLE 15 (continued)

Total Pop. (1880)	Total Adult Male Pop. (1880)	Total Vote Recorded	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious

TABLE 15 (continued)

	Total Pop. (1880)	Total Adult Male Pop. (1880)	Total Vote Recorded	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious
King & Queen	10,502	2,090	1,406	67%	D*
King George	6,397	1,371	1,016	74%	R*
King William	8,751	1,920	1,469	77%	R*
Lancaster	6,160	1,322	1,149	87%	R*
Mathews	7,501	1,710	1,044	61%	D
Middlesex	6,252	1,335	1,126	84%	R*
Nansemond	15,903	3,802	2,038	54%	R*
New Kent	5,515	1,295	792	61%	R*
Norfolk	58,657	15,141	9,337	62%	R*
Northampton	9,152	2,125	1,716	81%	R*
Northumberland	7,929	1,777	1,295	73%	D
Prince George	10,054	2,431	1,406	58%	R*
Princess Anne	9,394	2,305	1,499	65%	D
Richmond	7,195	1,545	1,183	76%	R
Southampton	18,012	3,915	3,292	84%	R*
Surry	7,391	2,040	1,157	57%	R*
Sussex	10,062	2,323	1,881	81%	R*
Warwick	2,258	589	423	72%	R*
Westmoreland	8,846	1,842	1,186	64%	R*
York	7,349	1,651	1,154	70%	R*

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voted; Middlesex 58 per cent black, 84 per cent voted; Southampton 59 per cent black, 84 per cent voted. Clearly, voting percentages such as those above indicate that blacks in Tidewater Virginia did not suffer intimidation, coercion or apathy after the "end" of Reconstruction in 1877.

Unfortunately too many historians have ignored the Garfield-Scott presidential election of 1880, particularly as it pertained to the border states and those in the upper south. There, in states like Virginia, the Democrats successfully won the state and the electoral vote, but most men, black and white, continued to exercise their franchise rights. Republican constituencies remained intact in Virginia, and even increased the party's hold on the Tidewater region.

For Virginia's historians the 1880 presidential election holds particular significance because of the controversy over the effects of the poll tax of 1876. That tax, imposed by the Conservatives to increase public school revenue, and coincidentally, to reduce the black voting strength, required that a registered voter pay a one dollar fee to his county Commissioner of Revenue prior to election day or be denied the right to vote. Two historians, C. C. Pearson and Richard L. Morton, cited the poll tax as "the undoing of Reconstruction" by white Conservatives who sought to eliminate blacks from the

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electorate.[51] A third historian, C. E. Wynes writing in 1961, reached the same conclusion but linked the poll tax with other measures: "Driven from the polls by intimidation in the forms of violence and economic reprisal, and by legal measures such as the poll tax and disfranchisement for petty theft, the Virginia Negro by the end of the 1870's was in despair."[52]

Yet the record made by Tidewater voters on election day 1880 directly contradicts such conclusions. Unless the election returns were totally wrong, most men, especially blacks, residing in the Tidewater registered, paid the poll tax, or had someone pay it for them, and then voted on election day. In 1880 the percentage of participation for all Tidewater voters approximated the turnout in 1876 and was greater than that in the 1872 presidential election. The counties of Lancaster, Middlesex, Northampton, Sussex, and Southampton registered black majorities, but the vote on election day exceeded 80 per cent of the adult male population in each county. Also, in the Tidewater region the Republican Party increased its bag of counties from seventeen in 1876 to twenty-one

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[51] Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia, p. 49; Morton, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1865-1902, pp. 95-96.

[52] Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902, p. 14.

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in 1880.[53] With this accomplishment the Republican Party achieved one of its greatest victories in any presidential election between 1872 and 1900. And in 1880 the Republicans achieved their successes in the Tidewater, by and large, with black voters who allegedly had been "driven from the polls."[54]

The presidential election of 1888 in Virginia and in the Tidewater section saw a continuing pattern of participation, party politics, and Republican majorities. In fact, the Cleveland-Harrison election of 1888 was Virginia's closest presidential election of the postwar years. Why? A strong, well led Republican party of Virginia emerged after 1882 and, relying heavily on its Negro constituency, almost won the state for Harrison in 1888. The Republican leader, William Mahone, ran the party like a dictator, yet he was skilled in the workings of patronage, inter-party politics, and especially political campaigning.[55] In fact during the decade of the 1880's Mahone's Readjuster-Republican Party elected two senators, one governor, twenty congressmen, and numerous candidates to the General Assembly.

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[53]Disaffected whites could vote for the Readjuster slate for Hancock in 1880, a fact which reinforces the description above of the Republican Party constituency.

[54]See Chapter V for a description of how the poll tax provision effected voters in state and local elections.

[55]Blake, William Mahone, pp. 235-254.

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Virginia's white community could not let these Republican victories go unchallenged. By 1883 they had formed a reorganized and modernized state Democratic party.[56] Thereafter, the white electorate was more united and competitive than ever before.

The presidential and congressional elections of 1888 brought these competitive forces together in a tension-filled campaign with national financial contributions flowing into Virginia. The end result produced an enormous voter turnout (Table 16). In fact more men in Virginia voted in 1888 than in any presidential election until the Hoover-Smith election of 1928. In 1888 the Democrats won a razor thin victory as Cleveland polled 153,308 votes to Harrison's 151,778.[57]

How extensive was voter participation in the Tidewater? Probably it was greater than any other presidential election in the nineteenth century. Thirteen counties, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, Northumberland, Northampton, Prince George, Richmond, Sussex, and Westmoreland experienced a 90 per cent or better participation. In fact, the returns from Lancaster showed that 1,773 men

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[56]Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 56, 57, 59, 61-63.

[57]Burnham, Presidential Ballots, p. 816.

TABLE 16

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1888, VOTER PARTICIPATION IN TIDEWATER COUNTIES

TABLE 16

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1888, VOTER PARTICIPATION IN TIDEWATER COUNTIES

	Total Pop. (1890)[a]	Total Adult Male Pop. (1890)[b]	Total Vote Recorded[c]	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious[d]
State:					
Virginia	1,655,980	378,782	304,087	82%	D
Counties:					
Accomack	27,277	6,419	5,333	83%	D
Charles City	5,066	1,104	988	89%	R*
Elizabeth City	16,168	3,556	1,880	53%	R*
Essex	10,047	2,105	1,862	88%	R*
Gloucester	11,653	2,563	2,442	95%	R*
Isle of Wight	11,313	2,763	2,316	84%	D
James City	5,643	1,373	862	63%	R*

[a] Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, pp. 44-45.

[b] Ibid., pp. 806-807.

[c] Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892, pp. 816-843.

[d] Ibid., pp. 223-224.

* Counties with 50 per cent or greater black population in 1890 census.

TABLE 16 (continued)

Total Pop.	Total Adult Male Pop.	Total Vote	% Eligible	Party

TABLE 16 (continued)

	Total Pop. (1890)	Total Adult Male Pop. (1890)	Total Vote Recorded	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious
King & Queen	9.669	1,887	1,787	94%	D
King George	6,641	1,438	1,262	87%	R
King William	9,605	2,016	1,839	91%	R*
Lancaster	7,191	1,689	1,773	105%**	R
Mathews	7,584	1,818	1,652	91%	D
Middlesex	7,458	1,650	1,556	94%	R*
Nansemond	19,692	4,893	3,469	71%	R*
New Kent	5,511	1,191	1,074	90%	R*
Norfolk	77,038	21,374	14,129	67%	R
Northampton	10,313	2,442	2,201	90%	R*
Northumberland	7,885	1,883	1,758	93%	R
Prince George	7,872	1,720	1,679	98%	R*
Princess Anne	9,510	2,421	1,854	77%	R
Richmond	7,146	1,535	1,298	85%	R
Southampton	20,078	4,326	3,731	86%	R*
Surry	8,256	2,136	1,768	83%	R*
Sussex	11,100	2,592	2,484	96%	R*
Warwick	6,650	2,482	1,148	46%	R*
Westmoreland	8,399	1,820	1,637	90%	R
York	7,596	1,694	1,494	88%	R*

**See text for an explanation of the percentage in Lancaster County.

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voted in 1888, although only 1,689 men of voting age lived there two years later in the Census of 1890. Three explanations seem probable: sufficient men left Lancaster County between 1888 and 1890 to account for the difference; fraud by Lancaster election officials; or, the 1890 Census figures for Lancaster County were inaccurate. Of the three, the latter appears the most likely since Lancaster's population increased each decade between 1860 and 1900 and never showed a decrease, which made a sudden decline unlikely. Next, election officials who conducted the election at the precinct levels were Democrats not Republicans.[58] And a similar 105 per cent vote was recorded in the 1890 congressional elections in which the Democratic candidate won.[59] Since neither the

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[58]Allen W. Moger, "The Origin of the Democratic Machine in Virginia," Journal of Southern History, VIII (May, 1942), pp. 183-209. In his article Moger traced the successful attempt by the state Democrats to pass the Anderson-McCormick Election Law of 1884. This bill stipulated that the members of the General Assembly would elect the county electoral boards, who in turn would select all other county election officials. All appeals concerning fraudulent elections were heard by the Democratically controlled General Assembly. Moger stated that after 1884 the Democrats had a self perpetuating political machine through their control of the election machinery. The evidence from federal, state and local elections in the Tidewater disprove Moger's thesis of a "democratic machine."

[59]In 1890 in Lancaster County 1,768 men voted in the congressional elections, in the 1888 presidential election 1,773 voted, a figure too similar to indicate fraud particularly when the Republicans won in 1888 but lost in 1890.

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Democrats nor the Republicans lodged protests in either election, I believe that the voting returns were accurate, and the Census of 1890 wrong. Notwithstanding the abnormality in Lancaster, the evidence for the other Tidewater counties and cities remains compelling: that an overwhelming majority of Tidewater men could and did cast their ballots in November 1888.[60]

The extent of voter participation in the Tidewater counties in 1888 should have repercussions far outside of historical studies of Virginia. V. O. Key's thesis of the two part disfranchisement of the blacks can not stand for Tidewater Virginia in light of this new evidence of voter participation. Not only were large groups of blacks not disfranchised before 1877 causing a "sharply curtailed" black participation, but manipulation of the "remaining Negro vote" by unscrupulous white Democratic politicians just did not happen as Republicans continued to win in county after county in the Tidewater. It is illogical to argue that Democratic politicians manipulated blacks into voting for the Republican Party. Instead, the evidence indicates that at least in Tidewater Virginia through 1888 most black men could vote and moreover did vote whenever elections were held.[61]

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[60]The average percentage for all Tidewater counties in 1888 was 79 per cent.

[61]The methods used in the collection of this evidence for the Tidewater counties could be applied

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Yet after 1888 events and forces moved quickly in Virginia and the South to change the political ground rules in effect in the 1870's and 1880's. By the 1896 presidential election powerful political, economic, and social forces had all but eliminated the black voter in many southern states.[62] While Virginia's constitutional disfranchisement came in 1902, a combination of forces existed within the state during the 1890's which effectively reduced black voting strength. Before the presidential election of 1896 William Mahone died and since he was Virginia's Republican political boss, his loss caused the party to slip into impotency. No Republican ran for governor in 1893 or 1897, and many local and county Republican clubs fell into inactivity.[63] Coincidental with the demise of Mahone and the state Republican Party was the rise of the Peoples Party, a farmers protest party which threatened Democratic hegemony in the early 1890's. Clearly, many of Virginia's voters saw the Populist Party as a new, strong, opposition party to the old conservative

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elsewhere. Were elections in the states of the upper south, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, Missouri, and Maryland more or less like Virginia in their electorates? Evidence is available in the census tracts and voting returns to test the standard theories on the size, composition, and performance of the electorates in those states.

[62]Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, pp. 235-263, 321-349.

[63]Blake, William Mahone, pp. 252-253.

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and interest-laden Democratic Party. But in the gubernatorial campaign of 1893 Populist leaders drew the color line and many black voters turned away from their programs.[64] Then in 1896, the Virginia Populists fell to the free silver mania and the charms of John W. Daniel, leader of the state Democratic Party who championed free silver and helped to nominate William Jennings Bryan in 1896.[65] When the Virginia's Populists and Democrats fused in 1896, the last of the state's opposition parties began marching rapidly towards its own funeral. After 1896 the Populists never mounted a serious political threat to the state Democratic party.

The results of the Bryan-McKinley election in the Tidewater revealed a movement towards Democratic majorities, limited voting, and the abstention of some blacks, but not all, from the polls on election day (Table 17). Throughout the region voter participation declined, from 79 per cent in 1888 to 62 per cent in 1896, but a county by county study showed that the dropoff was erratic. For example, Gloucester County, with 1,518 white and 1,580 black adult males, had only 1,385 men

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[64]Charles E. Wynes, "Charles T. O'Ferrall and the Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1893," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXIV (October, 1956), pp. 445-451.

[65]William C. Wooldridge, "The Sound and Fury of 1896," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXXV (January, 1967), pp. 97-108.

TABLE 17

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1896, VOTER PARTICIPATION IN TIDEWATER COUNTIES

TABLE 17

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1896, VOTER PARTICIPATION IN TIDEWATER COUNTIES

	Total Pop. (1900)[a]	Total Adult Male Pop. (1900)[b]	Total Vote Recorded[c]	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious[d]
State: Virginia	1,854,184	447,815	294,939	69%	D
Counties:					
Accomack	32,570	7,945	5,004	64%	D
Charles City	5,040	1,188	646	54%	R*
Elizabeth City	19,460	7,858	3,046	39%	R*
Essex	9,701	2,164	1,597	74%	D*
Gloucester	12,832	3,004	1,385	46%	D*
Isle of Wight	13,102	3,201	2,001	63%	D

[a] Twelfth Census: 1900, I, Population, pp. 43-44, 432-433, 477-478.

[b] Ibid., pp. 1,003-1,004.

[c] Compiled from Official Returns of State Board of Canvassers published in Richmond Times, November 25, 1896, p. 5.

[d] Ibid.

*Indicates counties with 50 per cent or more Negro population.

TABLE 17 (continued)

TABLE 17 (continued)

	Total Pop. (1900)	Total Adult Male Pop. (1900)	Total Vote Recorded	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious
James City	3,688	893	555	62%	R*
King & Queen	9,265	1,924	1,516	78%	D
King George	9,618	1,541	1,272	83%	R
King William	8,380	1,825	1,593	87%	R*
Lancaster	8,949	2,192	1,592	77%	D*
Mathews	8,239	2,149	1,278	60%	D
Middlesex	8,220	1,968	1,376	70%	D*
Nansemond	23,078	5,635	2,379	42%	D*
New Kent	4,865	1,106	823	74%	R*
Norfolk	50,780	13,951	5,674	41%	R*
Northampton	13,770	3,369	1,920	57%	D
Northumberland	9,846	2,486	1,873	75%	D
Prince George	7,752	1,843	918	50%	D*
Princess Anne	11,192	3,087	1,482	48%	D
Richmond	7,088	1,585	1,344	85%	Tie Vote
Southampton	22,848	5,178	1,897	36%	D*
Surry	8,469	2,178	1,328	61%	D*
Sussex	12,082	2,749	1,193	43%	D*
Warwick	4,880	1,480	863	58%	R*
Westmoreland	9,243	2,167	1,542	71%	R
York	7,482	1,790	962	53%	D*

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(46 per cent) at the polls and voting, yet King and Queen, a county which had 980 white and 944 black voters, saw a turnout of 1,516 men or 78 per cent of the potential electorate. The Democrats won both Gloucester and King and Queen, but Republicans carried counties that were equally diverse statistically. Norfolk County with a large black population had an enormous drop in voting, from 14,129 in 1888 to 5,674 in 1896, yet the county remained in the Republican column; and so did King William County where 87 per cent of all men voted. So generalizations equating voter decline with the absence of blacks must account for variations between counties.

One result of the 1896 presidential election was a shift to the Democrats in county alignment. Seventeen Tidewater counties went for Bryan and the Democrats to only eight for the Republican McKinley, and in one county, Richmond, a tie vote was recorded.[66] At first, the results seem to confirm the accepted thesis that fraud, corruption, or coercion reduced the Republican vote, but the campaign in Virginia was a complex one.[67] The Democrats adopted a Free Silver platform, displayed their candidate Bryan throughout the state, and in general

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[66]Edgar D. Robinson, The Presidential Vote, 1896-1932 (Stanford, 1934), pp. 354-363.

[67]Allen W. Moger, "The Rift in Virginia Democracy in 1896," Journal of Southern History, IV (August, 1938), pp. 295-317.

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worked hard for his victory. The State Republican Party, impotent after the death of General William Mahone in 1894, revitalized itself in 1896 with a huge sum of money, some $160,000, from the national Republican campaign chest. When they counted the votes Bryan had carried Virginia as expected, sweeping the rural counties of the state, but losing in close votes in the urban areas where the Republican's sound money theories apparently received a more favorable hearing. Bryan's victory in the Tidewater was achieved in part by winning ex-Republican counties, nine of which went Democratic for the first time since the Civil War.[68] Apparently, the combination of Bryan's popularity, Negro apathy, and the lack of local Republican organizations caused the switch to occur.

The canvass of 1896 revealed one clear, distinct trend for other elections in the Tidewater region. After 1896 Virgina's Republican Party became active only in presidential election years; and with little possibility of winning, Republican efforts became progressively weaker, especially when there were no economic or ideological issues like free silver at stake. Without an active state Republican Party or an effective Populist Party many Tidewater voters, particularly blacks, had no

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[68]Those counties were York, Sussex, Surry, Southampton, Prince George, Northampton, Middlesex, Gloucester, and Essex.

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effective voice in state politics. Consequently, many men stayed at home on election day and by default allowed a small handful of voters to control each county. One-party politics with all of its deadening effects arrived in the Tidewater after 1896.

But what of the electorate's voting record prior to 1896? How did Tidewater voting in presidential elections compare with Virginia as a whole, and with other states in the north, midwest, and deep south? Table 18 provides statistics from Virginia and five other states, Georgia, California, Missouri, New York, and Massachusetts, for the years 1868, 1876, 1888, and 1896. Between 1868 and 1896 presidential politics were extremely competitive between the two major political parties, and often the popular vote was so close that only the narrowest of margins separated the winner and loser. Against such a background the participation of the Tidewater electorate in presidential elections compared favorably with other states. In 1868 Virginia did not participate in presidential balloting because the state fell under the Reconstruction Acts and thus, did not have a legitimate state government. Therefore, the gubernatorial canvass of 1869 was chosen in order to establish a comparison for each decade.

According to the statistics in Table 18 the men of the Tidewater electorate, for all of their racial and economic differences, resembled the electorates of the

TABLE 18

COMPARISON OF VOTER PARTICIPATION BY STATES IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, 1868-1896[69]

	T.A.M.P.	Total Vote	% of Participation
Tidewater, Va.			
1869	55,138	48,755	88%
1876	71,206	51,130	71%
1888	82,891	65,362	79%
1896	113,555	56,098	49%*
Virginia			
1869	266,680	220,739	83%
1876	334,505	236,989	71%
1888	378,782	304,087	82%
1896	447,815	294,837	69%
Georgia			
1868	237,640	159,836	67%
1876	321,483	180,699	56%
1888	398,122	142,796	36%
1896	500,752	156,470	31%

69 For population figures see Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 623-638; Tenth Census: 1880, I, Population, pp. 648-666; Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, p. 751; Twelfth Census: 1900, I, Population, p. 970. For election returns see W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892; Edgar E. Robinson, The Presidential Vote, 1896-1932.

*This percentage is misleading. The twenty-seven counties had a voter turnout of 62 per cent, while the three cities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Newport News had a turnout of only twenty-eight per cent.

TABLE 18 (continued)

	T.A.M.P.	Total Vote	% of Participation
California			
1868	227,256	108,670	48%
1876	329,392	155,775	47%
1888	462,289	250,349	54%
1896	544,087	299,374	55%
Missouri			
1868	408,206	152,400	37%
1876	541,207	350,601	65%
1888	705,718	521,406	74%
1896	856,684	674,030	79%
New York			
1868	1,158,901	849,798	73%
1876	1,408,751	1,015,936	72%
1888	1,796,649	1,319,718	75%
1896	2,184,965	1,423,867	65%
Massachusetts			
1868	398,157	195,785	49%
1876	502,648	258,840	51%
1888	665,009	344,508	52%
1896	843,465	401,568	48%

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states of the north and west more than those of the deep south. Men in the Tidewater, indeed in all of Virginia, consistently went to the polls in the presidential elections in greater numbers than voters in California, Massachusetts, and all of the other southern states.

So Virginians consistently voted in presidential elections, but did they also vote in other federal elections between 1869 and 1900? U. S. Senators were elected by Virginia's General Assembly until 1916, but Congressmen received their office from the people and in the Reconstruction years there were fifteen congressional elections. Since Virginia was out of the Union between 1867 and 1869, the General Assembly of 1870 had to apportion the state into eleven congressional districts of which the first two came exclusively from the Tidewater region. The First Congressional District lay north of the York River to the Potomac and included sixteen counties and one town, Fredericksburg; while the boundaries of the Second District ran south of the York to the North Carolina border and contained fourteen counties plus the major cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth. In 1870 when the state legislature created the districts they were roughly equal in population, with 152,295 in the First, and 150,584 in the Second.[70]

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[70] Acts of Virginia, 1871, pp. 258-259.

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Between 1870 and 1900 two reapportionments by the state legislature reshuffled the boundary lines. The first in 1880 witnessed a major redistricting in which many counties in the Tidewater Congressional Districts were split off and placed into other districts. Seven Tidewater counties fell away and were placed into the 3rd, 4th, and 8th Congressional Districts.[71] After 1890 the state legislature reapportioned Virginia's ten Congressional districts again, but that time they made no substantive changes in the two districts of the Tidewater region.[72]

In the fifteen Congressional elections between 1870 and 1900 there emerged two distinct voting patterns. First, in presidential election years party discipline was extremely high, and the vote received by the Republican or Democratic candidate for Congress almost always approximated the total vote for the presidential candidate, indeed and at times, duplicated it. For instance, in 1876 in the Second Congressional District all of the county voting totals for a party's presidential and congressional candidates varied, but never by more than a hundred votes. Furthermore, the difference was never significant for wherever the Republican or Democratic

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[71] Acts of Virginia, 1883/1884, p. 183.

[72] Acts of Virginia, 1891/1892, pp. 348-349.

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presidential candidate succeeded in winning a majority, the victorious party's Congressional candidate also won. Since counties fell into districts for electing Congressmen, the same generalization applied: if the Republican presidential candidate won a majority of the voters in counties and cities of a Congressional District, then the Congressman-elect was also a Republican.

VOTING IN 2nd CONG. DISTRICT, 1876[73]

	Presidential Vote		Congressional Vote	
	Hayes(R)	Tilden(D)	Segar(R)	Goode(D)
Norfolk	2,551	2,061	2,549	2,060
Southampton	1,259	1,909	1,159	2,002
Princess Anne	860	1,026	716	1,158
Cities:				
Norfolk	1,434	2,392	1,429	2,390
Portsmouth	657	1,680	654	1,691

Did this pattern hold after 1877, the date often given for the demise of the Republican Party in the south?[74] In the case of Tidewater Virginia through the 1880's, the answer is yes, for the abstract returns in the 1884 Congressional elections show that the totals for President and Congressman often fell within one or two

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[73] Richmond Daily Whig, Nov. 20, 1876. For Congressional Elections see Election Record, No. 109, Virginia State Library.

[74] Vincent P. DeSantis, Republicans Face the Southern Question, The New Departure Years, 1877-1897 (Baltimore, 1959), pp. 24-25. By 1877, the Democrats controlled all of the south's one hundred twelve electoral votes, all twenty-two senators, and most of the ninety representatives.

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votes of each other. Apparently, party discipline in the late nineteenth century remained very high in both parties.

VOTING IN 1st CONG. DISTRICT IN 1884[75]

	Democratic Candidates		Republican Candidates	
	Cleveland(D)	Croxton(D)	Blaine(R)	Mayo(R)
Accomack	2,949	2,960	1,697	1,689
Northampton	905	905	1,098	1,094
King & Queen	933	934	920	925
Richmond	612	612	766	764
Northumberland	893	889	862	865
Essex	853	858	1,105	1,097
Gloucester	1,075	1,098	1,206	1,248
Middlesex	630	629	780	779

For example, Richmond County Democrats in 1884 cast an equal vote (612) for President and Congressional candidate, while county Republicans gave their presidential candidate two more votes (766 to 764) than their Congressional nominee. In Middlesex County only one vote separated the candidates of the same parties, although the Republicans carried the county by 150 votes. Clearly, Tidewater men rarely crossed party lines to select congressional candidates, however strong, in the years during and after Reconstruction.

Also, the percentages of voter participation in congressional elections closely paralleled those recorded in presidential elections. To take one case in point, the 1888 presidential election, a comparison of the voter

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[75] Richmond Whig, November 26, 1884. The newspaper published the Official Returns of State Board of Canvassers.

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turnout in Accomack, Richmond, and Southampton Counties, and Norfolk City revealed a close correlation between presidential and congressional voting (Table 19). And when the Republican Harrison won the Tidewater region by a substantial margin, he carried with him the two Republican candidates for Congress. A similar correlation between presidential and congressional voting totals occurred in the other elections between 1872 and 1900.

TABLE 19

COMPARISON OF CONGRESSIONAL AND PRESIDENTIAL VOTER PARTICIPATION IN SELECTED TIDEWATER COUNTIES IN 1888[76]

	Total Vote for Cong.	Total Vote for Pres.	%C	%P
Accomack	5,257	5,333	82	83
Richmond	1,296	1,298	95	95
Norfolk City	5,819	5,812	60	60
Southampton	3,683	3,677	86	86
Princess Anne	1,847	1,848	77	77

Off-year congressional elections followed a somewhat different pattern. Party organization fell off, and subsequently, party discipline loosened to the point where a candidate's political record and personality became more important issues in the race. In the early years of Reconstruction candidates of both parties directed some of their appeals to the constituency of the opposite party. Men

[76]Official Returns of State Board of Canvassers, Election Record No. 92. (VSL) for congressional vote; Richmond Whig, November 27, 1888 for presidential vote.

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from the Conservative Party tried to balance their call for white solidarity with separate appeals to the black community.[77] Conversely, Republicans, with the mass of their constituency assured, attempted to portray themselves as insurgents against a Democratic Party that was dominated by Conservatives.[78] Often the candidates crisscrossed the congressional districts speaking to political rallies, social organizations, and church groups.[79] As a result, when Tidewater men went to the polls on election day, even in an off year election, they found between sixty and eighty per cent of their fellow citizens also there. No small courthouse clique controlled the Tidewater electorate in those years. A comparison of two elections, one in 1870 and the other in 1890, in the First Congressional District in the counties of Accomack, Richmond, Gloucester, and Essex, revealed that voting participation did not decline, but increased twenty years later.

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[77] Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879, pp. 195-196.

[78] Pearson, Readjuster Movement in Virginia, pp. 137-138. During the Readjuster period, 1879-1883, the Republicans worked closely with the Readjuster party. In 1880 the Republicans endorsed two Readjuster candidates in the congressional districts in the Tidewater, and in the election they won.

[79] See Chapter VI, Election Practices, for a discussion of political campaigning in the Tidewater during Reconstruction.

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COMPARISON OF VOTING IN CONG. ELECTIONS
IN 1870 AND 1890 IN TIDEWATER COUNTIES[80]

	T.A.M.P.	T. Votes	% Eligible who voted
1870			
Accomac	4,473	2,653 D	59%
Richmond	1,325	1,036 D	78%
Gloucester	2,193	1,511 D	69%
Essex	1,978	1,616 R	82%
1890			
Accomac	6,419	4,845 D	75%
Richmond	1,535	1,349 D	88%
Gloucester	2,563	2,149 R	84%
Essex	2,105	1,798 R	85%

In both years, 1870 and 1890, no other political contest or referendum was on the ballot to heighten interest, so the percentages of participation probably accurately reflect voter interest in 1870 and 1890.

Unlike many areas of the South, Tidewater Virginia had a significant turnover rate in Congressmen. Between 1870 and 1900 from the First Congressional District ten defferent men were elected to Congress.[81] Moreover, only one man, William A. Jones, won reelection for more than two terms, and he served in the House of Representatives continuously during the last decade of the

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[80] Population figures Ninth Census: 1870, I. Population, p. 673; Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, pp. 806-807; Voting returns: Election Records, No. 3, 92 (VSL); Richmond Dispatch, November 25, 1890.

[81] Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington, D.C., 1961), pp. 195-271.

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nineteenth century.[82] In the Second Congressional District between 1870 and 1900, the same ratio of congressmen elected (ten) to their length in office (1.5 terms) applied.[83] But in the case of the Second Congressional District no one man dominated the office as Congressman Jones did during the decade of the 1890's in the First District. Indeed, during that decade in the Second District five different men were elected to the Congress.[84] In both districts the high rate of turnover illustrated that competition for office was keen, and the term "Solid South" to indicate Democratic congressmen repeatedly elected to office by a small white electorate is a twentieth century creation that cannot be applied to Tidewater during or after Reconstruction.

In conclusion the federal election returns show that the Tidewater electorate did not fit any of the old or new stereotypes of the southern states after the war. Not only did Tidewater men have the right to vote, they voted in large numbers, and competition for federal office was keen. No federal troops were stationed in the

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[82] Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961, p. 1,140. Jones, a native of Richmond County, served continuously from the 52nd Congress in 1891 to his death in 1918.

[83] Ibid., pp. 195-271.

[84] Ibid., pp. 247-271.

Tidewater counties to supervise elections, yet blacks continued to vote in federal elections almost to the end of the century when they suffered legal disfranchisement. Poor men and illiterate men could and did vote in federal elections. Also, the poll tax was never an effective bar in eliminating men from the electorate. Very few black men stopped voting because of disinterest, and fewer still because of intimidation or coercion.

Fraudulent election practices did exist during the period, but in federal elections Congress investigated all charges. Although election frauds in the Tidewater are discussed later, it seems clear that the presumption of fraud in every county and city in every election is invalid. Fraudulent manipulation of voters by Democratic election officials unquestionably happened, but in the counties of the Tidewater the party of the black man, the Republican Party, continued to carry county after county until the end of the century. It is logically inconsistent to argue that white Democratic politicians manipulated black voters into casting their ballots for Republican candidates in federal elections.

CHAPTER V

THE TIDEWATER ELECTORATE IN STATE ELECTIONS: RACIAL POLARIZATION WITH FULL PARTICIPATION

Most Tidewater men voted in federal elections during the Reconstruction years; but, did they also vote in state and local elections in those years? Evidence from official state election returns, from newspaper accounts, from county court records are available to establish definitively the extent of voter participation in all state and many county elections between 1865 and 1900.

Beginning in 1869 and every four years thereafter Virginia held state elections for members of the General Assembly and three state officials: Governor, Lt. Governor, and Attorney General.[1] The governor appointed other state administrative officials, while the General Assembly elected all judges.[2] Members of the General Assembly, Senators and Delegates, ran for office in the same poll as the Governor, but they represented

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[1] Constitution of 1868, Article IV, sections 2, 9; Article VI, section 8.

[2] Ibid., Article VI, sections 10, 11, 12.

constituencies from single counties or districts.[3] In addition local officials, sheriff, county clerk, commonwealth's attorney, supervisors, and others, held their offices by election.[4] Consequently, between 1869 and 1900, Virginia's registered voters cast their ballots often, and for a variety of office holders at the state and local level.

The first attempt at postwar government came in the summer of 1865 when state and local governments were reestablished with minimal changes in policies and personnel. Between 1865 and April 1867 Virginia had a weak Republican governor, Francis H. Pierpont, and a very conservative state legislature.[5] While the U. S. Congress moved towards civil liberties and protection for the Freedmen, Virginia's legislature enacted its version of the infamous "black codes" which put all ex-slaves in

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[3]The district concept solved the problem of forty senators representing one hundred counties. District boundaries, first established by the General Assembly in 1870, changed often thereafter as redistricting laws were enacted in 1874, 1876, 1878, 1883, 1891.

[4]Starting in 1871 election day for county and city officers fell on the traditional third Tuesday in May. Supervisors and other district officials served for two year terms, but the county officers--sheriff, clerk, commonwealth's attorney, held their office for four years.

[5]Hamilton J. Eckenrode, The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction (Baltimore, 1904), pp. 42, 43, 45.

a legal caste system with very few civil liberties.[6] The General Assembly's action, together with its 74 - 1 vote against the Fourteenth Amendment, and its petition to President Johnson requesting Jefferson Davis' release from imprisonment at Fortress Monroe, helped persuade Congress to include Virginia in its program of Radical Reconstruction.[7] On March 2, 1867 Virginia's state government was dissolved by Congress, and a number of developments--military rule, disfranchisement of ex-Confederates, Negro citizenship, new registration of voters, a liberal state constitution, and a tense, exciting gubernatorial election--hit the state in rapid succession. By the time federal troops withdrew in January 1870, Virginia had gone through a metamorphosis that produced acceptance of not only the idea of Negro suffrage as written in the Underwood Constitution, but the reality of large numbers of blacks at the polls supporting a Radical Republican for governor in the gubernatorial election of July 1869.

The stakes of power in July 1869 lay in winning control of the governorship. Since the Radical

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[6] Eckenrode, The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction, pp. 51-52. Eckenrode defended the "Black Codes" as a devise to control vagrancy, but thought them politically "unwise."

[7] Jack P. Maddex, Jr., Virginia Conservatives 1867-1879 (Chapel Hill, 1970), pp. 35, 44, 45.

Republican candidate, Henry H. Wells, campaigned hard throughout the state, particularly in counties where the newly enfranchised Freedman constituted a majority, conservative whites were forced to abandon their candidate R. E. Withers and support a Moderate Republican Gilbert H. Walker.[8] With no substantial Negro support, Walker relied heavily on the registered whites who constituted a 20,000 majority in the electorate. And his faith was well placed since the Moderate Republican received 119,535 votes to 101,204 for Wells, the Radical Republican.[9]

In the same election in July 1869 Virginians approved the Underwood Constitution, but without its proscriptive clauses, elected new representatives to the General Assembly, and chose a new set of city and county officials. The returns showed that native white conservatives had won control of both the House of Delegates, ninety-five Conservatives to forty-two Republicans, and the Senate, thirty Conservatives to thirteen Republicans.[10] In the counties and cities native whites swept into office, except where blacks held a clear majority,

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[8]Maddex, Virginia Conservatives 1867-1879, pp. 79-85. Maddex found that Virginia's railroad men, particularly W. H. Mahone, were acutely aware of political realities in the spring of 1869 and they worked hard to secure Withers' resignation and support for the Walker ticket (p. 80).

[9]Ibid., p. 82.

[10]Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1901 (Charlottesville, 1961), pp. 4-5.

Petersburg, some of the Southside counties, and approximately half of the Tidewater counties.[11] Based on Gilbert Walker's gubernatorial victory, on Conservative majorities in both Houses of the General Assembly, and on the preponderance of white conservatives in county government, most historians label the July 1869 election as Virginia's "redemption" election.[12]

The record of the Tidewater electorate in the election of July 1869 illustrates the necessity of looking past the election results to the voters themselves (Table 20). In the months prior to the election both the Republicans and Conservatives had campaigned extensively in the Tidewater region, and a county by county analysis of the returns showed a large percentage of men voting in virtually all of the region's counties and cities. Moreover voter participation was bipartisan as the Republicans carried many counties, Charles City (84 per cent), Elizabeth City (94 per cent), Essex (91 per cent), Lancaster (85 per cent), Nansemond (88 per

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[11] Luther Porter Jackson, Negro Officeholding in Virginia (Norfolk, 1945), pp. vi-xi. Jackson remains the one historian who has worked extensively on local governments in Reconstruction in Virginia.

[12] Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, pp. 6-7; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives 1867-1879, pp. 84-86; Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1926 (Charlottesville, 1968), pp. 5-12; C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South (Baton Rouge, 1951), p. 4.

TABLE 20

VOTER PARTICIPATION IN GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION OF 1869

County	Total Pop. (1870)[a]	Total Adult Male Pop. (1870)[b]	Total Vote Recorded[c]	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious[d]
Accomack	20,409	4,473	3,773	84%	C
Charles City	4,975	1,207	1,010	84%	R*
Elizabeth City	8,303	2,001	1,885	94%	R*
Essex	9,927	1,978	1,800	91%	R*
Gloucester	10,211	2,193	1,900	87%	C*
Isle of Wight	8,320	1,834	1,619	88%	C*
James City	4,425	1,089	790	73%	R*
King & Queen	9,709	1,873	1,658	88%	R*
King George	5,742	1,165	1,058	91%	C
King William	7,515	1,636	1,292	79%	R*
Lancaster	5,355	1,082	922	85%	R*

[a] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 68-70.

[b] Ibid., p. 637.

[c] Richmond Whig, November 19, 1872.

[d] Ibid.

*Counties with 50% or greater black population.

TABLE 20 (continued)

	Total Pop. (1870)	Total Adult Male Pop. (1870)	Total Vote Recorded	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious
Mathews	6,200	1,339	982	73%	C
Middlesex	4,918	1,037	928	89%	C*
Nansemond	11,576	2,562	2,262	88%	R
New Kent	4,381	1,042	1,032	99%	R*
Norfolk	46,702	11,372	9,782	88%	R
Northampton	8,046	1,889	1,643	87%	R*
Northumberland	6,836	1,385	1,219	88%	C
Prince George	7,820	1,990	1,708	86%	R*
Princess Anne	8,273	2,032	1,555	77%	R
Richmond	6,503	1,325	1,153	87%	C
Southampton	12,285	2,671	2,431	91%	C*
Surry	5,585	1,371	1,163	85%	R*
Sussex	7,885	1,819	1,760	97%	R*
Warwick	1,672	438	395	90%	R*
Westmoreland	7,682	1,544	1,393	90%	C*
York	7,198	1,646	1,624	99%	R*

cent, New Kent (99 per cent), Norfolk (88 per cent), Sussex (97 per cent), and York (99 per cent), with record turnouts. The Conservatives who supported the Moderate Republican Walker and campaigned for white solidarity did equally well in the counties they carried, Accomack (84 per cent), Gloucester (87 per cent), Isle of Wight (88 per cent), King George (91 per cent), and Westmoreland (90 per cent).

Within the Tidewater region men of every description, black, white, and red, poured out of every back creek, hallow, and shack to cast their ballots. New Kent County, for example, had an adult male population of 1,042 in the Census of 1870, yet 1,032 men voted in July 1869. The Republicans, as expected, carried New Kent since its population was 53 per cent black and 47 per cent white.[13] Counties with much larger black majorities, York County for instance, saw virtually its entire electorate, 1,624 of its 1,646 men, voting on election day.[14] Indeed the myth of Negro apathy was shattered in Mathews County which had the lowest percentage of blacks (34 per cent) and the greatest white

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[13] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 68-70, percentage calculated; Richmond Whig, November 19, 1872. The vote had Radical Republicans 525 to 507 for the Moderate Republicans or 51 per cent Radical to 49 per cent Moderate.

[14] York County had 65 per cent blacks in 1870.

concentration but the smallest percentage of voters (73 per cent) in 1869 of all the counties in the Tidewater region.[15] Yet in Mathews County seven out of every ten men voted, a greater percentage than in any previous election.

The large number of men who cast ballots in the election of 1869 drew many comments from interested observers. A reporter for the Norfolk Journal wrote that in the city of Norfolk on election day, "at early dawn almost, the colored element were out and at the polls. For four hours they voted in a solid phalanx. The whites were equally zealous . . . ."[16] From Mathews County an observer at the courthouse precinct sent an article to the Norfolk Virginian stating that on election day voter interest was intense: "The clans mustered early, and by one o'clock nearly the whole vote of the county had been cast, but anxious parties were out in every direction in quest of the aged, the sick, and the weakhearted."[17] The Virginian's observer in Isle of Wight County boasted that every white man in his district had voted, save two, "one

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[15] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 69-70, percentage calculated; Richmond Whig, November 19, 1872.

[16] Norfolk Journal, July 10, 1869.

[17] Norfolk Virginian, July 10, 1869.

dead, and one too sick to move."[18] The blacks, he found, had voted heavily, but since they "had failed to turn out some thirty-five of their number . . ." their effort was inferior to the white element.[19] Yet, for Isle of Wight County the returns showed that 88 per cent voted, or 1,619 of 1,834 men over twenty-one in the Ninth Census in 1870.[20] So the suggestion that black voters were apathetic which one can interpret from the observations by the reporter in Isle of Wight County can be checked with the official returns; there, the voting figures for 1869 show heavy voting by men of every race in every Tidewater county, including Isle of Wight County.

The urban returns revealed that men in cities registered and voted at about the same rate as in rural counties. Take the case of Norfolk. That city's three conservative papers, the Virginian, the Journal, and the Landmark, repeatedly called on all white men in Norfolk to vote on election day. At first, the newspapers boasted of the size of the white turnout and depreciated the efforts of the black voters,[21] but when the Journal's editor compared white and black voting totals with the

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[18] Norfolk Virginian, July 9, 1969.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Richmond Whig, November 19, 1872.

[21] Norfolk Virginian, July 6, 1869; Norfolk Journal, July 7, 1869.

registration lists, he found little statistical difference between the two groups.

Norfolk Journal's Report on Voting in Norfolk City in July 1869[22]

Total	Registered as Voters June 1869	Voted in July 1869 Election	Percentage
Whites	2,422	2,064	85%
Blacks	2,470	2,023	82%
Total	4,892	4,087	83%

Clearly, urban blacks were as interested in exercising their franchise rights in July 1869 as their contemporaries in the rural, more isolated areas. All historians of the period classify the election of 1869 as Virginia's "redemption" election, although few comment on the intensity of participation at the polls.[23] But therein lay the major part of this election's importance to contemporaries, particularly black men in the Tidewater region. After July 1869 whites controlled state government, but in Virginia, at least, that control was not exercised at the price of exorcising the Negro's franchise rights.[24]

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[22]Norfolk Journal, July 8, 1869.

[23]My calculations show that for Virginia 83 per cent voted in the 1869 election, while in the twenty-seven counties and two cities in the Tidewater the voting percentage, 87 per cent, was slightly higher.

[24]Maddex, The Virginia Conservatives 1867-1879, pp. 196-199.

Also after 1869 few white Virginians believed that black men were not citizens, and would not exercise their vote if given a chance. For when 87 per cent of all adult men in a region voted, as in July 1869, that meant their ranks included most, if not all, of the region's farmers, tenant farmers, farm laborers, men with property, and propertyless men, literate and illiterate men, and men of all races: white, black, indian, or mixed. In short, universal manhood suffrage became a reality in Tidewater Virginia in 1869.

By 1873, the next gubernatorial election year, events in Virginia and the nation caused politics and politicians to change. In 1870 Virginia witnessed a quiet and orderly withdrawal of federal troops;[25] while further South, Radical Republican state governments repeatedly summoned federal and state troops to help supervise turbulent elections.[26] Detailed accounts of those elections along with extensive commentary on the political behavior of national Radical Republicans appeared regularly in Virginia's conservative press.[27]

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[25]Eckenrode, Virginia During the Reconstruction, p. 127.

[26]Allen W. Trelease, White Terror, The Klu Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction (New York, 1971), Part VI.

[27]The leading newspaper in the state was the Richmond Dispatch with a circulation of about 20,000 in the decade of the 1870's. This statewide paper

Within the General Assembly conservative state politics hinged on two issues: refunding the state debt and the extent of state railroad promotion.[28] According to Jack P. Maddex, Jr., historian of Virginia's Conservatives, debates over railroads and funding the state debt illustrated the Conservatives' postwar drive towards capitalistic development and reintegration into the Union.[29] Since neither issue involved the legitimacy of the government, or the racial polarization of society, Virginia's politics between 1869 and 1873 developed along different lines than in states of the deep south where Radical Republicans still controlled a majority of the state governments.[30]

In Virginia's gubernatorial election of 1873 the Conservatives ran James L. Kemper, a native ex-Confederate General, on a platform encouraging industry,

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championed the white-conservative cause. Other important papers with their political affiliations were the State Journal (Republican), Richmond Whig (anti-Democracy, and later a Readjuster champion), Norfolk Landmark (Democratic), and Norfolk Virginian (Independent and pro-Readjuster).

[28]Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879, pp. 86-103.

[29]Ibid., pp. 91, 95-99, 143-165.

[30]After 1870, the following states were still "unredeemed", Texas (1873), Alabama, Arkansas (1874), Mississippi (1875), Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida (1877).

immigration, and commerce.[31] The Virginia Republican Party countered with Robert W. Hughes editor of the state's leading Republican newspaper, the Richmond State Journal. Hughes directed his campaign appeals to the poorer class of men by advocating relief for debtors, more equitable taxation, and increased support for local schools.[32] The Conservatives in their campaign oratory drew the color line and proclaimed themselves as champions of a noble white race that had saved Virginia from black rule.[33]

The Republican Party of Virginia in 1873 was not at all a moribund political party. It had adequate leadership, a strong press in Richmond, Norfolk, Petersburg, and Alexandria, and a large, loyal constituency among the Negro population. In 1872 the Republicans won eight of Virginia's eleven seats in the House of

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[31]Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879, p. 108.

[32]Ibid., p. 109.

[33]Robert R. Jones, "Conservative Virginia: The Post-War Career of Governor James Lawson Kemper" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1964), pp. 189, 195-196, 209-210. In his dissertation Jones argued that Kemper and the Conservatives did not run a strictly racist campaign because they were not classic Negrophobes. Wynes, Moger, and Maddex disagree with Jones's interpretation of the campaign of 1873.

Representatives,[34] and in 1872 the party carried the state for President U. S. Grant.[35] Throughout the fall months of 1873, the Republicans waged a vigorous campaign for Hughes, particularly in the counties with large black populations.[36]

While Virginia's Republican Party maintained its strong position into the 1873 campaign, the Conservative Party tried to rebuild through appeals to white solidarity. In 1873 the Conservative candidate Kemper campaigned in every part of the state; the Conservative press continually compared the moderate, progressive government in Virginia with the Radical Republican's rule in the lower south; and party men urged all white men to vote Conservative.[37] Moreover, the state's prewar politicians viewed Kemper as the leader of a "true restoration" of old Virginia and they worked hard for him in the campaign.[38] In the Tidewater many Conservative politicians worked harder for Kemper's election in 1873 than they had for Walker and

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[34]Election Record No. 3, pp. 153-177, VSL. The Republicans carried the two Congressional Districts in the Tidewater easily, by 4,000 votes in the First Cong. District, and by 5,000 votes in the Second Cong. District.

[35]Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892, p. 817.

[36]Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 109-110.

[37]Jones, "Conservative Virginian: James L. Kemper," pp. 195-196, 200-210.

[38]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, pp. 11-12.

Constitution in 1869.[39]

On election day, November 4, 1873, voting was heavy throughout the state, particularly in the Tidewater region (Table 21). Although not as many men participated in the election, the percentage remained high as eight out of every ten men voted. If counties with Conservative majorities experienced heavy voting: Isle of Wight (97 per cent), Nansemond (100 per cent), and Norfolk County (91 per cent); then, so did counties with Republican majorities: Sussex (93 per cent), Middlesex (94 per cent), and Lancaster (91 per cent). Moreover, the Republicans carried fifteen counties while the Democrats won twelve.

Since the Conservative candidate Kemper won in 1873, and Conservatives continued to control the General Assembly, some historians have suggested that the Conservatives achieved the victory fraudulently.[40] Within the Tidewater region local officials conducted and supervised the election without any outside interference;

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[39]This opinion is based on reports in the Norfolk, Warsaw, and Fredericksburg papers after the elections. Many of Tidewater's county courthouse observers saw Kemper's victory as Virginia's "redemption" election.

[40]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, pp. 7-8, 12, 13. Black voting strength was diluted, Wynes stated, through congressional reapportionment, registration lists kept segregated by race, and "lost" Negro registration lists on election day.

TABLE 21

VOTER PARTICIPATION IN GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION OF 1873

County	Total Pop. (1870)[a]	Total Adult Male Pop. (1870)[b]	Total Vote Recorded[c]	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious[d]
Accomack	20,409	4,473	3,013	67%	C
Charles City	4,975	1,207	973	81%	R*
Elizabeth City	8,303	2,001	1,399	70%	R*
Essex	9,927	1,978	1,524	77%	R*
Gloucester	10,211	2,193	1,527	70%	C*
Isle of Wight	8,320	1,834	1,782	97%	C*
James City	4,425	1,089	845	78%	R*
King & Queen	9,709	1,873	1,549	82%	R*
King George	5,742	1,165	864	74%	C
King William	7,515	1,636	1,327	81%	R*
Lancaster	5,355	1,082	980	91%	R*

[a] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 68-70.

[b] Ibid., p. 637.

[c] Warrock - Richardson Almanac, 1875 (James E. Goode, Richmond, Virginia, 1875), p. 33.

[d] Ibid.

*Counties with 50% or higher Negro population.

TABLE 21 (continued)

	Total Pop. (1870)	Total Adult Male Pop. (1870)	Total Vote Recorded	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious
Mathews	6,200	1,339	1,007	75%	C
Middlesex	4,918	1,037	978	94%	R*
Nansemond	11,576	2,562	2,561	100%#	C
New Kent	4,381	1,042	898	86%	C*
Norfolk	46,702	11,372	10,324	91%	R
Northampton	8,046	1,889	1,543	82%	R*
Northumberland	6,836	1,385	1,183	85%	C
Prince George	7,820	1,990	1,489	75%	R*
Princess Anne	8,273	2,032	1,496	74%	C
Richmond	6,503	1,325	1,087	82%	C
Southampton	12,285	2,671	2,780	104%#	C*
Surry	5,585	1,371	1,008	74%	R*
Sussex	7,385	1,819	1,685	93%	R*
Warwick	1,672	438	352	80%	R*
Westmoreland	7,682	1,544	1,304	84%	C*
York	7,198	1,646	1,060	64%	R*

#Both Nansemond and Southampton experienced rapid growth, over 40%, in this decade which makes their voting percentages seem abnormally high. Northampton County had an average annual increase of 134 men between 1870 and 1880.

and in several counties the tabulations were extremely close. Yet, upon analysis the Republican Hughes won as many of the close races as did Kemper, the Conservative.[41] For example, Middlesex County with 1,037 men of voting age, had 978 men voting (94 per cent)--490 for Hughes, and 488 for Kemper.[42] Yet in neighboring Richmond County the sides reversed as Kemper won by only five votes out of a total of 1,087.[43] Furthermore state and regional newspapers contained no articles on electoral corruption or fraud by local officials.[44]

Was there fraud in the Tidewater region in the gubernatorial election of 1873? Probably not, since voting percentages, party control of the counties, close votes, and contemporary newspaper accounts were similar to those of the 1869 gubernatorial election.

Instead of interpreting elections in the 1870's as undemocratic or fraudulent simply because reactionary white supremists consistently won, we should see it as a

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[41] In eight counties the two candidates were within fifty votes of each other. Warrock-Richardson Almanac, 1875, p. 33.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Norfolk Virginian, November 5, 7, 1873; Richmond Whig, November 7-14, 1873; Richmond Dispatch, November 6, 8, 9, 1873. See Chapter VI, Election Practices, for a more complete discussion of the actions of county and city election officials in all elections 1869-1900.

continuation of the election processes established in 1869. Then, with the U. S. Army conducting the election, 87 per cent of the Tidewater men voted, seventeen counties went Republican, and there were no accusations of fraud or intimidation. Four years later with local officials in control, 80 per cent of the Tidewater men voted, fifteen counties went Republican, and again no allegations of fraud appeared in the contemporary press. Apparently, by 1873 those men in power in the Tidewater counties had accepted one of the fundamental principles of Radical Reconstruction: suffrage rights for all male citizens, regardless of race.[45]

Evidence from local elections after 1869 would confirm acceptance of the new attitude, but unfortunately no state agency and only a few county clerk's offices preserved any documents on county elections. In Isle of Wight County a set of poll books exist for a contested county election in May, 1888, but one election in one county in one year is insufficient basis for any judgement. Instead of keeping poll books, many counties kept abstracts of election returns in the county court records

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[45] Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879, pp. 188-189. For example, Governor Kemper pledged to uphold the Reconstruction Amendments but insisted on state control of race relations within the limits established in the Amendments. To Kemper and the Conservatives the issue of "political equality" had been "settled" during Reconstruction.

which listed numerical totals for each candidate by position and district for local elections. Since the county courts also kept abstracts of federal and state elections, one can compare voter participation in local elections with that in state and federal elections to asertain the consistency and patterns of participation.

One county with the requisite combination of returns was Prince George County. In the Ninth Census (1870) Prince George had a population 65 per cent black, an electorate of 1,990 men, and a predominantly

VOTER PARTICIPATION

IN PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY, 1869-1879[46]

Date	Election	T.A.M.P.	Votes Cast	% of Total
Nov. 1869	Governor	1,990	1,708	86%
Nov. 1870	Congressman	1,990	1,191	60%
May 1870	County Attorney	1,990	1,160	59%
Nov. 1873	Governor	1,990	1,489	75%
May 1873	County Sheriff	1,990	1,484	75%
May 1875	County Clerk	1,990	1,339	67%
Nov. 1876	President	2,431	1,328	55%
Nov. 1877	Governor	2,431	239	18%
May 1879	County Sheriff	2,431	1,572	65%

[46] Population statistics from Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 68-70; Tenth Census: 1880, I Population, p. 655; Voting totals from Election Abstracts 1869-1879, County Clerk' Office, Prince George County, Virginia; percentages computed. In 1876 the base census figure changed from 1,990 to 2,431 which caused a lower percentage of voting participation although approximately the same number of men voted in 1876 as in 1875.

agricultural economy.[47]

Only in 1877 did voting in Prince George decline sharply, but then, F. M. W. Holliday the Conservative candidate ran unopposed and the absence of a Republican ticket apparently caused the drop-off in voting. In the other elections voting declined, but for reasons other than fraud or intimidation. For example, when federal troops left Virginia in early 1870 the November elections for Congressman showed a reduction in voting. Why? First, the gubernatorial and constitutional election of July 1869 had generated extraordinary excitement and many men in Prince George County, and probably throughout the state, had voted to test their liberty. In November 1870 no such comparable atmosphere existed. Furthermore, it was an off-year election for Congressman, and since the Republican Party dominated the county, winning and in July 1869 with a 602 vote majority, in May 1870 a 506 majority, it is not surprising that in November 1870 Republican James H. Platt received 836

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[47] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 68-70; II, Wealth and Industry, pp. 340-341.

votes to Democrat Stith Bolling's 355.[48] In light of those Republican victories, probably both black and white farm workers saw little reason for going to the polls in 1870, for the outcome was certain, a Republican victory. So, voter apathy can account for the decline in voting, rather than suggestions of fraud or intimidation.

The 1870's saw state and national politics change rapidly, yet the men of Prince George County exercised their franchise rights throughout the decade without a diminution in their numbers. In fact, a higher percentage of men voted in May 1879 for County Sheriff than in May of 1870 for County Attorney. Despite Conservative victories in state elections in 1873 and 1877, the Prince George Republicans continued to vote and win elections throughout the decade. In 1876 the Conservatives enacted a constitutional amendment requiring a poll tax as a prerequisite for voting. Apparently, the tax had little or no effect in Prince George since in the election for County Sheriff (May, 1879) 1,572 men voted, a greater participation than in county elections before 1876.

In recent years Virginia's poll tax amendment of 1876 has generated considerable historical controversey.

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[48]Election Abstracts, 1869-1879, Prince George County, Virginia.

Robert R. Jones, in his biography of Governor James L. Kemper, maintains that the Conservatives adopted the poll tax to raise revenue for the state's public schools.[49] Charles E. Wynes and Jack P. Maddex, Jr. disagree and argue that disfranchisement of poor whites and blacks was the Conservatives' primary motive.[50] Whatever the Conservatives' motives, historians agree that in the election in November 1876 Conservative whites supported the amendment, while blacks and white Republicans made up the opposition. But the returns for 1876 show that most voters in the Tidewater supported the poll tax amendment in a light vote (Table 22). Throughout the region seventeen counties favored the tax, and only nine rejected it. Since in 1876 blacks held majorities in seventeen of the regions' twenty-seven counties, in order for the measure to win a majority in the Tidewater some blacks must have supported it. For instance, Essex County had a population that was 67 per cent black, and a record of Republican majorities in 1869, 1872, and 1873; yet in the poll tax referendum, Essex voters approved the measure by a wide margin of 625 to 43.[51]

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[49] Jones, "Conservative Virginian, James L. Kemper," pp. 292-296; also Allen Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, p. 182.

[50] Wynes, Race Relations, pp. 12-14, 135-136; and Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 35-36.

[51] Election Record No. 108, VSL.

TABLE 22

REFERENDUM TO ADOPT POLL TAX AMENDMENT (1876)

	Total Adult Male Pop. (1870)[a]	Total Votes Cast For[b]	Against[c]	Total Vote	% Particip.
State:					
Virginia	266,680	88,956	60,449	149,405	56%
Counties:					
Group A (60% of higher Black)					
Charles City	1,207	337	569	906	75%
Elizabeth City	2,001	377	979	1,356	68%
Essex	1,978	625	43	668	34%
Northampton	1,889	635	-	635	34%
Prince George	1,990	Election returns invalidated - not counted			
Sussex	1,819	574	1,064	1,638	90%
Warwick	438	159	247	406	93%
York	1,646	521	658	1,179	72%

[a] Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, p. 637.

[b] Election Record No. 108, USL.

[c] Ibid.

TABLE 22 (continued)

	Total Adult Male Pop. (1870)	Total Votes Cast For	Against	Total Vote	% Particip.
Group B (50-60% Black)					
Gloucester	2,193	804	60	864	40%
Isle of Wight	1,834	1,177	436	1,613	88%
James City	1,089	240	364	604	58%
King & Queen	1,873	659	217	876	47%
King William	1,636	402	339	741	45%
Lancaster	1,082	425	-	425	39%
Middlesex	1,037	374	36	410	40%
New Kent	1,042	365	466	831	80%
Southampton	2,671	1,260	745	2,005	75%
Surry	1,371	433	559	992	72%
Westmoreland	1,544	375	3	378	24%
Group C (40-50% Black)					
King George	1,165	548	2	550	47%
Nansemond	2,562	1,413	754	2,167	85%
Norfolk	11,372	1,607	2,014	3,621	32%
Northumberland	1,385	627	3	630	46%
Princess Anne	2,032	931	710	1,641	81%
Richmond	1,325	409	300	709	54%
Group D (less than 40% Black)					
Accomack	4,473	1,617	265	1,812	41%
Mathews	1,339	656	56	712	53%

Furthermore, Essex County went Republican in elections in 1880, 1881, 1884, 1885, and 1888. Apparently, in that county and in many other Tidewater counties black voters desired better schools more than they feared disfranchisement.[52]

Not only did Republicans and many blacks support the poll tax, they must have paid it, for they continued to vote in elections after 1876. In the

COMPARISON OF VIRGINIA VOTE TOTALS--1869-1882[53]

Year	Election	Total Vote	% Participation
1869	Governor	220,739	85%
1872	President	184,855	66%
1873	Governor	213,519	75%
1876	President	236,989	71%
1877	Governor	93,624	34%
1880	President	212,281	64%
1881	Governor	224,226	67%

four state and national elections held between 1876 to 1882, approximately 65 per cent of all male citizens went to the polls, with the exception of 1877 when the Conservative candidate for governor had no opposition. In addition, when one compares participation in those

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[52]Eleven counties with black majorities voted in favor of the poll tax amendment in 1876.

[53]Richmond Whig, November 19, 1872; Warrock-Richardson Almanac, 1875, p. 33; Election Records No. 109, 52, VSL, for state elections. Burnham, Presidential Ballots, pp. 816-843 for presidential results.

elections, 1876-1882, with elections prior to 1876, he finds that approximately the same percentage of men voted in all of the elections, regardless of the year.

In light of this evidence bold statements about the disfranchising effects of the poll tax amendment of 1876 cannot stand. C. E. Wynes in Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902 stated that by 1877 the Negro had been "driven from the polls by intimidation in the forms of violence and economic reprisal, and by legal measures such as the poll tax . . . ."[54] Jack P. Maddex, Jr. admitted difficulty in measuring the political effects of the tax, but then hedged a bit by stating that in some counties probably enough black voters were eliminated by non-payment of the tax to swing the election to the Conservatives.[55]

Clearly Wynes misinterpreted the effects of the poll tax on the electorate, and if the record of the Tidewater counties is indicitive of the remainder of the state, then Maddex must revise his conclusion too. For a tabulation of the party of record, Republican or Readjuster, Democrat or Conservative, does not show a shift to the Conservatives after 1876. Instead, the Republicans

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[54] Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, p. 14.

[55] Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879, p. 198.

in combination with the Readjusters scored the gains, moving from fifteen counties in 1872 to nineteen in 1880 and 1881.

PARTY VICTORIOUS IN STATE AND FEDERAL ELECTIONS 1869-1882[56]

Year	Election	Democratic/ Conservative	Republican/ Readjuster
1869	Governor	10	17
1872	Governor	12	15
1876	President	10	17
1877	Governor	27	0
1880	President	8	19
1881	Governor	8	19

The gubernatorial election of 1877, although uncontested, has become important in the historical interpretation of the period. The one-party election and low voting percentage (34 per cent), some historians have written, demonstrated the triumph of the ex-Confederate white supremists and provided concrete evidence of disfranchisement of black voters.[57]

But the circumstances surrounding the 1877 election point to a different conclusion. By 1877 the

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[56]The presence of fraud and corruption at the ballot box would invalidate election statistics. Chapter Six, Election Practices, investigates this issue, but briefly stated, fraud prior to 1894 was neither so pervasive nor frequent as to permit a blanket generalization. Indeed, in most elections voters went to the polls, cast their ballots, and saw them counted. Fraud was the exception, not the rule.

[57]Wynes, Race Relations, pp. 14, 145; Morton, Negro in Virginia Politics, p. 96; Taylor, "Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia," Journal of Negro History, XI (1926), pp. 518-519.

Republican Party in Virginia had deteriorated to a position of impotency; it lacked sufficient leadership to run a candidate, but retained a strong nucleus of voters, mostly blacks in the eastern Tidewater and southern Piedmont counties, and whites in the far southwestern counties of the state. Since Republicans had always hated "The Democracy" they refused to vote in 1877. In fact, the Readjusters who emerged in 1879 in opposition to the Conservatives gained much of their support from the Republicans.[58] In the Tidewater in 1877 most Republicans and most blacks did not vote; not out of fear, intimidation, or failure to pay their poll tax, but because they had no party and no candidate to vote for.

Between 1877 and the next gubernatorial election in 1881 circumstances changed. A strong reform political party, the Readjusters, had swept its candidates into majorities in both houses of the General Assembly. And when the Readjusters tried to repudiate portions of the state debt as their platform promised, Governor Holliday, a Conservative, stimied the reform by exercising his veto power.[59] In retaliation the Readjusters went after

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[58] Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia, p. 130.

[59] Ibid., p. 142.

the governorship in 1881 and challenged the Conservatives for almost every seat in the General Assembly. Tension and excitement gripped the state as the Readjuster candidate, William E. Cameron, swept into the governor's seat with working majorities in both the House and Senate.[60]

In 1881 Tidewater voters supported the Readjusters in overwhelming numbers (Table 23). Nineteen counties went for the insurgents as the Readjusters received broad support in both black and white communities. The Readjuster's majorities in this election as well as the extent of voter participation belie the contention that the poll tax amendment disfranchised large numbers of voters, black or white.

Once in power the Readjusters enacted a series of progressive measures. They abolished the poll tax as a prerequisite for voting, eliminated the whipping post, revised the state tax code with particular emphasis placed on revaluation of railroad properties. Labor unions were chartered, public school appropriations increased to the point that all closed schools were reopened, and teachers were paid their salaries in full.[61]

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[60] Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia, pp. 139-140.

[61] Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902, pp. 17-38. This author has led a reevaluation of the Readjusters as liberals in a conservative age.

TABLE 23

GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION OF 1881

TABLE 23

GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION OF 1881

	Total Pop. (1880)[a]	Total Adult Male Pop. (1880)[b]	Total Vote Recorded[c]	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious[d]
State:					
Virginia	1,512,565	334,505	224,226	67%	Readjuster(Rj.)
Counties:					
Accomack	24,408	5,487	3,511	64%	Conservative(Cons.)
Charles City	5,512	1,224	826	67%	Rj.
Elizabeth City	10,689	3,284	1,349	41%	Rj.
Essex	11,032	2,168	1,511	70%	Rj.
Gloucester	10,211	2,643	1,704	64%	Cons.
Isle of Wight	10,572	2,516	1,737	69%	Cons.
James City	5,422	1,355	487	36%	Rj.
King & Queen	10,502	2,090	1,666	80%	Cons.

[a]Tenth Census: 1880, I, Population, pp. 82-83.

[b]Ibid., pp. 665-666.

[c]Warrock - Richardson Almanac, 1883 (Richmond, 1883), p. 30. Also, Election Records, 1881, Statement No. 52, VSL, for the returns for Attorney General, no official records extant for Governor.

[d]Ibid.

*Counties with 50% or greater black majority.

TABLE 23 (continued)

	Total Pop. (1880)	Total Adult Male Pop. (1880)	Total Vote Recorded	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious
King George	6,397	1,371	1,108	81%	Rj.
King William	8,751	1,920	1,440	75%	Cons.
Lancaster	6,160	1,322	1,093	83%	Rj.
Mathews	7,501	1,710	1,060	62%	Cons.
Middlesex	6,252	1,335	1,003	75%	Rj.
Nansemond	15,903	3,802	2,189	57%	Rj.
New Kent	5,515	1,295	781	60%	Rj.
Norfolk	58,657	15,141	8,559	56%	Rj.
Northampton	9,152	2,125	1,687	79%	Rj.
Northumberland	7,929	1,777	1,299	73%	Cons.
Prince George	10,054	2,431	1,275	52%	Rj.
Princess Anne	9,394	2,305	1,436	62%	Rj.
Richmond	7,195	1,545	1,128	73%	Rj.
Southampton	18,012	3,915	2,597	66%	Rj.
Surry	7,391	2,040	941	46%	Cons.
Sussex	10,062	2,323	1,547	67%	Rj.
Warwick	2,258	589	306	52%	Rj.
Westmoreland	8,846	1,842	1,266	69%	Rj.
York	7,349	1,651	783	47%	Rj.

Before the Readjusters lost power in 1884-1885, they ended the controversey over the state debt by declaring one-third of the total as West Virginia's portion and then refunded the remainder.[62]

Midway through the Readjuster's control of the state government, 1879-1883, William Mahone, a strong, capable leader emerged to create a new political machine. In 1880 the Readjusters elected Mahone to the U. S. Senate, and when the Independent Mahone supported the Republican Party in organizing the Senate he received control over all federal patronage positions for Virginia. Next, Mahone persuaded the Readjusters to oust Conservatives from state and county appointive boards and commissions, and to place loyal party men on the boards. Then, Mahone attempted to merge the Readjusters' strongest constituency, the white yeoman farmers in the western sections of the state, with the Republican party's black constituency in the Tidewater and the Southside regions. Suprisingly, he succeeded. For a solid decade between 1883 and 1893 Mahone's Republican Party was not only well organized, well led, and adequately financed, but it had the voters to challenge the Conservative/Democratic Party for political control of the state. When Mahone ran the Republican Party,

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[62]Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia, pp. 143-144.

state politics and elections regained an intensity missing since Reconstruction days.[63]

The successes of the Readjusters and the activity of Mahone and his lieutenants forced the leaders of the Conservative Party into action. In the state elections of 1883 the Conservatives dropped their previous party labels "Funder" and "Conservative" by which they had sought to unify Whigs and Democrats, and returned to their prewar name, the Democratic Party. Appropriately in the first election, state elections for House of Delegates in 1883, the Democrats drew the color line and made race the dominant issue in the campaign.[64] Three days prior to election day a race riot broke out in Danville in which one white man and four black men were killed and another ten men wounded.[65] The Democratic Party immediately tried to identify the Readjusters with the Danville blacks, who had won a majority of positions on the city's twelve man council during the Readjuster years. And they succeeded, for the returns

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[63] Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia, Chapter 12, pp. 142-160; and Nelson Blake, William Mahone, Chapter 9, pp. 235-254.

[64] Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, p. 29.

[65] Ibid., pp. 31-32.

showed that Democrats won throughout the state in 1883.[66]

When the Democratic state legislature met in 1884 it sought to secure permanent control of state politics by writing a new election law which established county electoral boards to supervise elections. Prior to 1884 all elections were staged by local, county, or city officials: sheriff, county clerk, registrar, election judges, and election commissioners. State officials neither interfered with nor supervised elections unless a candidate contested the results, and only then could a committee of the legislature investigate a specific election.[67] Prior to 1884 fraud and corruption by local election officials was not a serious problem, however, the Democratic Assembly of 1884 under the pretext of reform enacted the Anderson-McCormick Election Law of 1884.[68] Henceforth a three-man county electoral board supervised and conducted all elections: local, state, and federal. The Assembly selected men for the boards, usually drawn from the local Democratic Party

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[66] Richard L. Morton, The Negro in Virginia Politics (Charlottesville, 1919), pp. 120-122.

[67] See Chapter VI, Election Practices for a discussion of all contested elections from the Tidewater counties and cities between 1869 and 1900.

[68] Code of Virginia, 1887, pp. 34-41.

lists, to serve for four year terms renewable on approval of the General Assembly. Next, with the county electoral boards serving at the will of the Democratic majority in the Assembly, that body gave extensive appointment powers to the new commissioners. After 1884 the county electoral boards appointed all precinct officials, certified candidates for election, printed the ballots, tabulated the votes, and supervised the registration of new voters. Since the General Assembly retained appelate power over the boards, a case of fraud by the board members could be ignored. In fact, local officials committed outrageous frauds, particularly in the 1890's, but since the Democratic Party profited by the fraud, the General Assembly chose to turn most of the appeals aside. Allen W. Moger believes that the electoral boards were the first step in creating a Democratic machine in Virginia, and thus he believes that power, not reform, was the General Assembly's basic motive.[69]

Whatever the motivation for electoral changes in 1884, they proved only partially effective in the Tidewater counties for at least another decade. There was no surge to the Democratic candidates in the gubernatorial election of 1885 or in the presidential election

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[69]Allen W. Moger, "The Origins of the Democratic Machine in Virginia," Journal of Southern History, VIII (May, 1942), pp. 183-209.

of 1888. Indeed, in both elections the Democrats had opposition from a vigorous, well financed, and effectively-led Republican Party. For instance, in 1885 the Republicans swept the Tidewater as their gubernatorial candidate John S. Wise carried twenty of the twenty-seven counties in the region (Table 24). Not only did the Republicans win decisively in Tidewater but participation at the polls in many counties equaled Reconstruction levels. Why? Mahone's Republican Party had reestablished competition at the polls, and when black men voted, whites always responded with intensive voter drives. So, with intense party competition, and a legacy of mass voting, it is not surprising to find the Republicans winning additional counties, up from nineteen in 1880 to twenty in 1885.

Clearly, the Democratic machine as postulated by Moger contained more myth than reality. The Democrats certainly did not control the 1885 election in the Tidewater. A comparison of the results of that election with the Conservatives' previous record shows that the Democrats carried fewer counties (seven) in 1885 than Conservatives had won in the previous gubernatorial elections of 1869, 1873, 1877, and 1881.

After 1885 the Virginia Republican Party increased in strength so that by the time of the presidential election of 1888 it stood ready to capture the

TABLE 24

GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION OF 1885

	Total Vote[a]	% Eligible Who Voted (1890)[b]	Party Victorious[c]	% Black in Electorate[d]
State: Virginia	284,028	68%	D	35%
Counties:				
Charles City	1,033	94%	R	67%
Sussex	2,289	88%	R	64%
Prince George	1,747	87%	R	62%
Essex	1,900	90%	R	59%
New Kent	1,139	96%	R	59%
Surry	1,677	79%	R	58%
Warwick	929	*	R	58%
York	1,445	85%	R	58%

[a]Warrock-Richardson Almanac, 1887, pp. 28-29.

[b]Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, pp. 45-46. Percentages computed.

[c]Warrock-Richardson Almanac, 1887, pp. 28-29.

[d]Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, pp. 806-807. Percentages computed.

*During the latter 1880's the town of Newport News was founded as a shipbuilding center. So many men came into Warwick County that percentages for 1885 are meaningless.

TABLE 24 (continued)

	Total Vote	% Eligible Who Voted (1890)	Party Victorious	% Black in Electorate
Elizabeth City	1,845	52%	R	56%
King William	1,841	91%	R	55%
Southampton	3,737	87%	D	54%
Nansemond	3,328	68%	R	53%
Middlesex	1,526	93%	R	52%
James City	854	62%	R	52%
Gloucester	2,499	98%	R	50%
Lancaster	1,554	92%	R	49%
Norfolk	11,790	55%	R	48%
Northampton	2,007	82%	R	48%
Westmoreland	1,592	87%	R	48%
King & Queen	1,906	96%	D	48%
Isle of Wight	2,135	77%	D	44%
Princess Anne	1,931	80%	D	41%
Richmond	1,371	89%	R	40%
King George	1,247	88%	R	39%
Northumberland	1,684	88%	D	33%
Accomack	4,383	68%	D	31%
Mathews	1,462	80%	D	23%

state. And when they announced the results, Grover Cleveland had defeated Benjamin Harrison by 1,530 votes out of 304,087 cast.[70] The state turnout was extraordinarily large and in fact the total vote was not surpassed until the 1928 Smith-Hoover election.

In spite of that fact, C. E. Wynes in Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902 stated that, "fraud undoubtedly figured in this election, as it always did, but apathy and dissention caused many Republicans not to bother to vote."[71] His statement is totally incorrect for the Tidewater counties, a major source of Republican strength, and probably is incorrect for the entire state. The returns in 1888 for the Tidewater counties (Chapter IV, Table 16) revealed enormous voter turnouts in many counties, King and Queen (94 per cent), Prince George (98 per cent), Northumberland (93 per cent), Westmoreland (90 per cent), Gloucester (95 per cent), and Charles City (89 per cent). Despite the presence of the Democratic county electoral boards the Republican Party won majorities in twenty-three of the twenty-seven counties. If, as Wynes observes, "many Republicans did not bother to vote," they must have lived elsewhere in

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[70]Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1832-1892, pp. 816.

[71]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, p. 42. In a prior paragraph Wynes compounded his error in his comments concerning the gubernatorial election of 1885 when he noted that "After this election (1885) the Republican Party steadily lost strength in the Eastern part of the state . . . ."(p. 42).

the state, because in 1888 the Republicans in the Tidewater won more counties (twenty-three) and the Democrats fewer (four) than in any previous election since the war.

Clearly the performance of the Tidewater electorate during the 1880's must destroy the idea that the Democratic Party controlled and manipulated the Negro's vote. The black man's loyalty in 1885 and 1888 lay with Virginia's Republican Party and the extent of Republican success in the Tidewater was indicitive of how very few blacks crossed over to vote Democratic. In fact, politics and race seemed to coincide to an extent that divisions of class, wealth, occupation, or geographical setting became insignificant.

Interpretations of Reconstruction along class or wealth lines fail, at least in Virginia, since no one economic group dominated the electorate. Even in the most rural counties propertyholders did not control the electorate because they never numbered a majority of all eligible voters. For instance, in 1888 Charles City County recorded 988 men voting (89 per cent) for president and only 411 names registered on the county land books for that year.[72] Also Northampton County saw 2,007 men (94 per cent) go to the polls in the 1885 election for governor, yet only 705 were listed on the

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[72]Charles City County Landbook, 1888, Clerk's Office, Charles City County Courthouse, Charles City, Virginia.

property books that year.[73] In 1876 in Surry County there were 704 names on the land books, yet 1,236 men voted for president that year.[74]

Furthermore, those county landholding figures cited above suggest that farmers were a monolithic class, which of course was not the case. Beginning in 1891, Virginia county officials were required to list all propertyholders by race. Before that year Negroes holding property were listed in most counties by name and area without any special designation. However in one county, Surry, the county clerk in 1876 wrote "col" after 51 of the 704 landholders, which meant that approximately seven per cent of all landowners were black in 1876.[75] Yet, in the presidential election the Republican Hayes received 596 votes of a total vote of 1,236.[76] Fifteen years later, in 1893, Middlesex County had 788 whites and 390 black men listed as landowners, but in the gubernatorial election of 1893 the Populists swept the county of Middlesex.[77] In the same year, 1893,

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[73]Northampton County Landbook, 1885, Clerk's Office, Northampton County Courthouse, Eastville, Virginia.

[74]Surry County Landbook, 1876, Clerk's Office, Surry County Courthouse, Surry, Virginia.

[75]Burnham, Presidential Ballots, p. 816.

[76]Richmond Whig, November 20, 1876. Official returns of the State Board of Canvassers.

[77]Middlesex County Landbook, 1891, Clerk's

Prince George County had 1,060 black men eligible to vote, but less than half (417) owned property.[78] Prince George County voted Republican in 1885, 1888, 1890, and Populist in 1893,[79] a record which indicated that black propertyholders probably voted by race and not by class.

Apparently a similar situation existed in Tidewater cities, since divisions along lines of property or wealth just cannot hold because of the size of the electorate. For instance, Norfolk according to the Census of 1890 had an adult male population of 9,767, yet only 1,046 of these men owned property.[80] Portsmouth, a city of middle class whites and few blacks provided similar evidence; of 4,096 men of voting age only 591 owned a house or property.[81] Neither Norfolk with 17 per cent of its electorate holding property, nor

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Office, Middlesex County Courthouse, Saluda, Virginia; Election Record No. 154, Statement, 1893, VSL.

[78] Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, p. 806; Prince George County Landbook, 1893, Clerk's Office, Prince George County Courthouse, Prince George, Virginia.

[79] Election Returns, Clerk's Office Prince George County Courthouse, Prince George, Virginia; Population by race, Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, p. 806.

[80] Eleventh Census: 1890, Report on Farms and Homes, p. 1,089.

[81] Ibid., p. 1,090.

Portsmouth with 14 per cent had a wealthy class of men numerous enough to control elections.

So in summary, men of property or of a particular occupation did not control the Tidewater electorate, and it is certain that economic relationships as sharecropper to owner, farm laborer to farmer, or shipyard worker to owner, had little effect on voting patterns. Indeed, there is evidence that in a few counties men who owned no property, paid no taxes, and were in fact legally insolvent, were permitted to vote. The Treasurer of King and Queen County drew up a list of all men in the county who were insolvent by virtue of their inability or unavailability to pay the minimum state tax of one dollar, or the county levy of fifty cents. Dated September 1889 the list contained 490 names; 95 white and 385 black men.[82] Yet in the gubernatorial election of 1889 some 1,789 men were recorded as voting, 963 Democratic, and 788 Republican.[83] According to the Census of 1890 1,887 men lived in King and Queen, so that a total vote of 1,789 meant that more than three hundred men on the insolvency list voted in 1889. Furthermore, voting in the 1888 presidential election had been

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[82]Insolvent Capitation and Property Tax List, September 5, 1889, Clerk's Office, King and Queen County, King and Queen Courthouse, Virginia.

[83]Warrock-Richardson Almanack, 1890, p. 31.

equally intense, in King and Queen the returns showed 1,787 men voting of 1,887 residing in the county.[84] Forty miles away in Prince George County the 1888 presidential election found 1,679 men of a possible 1,720 at the polls,[85] (all but 41), yet the county clerk's list of insolvents contained 455 names in 1888.[86]

The universality of the Tidewater electorate during these years negates any economic interpretation of voting or voting patterns along class or occupational lines. At a time when many men, often a majority in the county, did not own any property, voters participated in federal, state, and local elections in extraordinarily large numbers. Because of the previous statistical evidence historians must accept the fact that in the 1870's and throughout the 1880's in Tidewater Virginia, men of all classes and occupations could and did vote--tenant farmers and sharecroppers, as well as farm laborers, railroad workers, lumbermen, oystermen, merchants, fishermen, and factory workers. Men with no property voted alongside men with much property, and

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[84] Warrock-Richardson Almanack, 1890, p. 31.

[85] Burnham, Presidential Ballots, p. 835; Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, pp. 512-513.

[86] List of Insolvents, 1888. Clerk's Office, Prince George County Courthouse, Prince George, Virginia.

at times men who were legally insolvent also voted. In short, during these two decades universal manhood suffrage prevailed throughout the region.

While no occupational group or class dominated the Tidewater electorate, economic issues did influence men's votes. Inequitable taxation and state fiscal policies too closely tied to the Conservative's economic interests caused the rise of the Readjusters in the late 1870's. And economic issues surfaced again in the 1890's with the Populist movement. By 1890 the Virginia Farmers' Alliance had 30,000 members in 1,113 sub-alliances in ninety-four of the state's one hundred counties; and a separate but similar organization, the Colored Farmers Alliance of Virginia had 20,000 members.[87]

Prior to the 1893 governor's election the Virginia Farmers Alliances' strategy primarily concerned lobbying for agrarian interests, particularly against unequal railroad rates in rural areas.[88] Between 1891 and 1893 the state Democratic Party capitulated to the white Farmer's Alliance by endorsing their programs in both the gubernatorial campaign of 1889 and the congressional elections of 1890.[89] But with the Democrats'

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[87] Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, pp. 22-47; Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 89-93.

[88] Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 100-102.

[89] Ibid., p. 101.

nomination of Grover Cleveland in 1892, and with inaction on railroad legislation by the Virginia General Assembly, the Farmers Alliance broke away from the Democratic Party and formed the Peoples or Populist Party of Virginia in the summer of 1892.[90] Virginia Populists supported General James B. Weaver for President and James G. Field, a Virginian and ex-Confederate General for Vice President; but their efforts failed as Virginia's Democratic organization secured a 50,000 vote majority for Cleveland.[91]

After losing badly in the presidential election of 1892, the Virginia Populists turned to the gubernatorial contest of 1893. At that time Virginia's Republican Party was so weak that it nominated no candidates for any state offices, and the Populist's strategy was to attract most of the former Republicians to Populist positions and candidates. But they miscalculated, for the resourceful state Democratic Party nominated a popular westerner for Governor, Charles T. O'Ferrell and Major R. C. Kent, a champion of the farmer's interests for Lt. Governor. Then, the Democratic platform adopted the Populists' principal issue, free silver, and campaigned on the color line against the insurgents. The

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[90] Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, p. 79.

[91] Ibid., p. 90.

Populist Party which had a weak political organization at the county level was left with little platform and only a minority of white supporters by the end of the campaign. In desperation some Virginia Populists tried to appeal to white supremacy which, of course, resulted in a subsequent drop off in black support.

When the polls closed in the Tidewater cities and counties in 1893, it was clear that the Populists had fared badly in the region (Table 25). Fewer men voted in 1893 than in previous years, moreover, the returns indicated a shift towards the Democratic Party. The Populists carried only seven counties, all with large black majorities in their electorates, while the Democrats won in twenty counties and both cities of the region. Despite winning seven black majority counties the Populists' strategy to conduct a whites only campaign backfired, since there were many other Tidewater counties with significant black populations in which voting declined markedly. For example, Westmoreland County with a population that was 52 per cent black had only a 53 per cent turnout in 1893 compared with 90 per cent participation in 1888. Furthermore Westmoreland County went Democratic in 1893 for the first time since 1877, when the Conservative candidate for governor ran uncontested.

There were many factors in the 1890's which caused the decline in black participation and the shift

TABLE 25

VOTER PARTICIPATION IN ATTORNEY-GENERAL ELECTION OF 1893

	Total Pop. (1890)[a]	Total Adult Male Pop. (1890)[b]	Total Vote Recorded[c]	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious[d]
State:					
Virginia	1,655,980	387,782	217,379	56%	D
Counties:					
Accomack	22,277	6,419	2,240	35%	D
Charles City	5,066	1,104	393	36%	P
Elizabeth City	16,168	3,556	1,425	40%	D
Essex	10,047	2,105	1,672	79%	D
Gloucester	11,653	2,563	1,940	76%	D
Isle of Wight	11,313	2,763	1,782	64%	D
James City	5,643	1,373	636	46%	D

[a] Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, pp. 44-45.

[b] Ibid., pp. 806-807.

[c] Election Record, No. 154. Statement, 1893, VSL. Figures for Attorney General were used because no extant accurate records exist for Governor for 1893. However, a comparison of official vote tabulations for Governor and for Attorney General for earlier elections show a close similarity. Generally, the total county vote varied by less than 10 votes, and in no case was it decisive in swaying the county to opposite political groups.

[d] Ibid.

TABLE 25 (continued)

	Total Pop. (1890)	Total Adult Male Pop. (1890)	Total Vote Recorded	% Eligible Who Voted	Party Victorious
King & Queen	9,669	1,887	1,285	68%	D
King George	6,641	1,438	821	57%	D
King William	9,605	2,016	1,351	67%	P
Lancaster	7,191	1,689	1,647	97%	D
Mathews	7,584	1,818	1,357	75%	D
Middlesex	7,458	1,650	1,214	74%	P
Nansemond	19,692	4,893	2,438	50%	D
New Kent	5,511	1,191	804	68%	P
Norfolk	77,038	21,374	9,739	46%	D
Northampton	10,313	2,442	1,030	42%	D
Northumberland	7,885	1,883	1,465	78%	P
Prince George	7,872	1,720	865	50%	P
Princess Anne	9,510	2,421	1,000	41%	D
Richmond	7,146	1,535	1,117	73%	D
Southampton	20,078	4,326	2,463	57%	D
Surry	8,256	2,136	846	40%	D
Sussex	11,100	2,592	1,549	60%	P
Warwick	6,650	2,482	1,160	47%	D
Westmoreland	8,399	1,820	970	53%	D
York	7,596	1,694	869	51%	D

of counties into the Democratic column in the 1893 elections. Among these were developments in race relations in the nation and the south in the early 1890's. Congress in the debate over the Force Bill, proposed by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, reopened the issue of state control over elections. And when the southern block in the Senate defeated the Force Bill it led some politicians in the south, like "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman of South Carolina, to advocate new state constitutions to eliminate the Negro from the electorate.[92] In Virginia the election of John M. Langston, a Negro from southside Virginia, to Congress in 1888 enabled some politicians within the state Democratic Party to call for a reduction of black voting strength, by any means, even fraud and intimidation.[93] After Langston's congressional election racial tensions increased throughout the state, and one manifestation of that was an increase in lynchings in 1890-91.[94] By the gubernatorial election of 1893 these trends forced white candidates in both parties to shun the Negro vote, and to capitulate to a rising tide

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[92] Morton, The Negro in Virginia Politics, pp. 130-132.

[93] Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, p. 89; W. F. Cheek, III, "Forgotten Prophet: The Life of John Mercer Langston" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1961), pp. 291-300.

[94] Morton, Negro in Virginia Politics, pp. 128-129, 137-139.

of racism in the state and south. Thus, it is not suprising to find fewer black men voting than in previous years.

By the time of the presidential election of 1896 the trend towards reduced participation and one party control had developed even further. In that campaign Democrat William Jennings Bryan represented free silver and agrarian interests; a combination which most Virginia farmers and politicians found irresistible. Even black voters could support Bryan for president, although many were persuaded by Republican money and party loyalty to vote for William McKinley. The Republican National Committee spent $160,000 in Virginia in 1896 and, although they enjoyed considerable newspaper support, they failed to get the voter's ballot on election day as the Democrats scored an easy victory[95] (Chapter IV, Table 17). After 1896 Virginia was a one party state with no effective opposition at the national or state level.

Politics during the remainder of the decade confirmed the shift towards one party domination. Indeed James Hoge Tyler, the Democratic candidate for Governor in 1897 was elected with fewer total votes but with a larger majority than the party's nominee received in

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[95]Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 161-164.

1889 or in 1893.[96] With no opposition party or candidates, apathy spread through all parts of the electorate, and four years later in 1901 Virginians authorized a constitutional convention to disfranchise the Negro. Although less than half of the electorate approved of the convention or selected its delegates, the completed constitution was never submitted to the people for their approbation. Instead, the Democrats promulgated the new constitution which further indicated the extent of one party control and domination of the state.[97]

Yet, these undemocratic developments came at the end of the nineteenth century and were not representative of elections, voter activity, political parties, or patterns of county and city majorities in the years 1865 to 1900. For much of this period most Tidewater men went to the polls in state elections and voted for the party and man of their choice. Furthermore, the existense of an opposition party to challenge the Democrats generally brought out the Tidewater electorate, especially its black voters. For as a rule when an effective opposition party existed, like the Radical Republicans in the 1870's, or Mahone's Readjuster-Republican coalition in the 1880's,

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[96]Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, p. 168.

[97]Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, 1870-1930, pp. 66-87.

Tidewater voters always responded.

Indeed the presence or absence of a well led effective counter party can explain almost all of the voting patterns in the postwar years. Instead of examining election contests for evidence of intimidation against black voters, coercion by white politicians, fraud by election officials, or corruption of black preachers who sold votes of their parishioners, historians should look to the existence of an effective opposition party. For the evidence in the previous two chapters points to the conclusion that in Tidewater Virginia men voted when federal troops were present, when they were removed, when the poll tax was a prerequisite for voting, when the poll tax was repealed, when voice voting was mandatory, when the secret ballot was initiated, when hostile election judges were present, and finally when many other states had barred blacks from voting. For too long historians have viewed Southern state politics in racial terms alone without considering the importance of an effective two party system. Virginia for at least twenty-five years after the Civil War had such a two party system, and apparently it produced democratic elections, not unlike those held in northern, midwestern, and far western parts of the nation.

Yet this conclusion must meet additional tests to be valid. If the men in control of elections recorded

these votes incorrectly, or failed to count ballots from certain groups within the electorate, or counted more votes than a candidate actually received, then the previous voting percentages, comparisons, and conclusions are wrong. Fraudulent elections and charges of election fraud did occur regularly throughout the period. Fortunately, men did not take the loss of their franchise lightly as charges of election fraud were recorded, investigated, and in most cases adjudicated. Evidence from these contested elections, discussed in the next chapter, provides yet another yardstick to measure the nature of the Tidewater electorate.

CHAPTER VI

ELECTION PRACTICES 1865-1900

In spite of extensive voter participation in federal, state, and local elections, Republican success in winning county majorities in election after election, and the almost complete failure of state-imposed suffrage restrictions like the poll tax of 1876, present historical opinion holds that postwar elections in Virginia were undemocratic and fraudulent.[1] But how was that possible in the face of evidence of persistent voting by all races and classes of Tidewater society? Apparently control over election practices was critical, for present interpretation states that the conservative white politicians who served as election officials used their positions to manipulate and disfranchise defenseless voters. Support for the above interpretation exists in newspaper

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[1]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1901, pp. 24, 40, 41, 43, 47, 52, 54; Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, 1870-1930, pp. 27, 28, 45, 46, 47; Buni, Negro in Virginia Politics, pp. 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15; Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925, pp. 24-25, 98.

accounts, manuscript collections, reminiscences, and in testimony taken in congressional and state legislative committees.[2] Furthermore the record of Virginia's election practices conforms to existing knowledge of elections in other southern states, so the weight of historical evidence rests firmly in the corner of those writers who believe that Virginia's elections were undemocratic and fraudulent between 1870-1900.

Yet doubt persists about such generalizations. Far too often historians simply enumerated the contested federal elections in Virginia between 1865 and 1900,[3] or constructed a thesis around two or three disputed election cases,[4] or spliced together an unquestioned secondary source with some manuscript quotations to state the

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[2]Most citations of corruption are for elections in the decade of the 1890's when the state's election law, the Walton Act, was judged to be one of the most undemocratic in the nation. Almost all historians of this period in Virginia are guilty of generalizing about the extent of corruption from a sampling of evidence, letters, newspapers, and contested election cases, taken from this decade.

[3]Ralph C. McDanel, The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902, p. 11. McDanel stated that between 1874 and 1900 Virginia had twenty congressional elections contested, sixteen of which involved fraud. Others have used McDanel's statement to generalize about pervasive fraud in all parts of Virginia for the entire period. See Key, Southern Politics, p. 540.

[4]Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, pp. 45, 46, 47; Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics, pp. 7, 11, 13.

existence of undemocratic and fraudulent elections.[5] Conversely, too few tried to discover if patterns of persistent intimidation or coercion existed; or if the defeated politician, the victim of the alleged corruption, took his case to the legislature for adjudication; or if the legislature, which reviewed all contested elections in the period, attempted to enforce any consistent set of rules governing election practices.

Also, news of election day activities were always recorded in the Tidewater press. The region had several daily newspapers, in Norfolk and Portsmouth, and many small weeklies, serving clusters of counties in the peninsula areas. Yet in histories on Virginia almost all references to fraud or corruption in the Tidewater counties are taken from the Richmond newspapers.[6] There is little or no attempt to consult important regional papers, or to discern from legislative records the conduct of local officials in the disputed election, or to measure the reaction of the local population to the incident.

This chapter tests the accepted generalizations on election practices as they pertain to the Tidewater region. Fortunately ample sources still exist, local newspapers, congressional documents, general assembly

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[5] Key, Southern Politics, pp. 536, 540.

[6] Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, pp. 42, 136.

committee records, and manuscript election returns to permit a multi-level judgement about the activities of the Tidewater electorate on election day.

Like all of the ex-Confederate states Virginia experienced a brief period of military rule, 1867 to 1869. Thereafter elections in Virginia were always held under the control of local officials. And from the first, native whites, most of whom belonged to the Conservative Party, held a majority of positions in local county and city governments and their decisions, not those of a federal troop commander determined the manner of conducting elections. The state legislature provided a legal framework for holding elections and periodically made its influence felt through its decisions in disputed election cases. Nevertheless, between 1870 and 1884 all federal, state, and local elections were conducted by law by county officials: the sheriff, registrar, commissioner of revenue, and commissioner of elections.[7] In 1884 the General Assembly through its Democratic majority enacted new legislation, the Anderson-McCormack Law, which placed control of all elections in the hands of a specially elected electoral board.[8] Since the law designated the

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[7] Code of Virginia, 1873, pp. 59-61.

[8] Code of Virginia, 1887, pp. 34-41.

General Assembly as the electing body, the new electoral boards were packed with loyal Democrats.[9] After 1884 only one other substantive change was made in the election law, when the Walton Act of 1894 implemented the Australian secret ballot.[10] The legislators anticipated difficulty in using the new ballot since over half of Virginia's adult male population was illiterate, so they authorized the electoral boards to appoint a special judge to assist the voter with his ballot.[11]

Clearly then charges of undemocratic or fraudulent elections rest with native Virginians. The only election not under the control of local officials was the gubernatorial and constitutional election of July 6, 1869 conducted by federal troops assigned to Virginia during Congressional Reconstruction. But those forces withdrew in January 1870 and returned to the state only once, to Petersburg for the 1876 presidential election.[12] No

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[9]Allen W. Moger, "The Origins of the Democratic Machine in Virginia," Journal of Southern History, VIII (May, 1942), pp. 183-209.

[10]Acts of Assembly of Virginia, 1894-95, pp. 862-867.

[11]McDanel, The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902, pp. 29-30. This provision in the law was an open invitation to fraud by unscrupulous election judges. Blacks, a majority of whom were illiterate, often refused to vote rather than suffer through the indignity of being tricked by an election judge.

[12]Jack P. Maddex, Jr., Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879, p. 192.

Tidewater county or city saw federal troops guarding the polls during Reconstruction as happened in many regions of the South.

But there were some federal officials observing elections in Virginia after 1870. For in 1871 Congress passed a series of laws which created Federal Election Supervisors to monitor elections in the southern states.[13] These men, appointed by Federal District judges, made their first appearance in the Tidewater in the presidential election of 1872, when Judge John C. Underwood appointed three supervisors to observe the polling at certain precincts in Norfolk and a few select counties.[14] By statute the supervisors did not conduct the election, but they did oversee registration, balloting, tabulation, and submission of the election returns to state or federal officials. Also, since the federal supervisors served as deputies to the federal courts they were empowered to issue citations in any instance of election irregularity. For the Eastern District of Virginia, over the life of the

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[13]Between 1871 and 1872 Congress enacted three enforcement acts to deal with the violence in southern elections. Act of May 31, 1870, U. S. Statutes at Large, Vol. XVI, pp. 140-146; Act of February 28, 1871, Ibid., pp. 432-440; Act of April 20, 1871, Ibid., Vol. XVII, pp. 13-16.

[14]Norfolk Virginian, November 2, 1872; Gloucester Herald, October 26, 1872.

Enforcement Acts, 1871 to 1893, the federal supervisors charged sixty-one Tidewater men with election violations, but secured only two convictions.[15] In comparison, over the same period North Carolina had 523 men charged and 325 convicted, Maryland 167 charged with 45 convictions, and West Virginia 179 with 37 convictions.[16]

Yet evidence about the absence of election irregularities in the Tidewater, although valuable, is essentially negative evidence. Local newspapers generally assigned reporters to watch the polls, or designated special men as correspondents in the outlying counties, and their testimony in the form of news articles affords us the clearest explanation of how elections were conducted. Throughout the Tidewater there were many papers of differing political persuasion, Democratic, Independent, Radical Republican, Republican, and Independent-Conservative, and their news articles and editorials reflected their predjudices and biases.[17] Singularly the

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[15] U. S. Senate, Report on Repeal of Federal Election Law of 1894, Senate Doc. 23, 53rd Cong., 2nd Sess. 1893-94, pp. 1-59. In this report the Attorney General's office listed for the entire south a tabulation of all citations, noll processed, and convictions of men who violated the electoral process in any way.

[16] Ibid., p. 58.

[17] The party affiliations were: Northern Neck News, Democratic weekly; Fredericksburg Star, Independent-Democratic semi-weekly; Suffolk Herald, Democratic-Independent weekly; Norfolk Public Ledger, Independent to

articles were partisan, but taken as a group most of the predjudices cancel out, particularly since the selection covers a thirty year period 1867 to 1897. During those years a multitude of elections were held in the Tidewater region; local ones in May each year, state elections in November of odd numbered years, and federal elections in even numbered years, and news of election day activities provide a basis for establishing a perspective to judge evidence of corrupt practices.

Reconstruction Years, 1867-1876

Between 1867-1876 newspapers in Norfolk viewed politics as essentially a contest between the two races and their news articles generally contained items about any racial disturbances at the polls. For example, the Norfolk Journal's reporter observed the poll in Norfolk in the tense gubernatorial election of 1869: "Yesterday morning, at early dawn almost, the colored elements were out at the polls. For four hours they voted in a solid phalanx. The whites were equally zealous . . . . We heard of no disturbance of any kind. The polls closed at

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1893, Independent-Democratic afterwards, daily; Norfolk Landmark, Democratic, daily; Norfolk Virginian, Democratic, daily. The Richmond Whig was the only major Republican paper in the state, and although others existed in the Tidewater region only scattered copies have survived. Independent editors often took the role of an opposition voice to the Conservative/Democratic opinion in the region.

sundown, all quiet and orderly."[18] A rival paper, the Norfolk Virginian, also had its reporters at the polls on election day and the paper's early edition noted that "the election as far as it has progressed is the quietest ever in Virginia, and the city presents the appearance of a Sunday."[19] Both presses published unofficial totals for each precinct in the city and they kept the tallies by race, white and black. According to the press a large vote was cast and the turnout was biracial, 84.5 per cent of all whites to 82 per cent of all blacks in the city voted.[20] Thus a "quiet" election, as reported by the Norfolk press, cannot be explained by an absence of voters from the polls, particularly black men who were voting for the first time. However, the U. S. Army conducted this poll, and although interest and partisan feelings ran high, the election itself was orderly and quiet.

Long before the next gubernatorial election federal troops withdrew from Virginia. Yet the next gubernatorial election, November 4, 1873, came and went without incident in the Tidewater. "The election passed off very quietly," noted the Norfolk Virginian, "there being

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[18] Norfolk Journal, July 7, 1869.

[19] Norfolk Virginian, July 7, 1869.

[20] Ibid.; Norfolk Landmark, July 7, 1869.

no disturbances worthy of the name at any of the polling places."[21] In the Norfolk Landmark a correspondent from Northampton County observed that the election "at Eastville township passed off without an angry word heard from any quarter."[22] Furthermore, he noted that the Radicals swept to victory in Northampton County; indeed the returns showed 852 for the Republicans to 691 for the Conservatives, and a turnout of 1,543 of 1,889 men in the county.[23] From other areas of the Tidewater newspapers reported on the same gubernatorial election. Fredericksburg, a large town situated between the Piedmont and Tidewater regions, was technically not a Tidewater town but many of its newspaper's readers lived in adjacent counties in the Tidewater.[24] James B. Sener, Republican Congressman from the First Congressional District, owned the Fredericksburg Ledger an Independent-Republican press;

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[21] Norfolk Virginian, November 5, 1873.

[22] Norfolk Landmark, November 6, 1873.

[23] Warrock-Richardson, 1873 (Richmond: C. F. Johnson, Printer), p. 33.

[24] Both the Fredericksburg Ledger, an Independent-Republican paper, and the Virginia Herald, a Conservative-Democratic paper were circulated in the Tidewater counties in the Northern Neck region between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers, and the counties to the west of the York River.

while the Virginia Herald a Conservative-Democratic press was owned by J. Harrison Kelley, an ex-Confederate officer.[25] Yet news coverage differed little between the Republican Ledger's description of a quiet, orderly election,[26] and the Conservative Herald's observation that "never probably in the history of this town and county was there a quieter or more peaceful election."[27]

The following year Sener, the proprietor of the Fredericksburg Ledger, ran for reelection to Congress and he campaigned vigorously in the Tidewater counties of Essex, Northampton, Richmond, Westmoreland, Gloucester, King William, Middlesex, Lancaster, Northumberland, and Accomac. After a rough exciting campaign, Sener lost to his Democratic opponent Beverly Douglas by 295 out of 21,271 votes cast.[28] Sener's own newspaper reported that in Fredericksburg "the voting and the canvass were the most quiet we ever witnessed," and that it heard no news of intimidation or fraud from the counties in the district.[29]

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[25]Lester J. Cappon, Virginia Newspapers, 1821-1935 (New York, 1936), pp. 91-92.

[26]Fredericksburg Ledger, November 7, 1873.

[27]Virginia Herald, November 6, 1873.

[28]Election Record No. 108, Virginia State Library.

[29]Fredericksburg Ledger, November 6, 1874.

Although the Democrats captured the First Congressional District in 1874, they lost it in the elections of 1882, 1886, and 1888.[30]

Excitement and drama attended the congressional campaign of 1874 in the Second Congressional District. In that district, which included most of the remaining counties of the Tidewater region, the candidates centered their campaigns in the populous Norfolk area. There James H. Platt, a Radical Republican carpetbagger who owned a Norfolk newspaper, and John W. Goode a native white Conservative waged so bitter a campaign that many men expected violence at the polls. The mayor of Norfolk put twelve extra policemen on duty and the U. S. District Court Judge appointed twelve federal election supervisors to watch the polls.[31]

But there was no violence. "The election," noted the Norfolk Virginian on November 4, 1874, "passed off as quietly as could have been asked by anyone. Not a disagreeable incident occurred during the day . . . ." A Virginian reporter in the adjacent city of Portsmouth described the election as "one of the most peaceful we ever saw here, there being no disturbance worthy of the

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[30] Warrock-Richardson Almanack, 1884, p. 35; 1888, p. 32; 1890, p. 32.

[31] Norfolk Virginian, November 3, 1874.

name all day."[32] Similar comments came in from special correspondents in small towns outside Norfolk. "The election," began one report from Williamsburg, "passed off quietly here yesterday," and continued with a summary of the vote tabulation.[33] It took a week to count all the ballots in the Second District, but victory went to the Radical Republican Platt, yet his victory total was so slim that virtually every living Republican in the Second Congressional District must have gone to the polls that day.[34] If whites tried to coerce or intimidate black voters in the congressional elections of 1874, they failed everywhere.

Unquestionably the Platt-Goode election of 1874 revealed the tense racial polarization present in the lower Tidewater. For that reason alone the congressional election of 1876, which once again set Platt against Goode, was a tension-filled campaign with warnings about "black rule" and charges of Platt's misuse of his patronage powers.[35] But as in 1869, 1873, and 1874, election day 1876 found the polls in the Norfolk area orderly and quiet.

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[32] Norfolk Virginian, November 4, 1874.

[33] Ibid., November 5, 1874.

[34] Election Record No. 108, 1874, VSL.

[35] Norfolk Virginian, October 24, 26, November 1, 3, 1876; Norfolk Landmark, November 1, 3, 1874.

"There was not a single breach of the peace in this city," noted the Independent Norfolk Landmark, "and no contentions of any importance," and the paper also reported that the election in Portsmouth was "one of the most quiet" ever held in that town.[36] Who deserves credit for this situation? Apparently it was shared by man and nature, for as the papers in Norfolk observed: the mayor reinforced the polls with extra police, it rained heavily all day, and all bars were closed until sundown.[37]

Although the Radical Republican Platt won the election the Democrat contested the results before the Committee on Elections of the House of Representatives.[38] In testimony presented to the committee Goode charged that Platt had bribed his way into office. For just prior to the election the labor force of the Norfolk Naval Yard had increased from 900 to 1,400 men and according to the testimony "these new employees were generally introduced by the Executive Committee of the Republican Party, and it was generally understood that they would be expected to

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[36] Norfolk Landmark, November 8, 1876.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Chester H. Rowell, A Historical and Legal Digest of All the Contested Election Cases in the House of Representatives of the United States from the First to the Fifty-sixth Congress, 1789-1901 (Washington: 1901), pp. 319-320.

vote for the Republican ticket."[39] Since Republicans did not deny the accusation, Congress upon recommendation of the Committee on Elections voted to seat the Democrat Goode.

However revealing of campaign tactics, the Platt-Goode election of 1876 probably was not indicitive of Tidewater politics during Reconstruction. It was the only federal election contested between 1869 and 1876; a time of sixteen congressional elections in Tidewater's two congressional districts. Although tensions always ran high on election day according to congressional records and the region's press, only Platt used blatantly illegal tactics. Of course political parties used pressure to insure their followers voted correctly, no poll was yet considered so illegal as to constitute a challenge before Congress.

At the state level there were many disputed elections, but considering the number of counties and cities in the Tidewater region and the number of opportunities for fraud and corruption, only a fraction reached the General Assembly. Between 1870 and 1876 just six of approximately 125 elections in the region's twenty-seven counties and two cities came before the House of

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[39]Rowell, A Historical and Legal Digest of All the Contested Election Cases in the House of Representatives of the United States from the First to the Fifty-sixth Congress, 1789-1901, p. 319.

Delegates, and none of the disputed elections concerned voters or officials in the same county twice.[40]

In ruling on the six disputed elections from the Tidewater the House of Delegates' Committee on Privileges and Elections, although controlled by Conservatives, tried to establish some electoral standards for local election officials to follow. How and to what extent their decisions influenced local officials remains unknown, but the committee's decisions were consistent in law and at times had real merit to them.

The 1869 gubernatorial election conducted by the U. S. Army saw six defeated candidates with complaints before the legislature in early 1870. Three came from counties in the Tidewater region, and two involved black candidates. In York County Charles S. Buttz a defeated white Conservative charged that his successful opponent F. S. Norton, a Negro was elected under a fictitious name for he had evidence that Norton was actually one Fred Smith. The Committee ruled against Buttz stating that if the voters thought that F. S. Norton was real, cast a majority of their ballots for F. S. Norton, then that was the man they had elected, regardless of his true name.[41]

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[40] House Documents, 1869-70, three cases, No. 2, 7, 12; House Journal and Documents, 1871-72, one case, pp. 77, 128; House Journal and Documents, 1875-76, two cases, pp. 261-269, 271-280.

[41] House Documents, 1869-70, No. 12, pp. 1-2.

In another case from Richmond County L. R. Stewart a Radical Republican received 579 votes to 571 for John S. Braxton, the Conservative. In contesting the election Braxton presented evidence showing that among those who voted were eleven males not twenty-one years of age, two unregistered and five non-resident men, and two idiots who were constitutionally ineligible.[42] The Assembly's Committee on Elections investigated, and decided that Stewart, the Radical Republican, would retain the seat.[43]

Although the House Committee did not explain its decision, a third case from King William County involved a similar Conservative challenge to a Radical Republican's victory. W. D. Pollard the white Conservative contested the election of B. F. Jones a black Republican on the technical grounds that at the Courthouse precinct election officials used one ballot box instead of two as directed by law. After investigating the matter the Committee reported to the House that since they found no fraud, intimidation, or any other irregularities, and a complete acceptance of the tabulation made by the officials at the Courthouse precinct, the election results should stand with B. F. Jones retaining the seat.[44] In this matter

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[42] House Documents, 1869-70, Document No. 2, pp. 1-5.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., Document No. 7, pp. 1-8.

the House of Delegates concurred.[45]

In these three disputed elections a Conservative-dominated committee in the House of Delegates ruled against Conservative party candidates each time. Why? Apparently the legislators had worked out a process based on past experience which involved accusation, investigation, reference to precedents, and finally adjudication. Like the gubernatorial election of 1869, which established standards for later elections, the General Assembly's decisions in these contested elections set precedents and patterns for the decade of the 1870's.

From 1870 to 1876 the House of Delegates Committee on Elections investigated many contested elections from counties throughout the state, but only three from the Tidewater region. Two involved minor complaints,[46] but the third, from predominantly black Prince George County, concerned a charge of intimidation of voters. And that charge made it unique, for among all of the elections brought before the House Committee, only in 1875 in Prince George County was force documented.

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[45] House Journal 1869-70, p. 175.

[46] House Journal and Documents 1871-72, Willis v. Carter, pp. 71, 77, 128, a residency case from Northampton County; House Journal and Documents 1875-76, Murphy v. Walker, pp. 86, 174, 261-269, a contested election from Westmoreland County which hinged on a technicality of the timing of depositions of witnesses.

In the Prince George case the dispute centered on returns from a heavily black precinct where, according to Mann Page, the defeated Conservative candidate, black Republican Party workers seized and beat a black man for failing to obtain a transfer to vote for the Republican ticket, and then displayed the victim to the other blacks in the voting line. The committee investigated, substantiated Page's accusation, and then issued this ringing denouncement:

> When a colored voter was held and cruelly lashed by three other colored voters for not being qualified by transfer to vote with them, and when the facts were known, and the lacerated back and bloody clothes of the person beaten, were exhibited publicly in a mixed crowd of 498 voters, how free were they to vote as free men, or as freedmen? It was a brutal outrage, calculated to intimidate voters, to deter them from voting their choice, and to prevent a free fair election.[47]

Since there was no minority report, the veracity of the charges stand unchallenged; and, upon Committee recommendation the House of Delegates voted to throw out the returns from Bland precinct, and to award the seat to the Conservative Mann Page.[48] No other contested elections

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[47] House Journal and Documents 1875-76, pp. 271-80. Quotation p. 277.

[48] Ibid., p. 280. Minority reports by Republicans in the Assembly were not uncommon during the Reconstruction years. Since a minority report was not filed in the Prince George case, probably the charges concerning intimidation were correct.

from the Tidewater region came before the state legislature during the remainder of the Reconstruction years.

In retrospect the contested elections from the Tidewater region between 1867 and 1869 provide little evidence about election practices. In fact, they illuminate only when placed in a negative light. For instance, out of sixteen congressional elections only one, the Platt-Goode contest of 1874 went to the House of Representatives; and, from the approximately one hundred and twenty-five state elections for Senator or Delegate only six reached the House of Delegates. In the latter group, only one election, the incident of intimidation in Prince George County, witnessed some of the nefarious practices historically associated with the postwar south. Ironically in Prince George the evidence showed that blacks, not whites, beat up a black voter so as to influence the remaining blacks in line to vote. In the end the evidence from the contested elections is consistent with newspaper accounts of the election day activities, and with the returns themselves; for when elections are orderly, quiet, and fair, generally there are few complaints.

Readjuster - Republican Years, 1879-1885.

After 1876 the state Republican Party collapsed and the Conservatives dominated politics in the state until the rise of the Readjusters between 1879 and 1881. In a few counties, like York County with Williamsburg at its

center, the Republican Party continued its control over local politics. For instance, voters in York County in 1877 chose Robert Norton, a Negro Republican, to represent them in the General Assembly, but Norton's Conservative opponent contested the election in Nelson District charging that the election judges, two Republicans and a Conservative, failed to conduct a legal election. Specifically the Conservatives alleged that the Republican election judges openly campaigned for Norton, and that the final count reflected their activities, since Norton carried Nelson District by a vote of 177 to 25.[49] The charge must have contained more wind than substance for it was rejected by the House Elections Committee who investigated and concluded that "the law was fairly and substantially complied with by the judges."[50] Furthermore the House of Delegates concurred in the committee's decision and Norton retained the seat in the House of Delegates.

Evidence of post 1876 Republican successes in other counties came from small weekly newspapers located throughout the region. While the county courts placed abstracts of every election in the order books, the county clerks made no party designations. Thus, except for a presidential or a gubernatorial election year, when slates

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[49] House Journal and Documents, 1877-78, p. 119.

[50] Ibid.

of candidates ran and party affiliations are recognizable, the county records are not as valuable a source as local weekly newspapers. For example, the Northern Neck News was a small Democratic weekly which served the counties of Richmond, Lancaster, Northumberland, Westmoreland, King George, Middlesex, and Essex. Established in 1879 by W. W. Walker, William A. Jones, Dr. A. N. Weldford, and George Walker, the paper was involved in regional politics and worked closely with the Conservative-Democratic Party in the 1880's.[51] In 1879 several of the Northern Neck News county correspondents sent in reports about the county elections held in the third week in May, 1879. From Lancaster Courthouse one "C. B." described how "an exciting canvass ended in a quiet election," and declared that for the first time since Congressional Reconstruction "a Conservative was elected Commissioner of the Revenue over an opponent nominated by the Republican Party."[52] From Heathville, the county seat of Northumberland County, another correspondent took note of the "full vote" polled and sardonically observed that the elections "passed off as quietly as if each voter had been marched to the

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[51]Cappon, Virginia Newspapers, 1821-1935, p. 220. One of the owners of the Northern Neck News, William A. Jones, was its editor between 1883-1889 when he resigned to run for Congress. Elected in 1890, Jones served for the next eighteen years in Congress.

[52]Northern Neck News, May 30, 1879.

polls by a file of soldiers with fixed bayonets."[53] Although federal soldiers were not in Heathsville, Northumberland County, in May 1879, federal election supervisors were there, and apparently everyone knew of their presence.[54]

From Fredericksburg a Conservative paper, the Virginia Star, described the presidential election of 1880 as a normal election in Fredericksburg: a large turnout of voters and an absence of any irregularities at the polls.[55] Similar remarks came from the columns of the Norfolk Virginian in 1880. After describing the election day as "beautifully fair," the Virginian noted that "the vote polled was very large, and everybody was in good humor."[56]

In the gubernatorial election of 1881 William E. Cameron the Readjuster candidate defeated his Conservative opponent.[57] The editor of the Democratic weekly, the

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[53]Northern Neck News, May 30, 1879.

[54]The fact that Federal Supervisors were present at a county election in 1879 should not become grounds for latent cynicism, since any group of nine citizens could request the District Court to appoint men to watch the elections. By law the judge was required to do so; and by practice the county Republican Party sent in the request.

[55]Virginia Star, November 8, 1880.

[56]Norfolk Virginian, November 3, 1880.

[57]Warrock-Richardson Almanack, 1883, p. 30. Of 214,231 votes polled, Cameron won by 12,615.

Northern Neck News made the usual remarks about a quiet election passing off without any difficulty, and added that "the Negro vote was brought out more fully than for years."[58] He claimed that the Readjusters had paid the blacks' capitation taxes and had set up an effective party organization to get the voters to the polls on election day.[59]

Evidence from the presidential election of 1884 indicated that election practices remained competitive and orderly. The Fredericksburg Star the day after the election noted that "the election passed off here without any disturbance of any kind. The largest vote ever cast here was polled."[60] A correspondent from Williamsburg also found "a quiet election" and observed that there was "as usual a full vote, with a Democratic gain recorded."[61]

The gubernatorial election of November 5, 1885, saw Fitzhugh Lee, an ex-Confederate General and Democrat, defeat John S. Wise a popular Readjuster/Republican

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[58] Northern Neck News, November 11, 1881.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Fredericksburg Star, November 5, 1884.

[61] Norfolk Landmark, November 6, 1884.

candidate.[62] In the Tidewater region after an exciting campaign the press observed that election day activities were as orderly as in previous years. From Norfolk the Public Ledger, an independent paper, reported that the Mayor had extra police available but that "the election was one of the quietest seen here in many years." "In Portsmouth," the Ledger continued, " there was the same quietness prevailing . . . ."[63] From the town of Warsaw in Richmond County the Northern Neck News described election day as "Sunday-like," with a few voters on the streets. Most men, according to the Northern Neck News, "came to the polls, voted and returned to work."[64]

In 1885 the Republican Wise swept the Tidewater and especially the counties south of the James River. That section's weekly paper, the Suffolk Herald, attributed his victory to the large number of black voters. Since the Herald was a Democratic paper any unusual activity within the black electorate caused comment. Just after

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[62]Warrock-Richardson Almanack, 1887, pp. 28-29. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902 stated that the Republican Wise received a majority in ninety-three counties and, "friends claimed he was only defeated by fraud in the remaining seven counties." (p. 41). The official returns published in the Almanck show Wise won forty-eight counties to Lee's fifty-two counties and all major cities in the state. Any man winning ninety-three counties would have been elected governor easily.

[63]Norfolk Public Ledger, November 6, 1885.

[64]Northern Neck News, November 6, 1885.

the 1885 gubernatorial election the Herald ran an article entitled "Negro Vote," which stated: "Nansemond County has been receiving a large number of Negro recruits during the past twelve months. We are informed that in the Cyprus district alone more than forty new Negroes registered for the last election."[65] The new "recruits" were black laborers helping to construct a new railroad through the county. Furthermore if transient blacks could register and vote in Nansemond County as they did in 1885, then surely the county electoral board was aware of it.

Democratic Ascendency 1885 - 1894

In 1885 a revived and reunited Democratic Party under the leadership of Governor-elect Fitzhugh Lee took over the reigns of power in Virginia. The Democrats were stirred into action by the activities of Senator William Mahone, the Readjuster Republican leader who successfully fused white Republicans from western Virginia with black Republicans in the Tidewater and southside counties. Once in power the Democrats moved to rewrite the election laws by creating county and city electoral boards to schedule, conduct, and certify all future elections. Enormously powerful, these new electoral boards were loyal to the Democratic Party, since two of its three members came from

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[65] Suffolk Herald, November 6, 1885. The Republican Wise carried Nansemond County 2,008 to 1,320 for the Democrat Lee.

that party by law. Furthermore, all board members served at the will of the General Assembly which was controlled by its Democratic members. After 1885 the veracity of election returns, particularly from counties with heavy concentrations of white Republicans or Negroes, became suspect as charges of corruption and fraud increased substantially.

In Virginia, those counties lying southeast of Richmond and south of the James River were known as the Black belt counties because of the heavy concentration of Negroes. Within the Tidewater region the counties of Southampton, Nansemond, Sussex, Surry, Isle of Wight, and Prince George fell in the "Black belt" and were characterized by their one-crop economies and share-cropper systems. White supremacy attitudes predominated in those counties, and generally elections have been labeled as fraudulent and corrupt by definition.[66] But one of the area's newspapers, the Suffolk Herald, revealed a different set of election practices and attitudes. For example, the paper described the Nansemond County elections of May 27, 1887 as routine: "The election last Thursday passed off very quietly in this county and the vote was a quite full one . . . ."[67] The voters selected a Democratic

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[66] Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, pp. 53-55.

[67] Suffolk Herald, June 3, 1887.

Clerk and Treasurer, but a Republican Sheriff and two Republican Commissioners of the Revenue, one a black man.[68]

Six months later state elections in November 1887 in Nansemond County saw a Republican win a seat in the General Assembly over a Democrat. The county electoral board found irregularities in six precincts, discounted all votes from the predominately Negro precincts, and then certified the Democrat the winner. The Suffolk Herald ran a full account of the electoral board's investigations and decision, and concluded, "This trouble is much regretted and it is to be hoped the will of the voters as expressed at the polls will not be reversed upon immaterial technicalities."[69]

Thus, a Democratic weekly, the Suffolk Herald, in one of the "Black belt" counties in 1887 condemmed the use of technicalities by election officials to void the democratic process of voting. Why? Certainly the editor's position was not taken for partisan political reasons, since if followed, the Republican, not the Democrat, should

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[68] Suffolk Herald, June 3, 1887. Of eleven precincts the Republicans consistently carried seven, and they ran a full slate of men for District officials within the county, Supervisor, Overseer of the Poor, Constable, and Justice of the Peace.

[69] Suffolk Herald, November 18, 1887.

have won the seat. Nor did it reflect a paternalistic attitude towards the blacks, since black votes had placed the Republican in the majority. Perhaps the editors of the Suffolk Herald knew of conditions in other Southern states where fraud and corruption by election officials had made elections a mockery of democracy. Whatever the reason, the editor of the Suffolk Herald's remarks stand in opposition to the accepted view that all whites condoned the use of fraud by election officials in order to secure otherwise unobtainable Democratic victories.

Was 1887 the year when fraudulent elections became commonplace in the Tidewater? Certainly the activities of the Nansemond County Electoral Board were novel enough to elicit comment from the local newspaper. In 1887 in another Tidewater County, Princess Anne, when the Electoral Board arbitrarily certified George W. Leggett, a Democrat, over James E. Kilgro, Republican, Kilgro contested the election in the House of Delegates.[70] In presenting his case which went to the Committee on Privileges and Elections, Kilgro charged that at the Princess Anne courthouse precinct all of the election judges were Democrats, the printed ballots were stamped with the Democratic candidate's picture, and that of 187 men who swore on oath that they had voted the Republican ticket, only 154 were listed as voting Republicans

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[70] House Journal and Documents, 1887-1888, pp. 236-237.

in the official tally.[71] The Committee on Privileges and Elections left Richmond, journeyed to Princess Anne, and investigated the charges. There they interviewed the 187 Republican voters and found sixty-nine men, all of them black, who were illiterate. Since most of these illiterate voters could not identify the Republican candidate, his name, his party, or anything about the election, the Committee chose to discount their votes. This decision permitted the original results to stand with the Democrat the winner. Clearly, the General Assembly's actions in 1888 represented a movement away from impartiality in enforcing election standards towards expediency in helping Democratic candidates.

But the General Assembly's shift occurred slowly in the 1880's and did not reach its undemocratic nadir until after 1894. Then the legislature was considered so partisan that only three disputed elections are on record from 1894 to 1902, a time of notorious corruption and fraud in elections in Virginia.[72] Prior to 1887 a different more

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[71] House Journal and Documents, 1887-1888, pp. 236-237.

[72] All historians who have investigated Virginia in the last decade of the century have found evidence of fraudulent elections. See McDanel, Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902, pp. 29-39; Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902, pp. 52, 55, 56; Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 97, 98, 182, 183; Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, pp. 46, 47.

democratic consensus was present in the state legislature as seen in the following two disputed elections from counties outside the Tidewater. The first, from Mecklenburg County, on its face presented a classical situation for a partisan political judgement. In the 1885 election for House of Delegates, Democrat C. L. Finch received 1,911 votes to 2,395 for Republican J. R. Jones. When Finch took his case to the heavily partisan Democratic General Assembly he listed a series of technicalities: officials in some precincts left ballot boxes open, in others the boxes had inadequate locks, a few polling places opened late while others closed early, and that irregularities in counting and recording the ballots had occurred throughout the county.[73]

In certifying Jones the Republican as the winner, the Committee made the following unusual but accurate observation: "All presumption of fraud as against contestant is negated by the fact that the election machinery was under the absolute control of the Democratic Party . . . of which the contestant was a member."[74] Furthermore, since each precinct in the county had two Democratic election judges and one Democratic clerk, the committee stated it could not believe that "these officers

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[73] House Journal and Documents, 1885-86, p. 237.

[74] Ibid.

failed of their duty, or violated the law, with the intent to defraud the candidate of their own party and defeat his election."[75] This judgement had particular significance for the voters of many of the Tidewater counties because they continued to elect Republicans to office throughout the 1880's.

The second disputed state election prior to 1887 in which the General Assembly adhered to some form of democratic election standards, was the Stubbs-Ross case from Gloucester in 1883.[76] After the election J. N. Stubbs, the unsuccessful Democrat, protested that Readjuster Joshua F. Ross, should not retain his House seat because of irregularities by the election officials. For instance, Stubbs cited the practice followed in one precinct of recording the tally at the top of the page instead of the bottom as stipulated by statute; and he objected that in one precinct a minor served as an election clerk. When the charges were brought up the House Elections Committee rejected them and thundered out in its report "that four hundred and eighty-five voters should be deprived of their franchise because one of the parties that recorded their votes was a youth is a demand

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[75] House Journal and Documents, 1885-86, p. 237.

[76] House Journal and Documents, 1883-1884, pp. 144-146.

that even intense partisans could but resist."[77] When Stubbs claimed that men voted who were not on the county property books, the Chairman of the Committee observed:

> The Committee cannot perceive that the absence of a number of names from the Commissioner's property books cast any doubt upon the registration books. It will be conceded that many men might be eager to vote and adverse to assessment for taxation, and it should produce no surprise that the poll books are fuller than the Commissioner's books.[78]

Of course the Committee rejected Stubbs' claims and seated Ross, but their pronouncements have deeper meaning. Once again the state legislature's elections committee, controlled by Conservatives, acted decisively in 1883 and 1885 to protect the voting rights of state citizens and rejected spurious claims based on personal or party affiliation.

So perhaps 1887 was the pivitol year in which the officials enforcing the election laws, the county electoral boards and indirectly the General Assembly, began to practice systematic fraud to secure the election of Democrats. Certainly prior to 1887 the Democratically controlled Committee on Privileges and Elections of the House of Delegates rejected spurious claims from fellow Democrats, backed local election officials, and more

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[77] House Journal and Documents, 1883-1884, p. 145.

[78] Ibid.

importantly, followed established principles in counting each man's vote regardless of technicalities.[79] Prior to 1887 news of election day activities in the region's press, whether in the major dailies of Norfolk or in the small weeklies of the more isolated counties, corraborated the view that elections were orderly and fair. From all of the region's newspapers reporters had similar observations about "quiet elections" and "large turnouts" and generally of "Republican successes." Then in 1887 in Nansemond County, the Suffolk Herald published its article on fraud and manipulation by election officials, and thereafter post-election coverage, particularly in the 1890's, usually contained a comment about corruption at the polls.

Yet, there is convincing evidence that fraudulent elections were not widespread in the Tidewater for at least five or six years after 1887. For instance, the presidential election of 1888 saw an efficient, ably-led Republican Party sweep the Tidewater region, winning

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[79] In reviewing case after case in the House Journals over a twenty-five year period, 1869-1894, one is struck by how many times the Committee accepted almost any vote that was properly cast at the ballot box. Cases involving disputes of age, residency, or registration rarely received a favorable hearing. See ruling in White v. Hudgin, House Journal and Documents, 1875-76, which stated: "It was clearly the intention of the legislature that elections by the people should not be defeated by irregularities or informalities which could be cured . . . by county board action at a later time," p. 188.

majorities in twenty-four of the twenty-seven counties and in the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth.[80] In 1888 the First Congressional District contained thirteen Tidewater counties north of the York River, and in the congressional race Republican H. Baly Brown, defeated D. R. Kendall, the Democrat, by 424 votes out of 29,048 cast.[81] The Northern Neck News, a staunchly Democratic paper, reviewed the election on November 3, 1888, and found no irregularities or fraudulent practices to report.[82] In fact, the editors called for better organization within the Democratic Party and the selection of a stronger candidate.[83] In the southern part of the Tidewater, the Suffolk Herald, a Democratic weekly, noted that Republicans had won everywhere in 1888, and that in Nansemond County the Republican's margin of victory, 750 votes, exceeded their winning total in 1884 by 160 votes.[84] Was the Republican's great victory achieved by fraud? The Suffolk Herald thought differently since its post-election issue had no

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[80] See Chapter IV, Table 16 for a breakdown of the election of 1888 in the Tidewater region.

[81] Election Record No. 92, 1888, VSL.

[82] Northern Neck News, November 3, 1888.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Suffolk Herald, November 9, 1888.

articles on corruption, fraud, or any election irregularity.[85] In fact, a special correspondent for the Suffolk Herald noted that in Southampton County the election "passed off very quietly," and that "a number of Democrats failed to come to the polls."[86] Why? The writer speculated that many white men believed that voting was hopeless since black Republicans so overwhelmingly outnumbered them.

While the election of 1888 apparently was quiet, orderly, and fair in the Tidewater region, elsewhere in the state turbulance reigned. For instance, the Fourth Congressional District encompassed the many predominantly Negro counties south of Petersburg to the North Carolina border, and in 1888 Johm M. Langston, a Negro college professor from Virginia State College, ran for Congress against two white candidates and the Democratic Electoral Boards. Langston was counted out, but the fraud and corruption was so pervasive that Congress, despite a powerful white Democratic southern block, voted to reverse the election and award Langston the seat.[87]

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[85] Suffolk Herald, November 9, 1888.

[86] Ibid.

[87] W. F. Cheek, III, "Forgotten Prophet: The Life of John Mercer Langston" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1961), pp. 281-298. Rowell, Contested Elections, pp. 458-460.

Also in 1888, in the Third Congressional District centered around Richmond election officials closed the polls with 722 black men waiting in line to vote. Since these black men had been forced to stand in line for several hours prior to the closing of the polls, the defeated Republican candidate contested the election to Congress. The Republican Congress chastised Richmond's election officials, overturned the election results, and awarded the seat to the Republican.[88] Since these two controversial congressional elections received wide publicity throughout the state and nation, many men assumed that all elections in Virginia were fraudulent.

Yet in many Tidewater counties blacks continued to vote after 1888 although their loyalty to the Republicans waned somewhat. For after 1888 Negroes distrusted William Mahone, the state's Republican boss since he had vigorously opposed John M. Langston in his race for Congress from the Fourth Congressional District. Apparently many blacks turned away from the Republican leader when he ran for Governor in 1889. The Democrats in opposition to Mahone in 1889 nominated Philip W. McKinney, a popular old-line Democratic Congressman, and after a bitter campaign which centered on Mahone's "bossism," the

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[88] Rowell, Constested Elections, pp. 452-454.

Democrats swept to a 42,000 vote victory.[89]

A county-by-county analysis of the 1889 election returns showed that some of the black majority counties went Democratic for the first time in the decade of the 1880's. For example, Nansemond County, the location of the southside weekly the Suffolk Herald, went Democratic in the 1889 gubernatorial election for the first time since 1877, when the Conservative candidate ran unopposed. In article after article about the election, columnists in the Herald proclaimed the Democratic success in Nansemond County an "immense victory" over the "bossism" of Mahone.[90] And the paper suggested that McKinney's victory was due to the many black men who supported the Democratic ticket in opposition to Mahone. A special correspondent from Southampton County said he saw "a number of colored men who voted the Democratic ticket . . ." and that night when the Democratic victory was announced "they (colored men) seemed quite proud of the fact."[91] Thus, in two counties from the Southside, Nansemond and Southampton, the shift from a Republican to Democratic majority was not the result of fraud by election officials; it was a legitimate crossover of voters.

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[89] Warrock-Richardson Almanack, 1891, p. 28.

[90] Suffolk Herald, November 8, 1889.

[91] Ibid.

Such a conclusion gains strength when one looks at the results of a local election in Nansemond held in May 1889. The Suffolk Herald, after noting that "the elections in this county passed off quietly last week . . . ," went on to present the results for the district elections. Of four districts, three went solidly Republican as the voters chose men for the offices of supervisor, magistrate, justice of the peace, and constable.[92] Indeed, "A colored supervisor and two colored magistrates," the article stated, "were elected in Sleepy Hollow District."[93] If Republicans could win in Nansemond in May 1889, then surely they had the votes to win in November 1889 when Mahone went down to defeat.

By 1893 the Republican Party had become moribund at the state level; no Republican candidate was nominated for governor, and Republican county organizations had deteriorated. Since the voting strength of the Republicans in the Tidewater counties had always resided in the black community, black men faced several choices in the early 1890's. A few moved into the Democratic Party, others voted with a new opposition party, the Peoples Party, still others followed independent candidates of their own race, and some black men just stopped voting.

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[92] Suffolk Herald, May 31, 1889.

[93] Ibid.

The gubernatorial election of 1893 saw the working out of all of these voting trends and shifts. For example, in the urban area of Portsmouth, the press commented that "it was quiet and dull around the polls yesterday and a light vote was polled," and how "the Negroes voted with the Democrats, and the Republicans with the Democrats."[94] From the Eastern shore, a correspondent noted that "the vote in Accomac is the smallest in many years. The state legislative ticket had practically no opposition."[95] Others expressed the same feeling of apathy among the voters, as the Fredericksburg Free Lance editor wrote that "never in the last twenty years has there been as little interest manifested in an election in Fredericksburg."[96] Moreover, he found only minor opposition to the Democratic ticket for "the Populists had no organization whatsoever."[97] From Williamsburg the Norfolk Landmark's correspondent had a different observation about the Populists. After he described the election as quiet "with a small vote recorded," he stated that "the

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[94] Norfolk Landmark, November 7, 1893.

[95] Fredericksburg Free Lance, November 10, 1893.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

Populist leaders, who are all Republicans, worked hard all day and with little success."[98] From the Northern Neck a man wrote in to report that "a rather small vote was polled in Mathews County as the Republicans voted lightly."[99]

The press reports pointed to many factors--voter apathy, no Republican candidate, ineffective Populist Party organization--to explain the transfer of a county or city from Republican to Democratic control. Corruption by election officials probably occurred in some counties and cities in 1893, but not to the extent that it affected every election in every county. In many counties officials conducted elections in 1893 as they had in previous years: with order, decorum, and with a fair count. In 1893 the returns showed a tremendous victory for the Democratic candidate, Charles T. O'Ferrell. He won by 46,701 votes over his opponent Edmund R. Cocke, the Populist, and it represented the greatest victory margin for the Democrats since the Civil War. Yet, the victory was achieved by a more sophisticated set of factors than references to fraud, corruption, or intimidation.[100]

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[98] Norfolk Landmark, November 8, 1893.

[99] Northern Neck News, November 4, 1893.

[100] Charles E. Wynes, "Charles T. O'Ferrell and the Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1893," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXVI (October, 1956), pp. 437-453. Wynes agreed pointing to O'Ferrell's stand

Virginia's newspapers rarely published details about fraudulent practices by state election officials, however, in February, 1894 a Richmond paper, The Times, ran a series of articles on corruption at the polls in state elections.[101] Evidence from those articles revealed that while most of the corruption was centered in the Fourth Congressional District south of Petersburg, the cities of Norfolk and Richmond had corrupt officials too. And the Norfolk Virginian corroborated the allegation when it investigated and found that in Norfolk electoral fraud was centered in the city's heavily black Fourth Ward.[102] When the Virginian compared the vote totals for the Fourth Ward between 1884 and 1892 it found a series of Republican victories in 1884, 1885, 1886, 1889, 1890, and 1892, with the Democratic Party's highest vote total, 231 votes, coming in 1892. Then in May 1893 the Democratic candidate for Mayor spent $2,300 in his campaign which carried him to victory in the ward, as he received 238

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on Free Silver, and the statements of Mahone, encouraging his old Republican supporters to vote with the Populists. The former drew support from the Populists, and the latter held wayward Democrats in check.

[101] Richmond Times, February 7, 9, 10, 1894.

[102] Norfolk Virginian, February 8, 9, 11, 1894.

votes.[103] The following November, 1893, the Democratic campaign committee spent but $30, and won an 822 vote majority! The Virginian concluded that the Democratic victory was the result of deliberate fraud by election officials in the Fourth Ward.[104]

The other Norfolk papers took up the issue of fraudulent elections over the next few weeks of February 1894, and although the discussions concerned corruption in the Fourth Ward, the issue quickly shifted to "bossism." The three leading papers of the city concluded that the Democratic voters had such a majority in Norfolk that a "boss" was no longer needed.[105] Within the city six hundred Democrats signed a petition asking the state legislature to remove Norfolk's corrupt Electoral Board and order a new general registration.[106] Throughout the

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[103] Apparently the money was spent to bribe men not to vote, since Negroes generally would not vote for the Democratic candidate. See Frank G. Ruffin, White or Mongrel (Richmond, 1890), p. 50, in which Ruffin, a Negrophile, observed "All that the Democratic Party has ever been able to effect has been to purchase their neutrality to a partial extent."

[104] Norfolk Virginian, February 9, 1894.

[105] Ibid., February 16, 1894; Norfolk Public Ledger, February 18, 1894; Norfolk Landmark, February 21, 1894.

[106] Norfolk Virginian, February 16, 1894. Apparently the petition did little good as the legislature reappointed the same members to the board in 1894.

discussions in all three Norfolk newspapers there was an absence of citations about similar fraudulent conditions in the other cities, towns, or counties of the Tidewater region.

In conclusion, some election officials were corrupt in the Tidewater region between 1885 and 1894 but they were not numerous until the 1890's. The press in Norfolk knew when corrupt elections began in their city: in 1893 with the election of the Democrat O'Ferrell. Prior to that election the opposition had always carried the black Fourth Ward; and if the vote was close, it meant that either no independent opposition to the Democratic candidate, as in 1877, or the absence of the Republican Party after 1893.

Era of Fraud and Corruption 1894-1901

In 1894 the state legislature enacted a new election law, the Walton Act, which was so partisan that many local Democratic election officials used it openly to disfranchise blacks and white Republicans through fraudulent practices.[107] Specifically, the Walton Act introduced the Australian secret ballot into Virginia politics. The new ballot contained no symbol or other party designations, and the voter was required to mark it in an enclosed polling

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[107] McDanel, Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902, pp. 29-33.

booth. In addition, the voter had to line out all candidates or proposals but the one of his choice. To further confuse the voter a time limit of two minutes for each individual to vote was further stipulated. Since illiteracy was still high in Virginia (one-half of the black population and one-fifth of the white) the Walton Act provided one additional election official, a special constable authorized to enter the booth with the voter and assist him in voting.[108]

The first election conducted under this new election law produced unexpected chaos particularly when local officials used its provisions either to eliminate votes through improperly marked ballots, or to discourage voters, mostly blacks, by appointing white Democrats as special constables. Apparently the special constables tricked many an illiterate voter into casting his ballot incorrectly or for the Democratic candidate.[109]

The press of the region painted a sordid picture of officials' activities during the first election of November 1894. The Norfolk Pilot complained that Democratically controlled Electoral Boards had arbitrarily eliminated 801 Republican votes in Norfolk, 500 in Elizabeth

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[108] Acts of Virginia, 1893-1984, p. 862.

[109] Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, p. 52.

City County, and 400 in Nansemond County.[110] The Free Lance, an independent paper in Fredericksburg reported that many of its readers objected to fraudulent practices of the Democratic election officials.[111] One of the paper's subscribers, William A. Mayo, observed the polling in Westmoreland County and reported "most of the thrown out ballots were those of young Negroes who would not consult with the constables but did their own scratching, and, of course did it defectively."[112] On the Eastern Shore peninsula the editor of the Farmer and Fisherman, a local weekly from Accomac County, criticized the Walton Act. In his analysis of the first election held under the new law the editor observed that many precincts with large Republican majorities had recorded Democratic victories for the first time since 1869! Furthermore he knew of hundreds of Negroes, along with many white citizens, who were confused by the new procedures under the Walton Act; and he called for its repeal.[113]

The Walton Act of 1894 was primarily responsible

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[110] Norfolk Pilot, November 8, 1894.

[111] Fredericksburg Free Lance, November 9, 1894.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Reprinted in Fredericksburg Free Lance, November 9, 1894.

for the increase in disputed elections after 1894. Between 1869 and 1901 Virginia had twenty-one congressional elections contested before Congress; and ten of those cases occurred in elections conducted under the Walton Act of 1894. In adjudicating those ten disputed election cases Congress, through its Committee on Elections, criticized Virginia's election law severely. In one case the Committee stated that Virginia's Walton Act was only a "shield for fraud,"[114] in another, "a sanctioned conspiracy by the state,"[115] and in another case a committee member referred to the law as "the most undemocratic state election law in the nation."[116]

Coincident with the enactment of the Walton Act in 1894 came the repeal by Congress in 1894 of the federal statute requiring federal election observers at elections in the ex-Confederate states.[117] Those two acts, along with the demise of the Republican and Populist Parties in Virginia, opened the flood gates of corruption in many counties and cities of the state.

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[114]Thorp v. McKenney, 1896. Rowell, Contested Elections, p. 540.

[115]Yost v. St. George Tucker, 1896. Rowell, Contested Elections, p. 551.

[116]Thorp v. Eppes, 1898. Rowell, Contested Elections, p. 566.

[117]Cong. Record, 53rd Cong., 1st Sess., 1893, pp. 2375, 2376, 2378.

Under such chaotic conditions many men, particularly blacks, stopped voting completely. For example, the election for state senator in Nansemond County on November 4, 1895, produced only one candidate and the smallest vote, according to the Suffolk Herald, "that has been polled in any similar election since the Reconstruction period . . . ."[118] In neighboring Southampton County a similar condition existed, for the election there was "the quietest ever held here," with a very light vote, and "the Negroes as a rule, abstained from voting."[119] In the northern part of the Tidewater the electorate was in a similar comatose condition. A correspondent from King George County reported to the Northern Neck News that widespread Democratic frauds had produced a very small turnout of voters.[120]

Thus, election practices and election politics became so undemocratic after 1894 that voting for many man was an exercise in futility. Fewer men participated in elections after 1894, and those who still voted had to endure some form of corruption from one Democratic faction or another. Black men in particular felt the effects of the pervasive fraud after 1894 for they were bribed, coerced, counted out, and repeatedly betrayed by white

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[118] Suffolk Herald, November 8, 1895.

[119] Ibid., November 8, 1895.

[120] Northern Neck News, November 12, 1897.

politicians. In fact, as H. J. Eckenrode has stated, Negroes after the passage of the Walton Act of 1894 only voted in certain county elections and in their own district contests.[121]

For those reasons, election statistics after 1894 are probably unreliable for state and many local elections. Presidential elections in 1896 and 1900 saw many complaints of corruption during the campaign; for example, the buying and selling of votes for McKinley in 1896. Yet there were but few verified complaints of official fraud. Although the state went for the Democrat Bryan in 1896, the margin was smaller than in 1892 for Cleveland, which meant that Republican voters were counted by election officials.[122] Also, the Republicans knew of the Democrats' past history at the polls, and in 1896 the state party had received $150,000 from the national committee, some of which was spent hiring men to watch the polls.[123] Yet, given the consensus of the times, the past record of the election officials, and the Walton Act's

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[121]Eckenrode, "History of Virginia Since 1865" (unpublished manuscript, Virginia State Library), p. 275. My own research confirms this judgement, but that blacks generally voted only for black candidates as they began to run for office as independents.

[122]Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 163. Bryan's plurality was 19,341 in 1896, compared with a plurality of 50,715 for Cleveland in 1892.

[123]Ibid., pp. 161-165.

provisions, statistics from the presidential elections of 1896 and 1900 probably should not be trusted to the same degree as those from 1872 to 1892.

It is clear that elections after 1869 in Tidewater Virginia fell into two unequal chronological periods. In the first, between 1869 and 1894, elections according to the region's press were quiet, orderly, with extensive voter participation, and with an accurate count of the votes. Contested elections occurred infrequently at the federal and state levels; and they were adjucated with surprising uniformity. The standards of conduct imposed on local election officials were essentially democratic, since the will of the voter took precedence over technicalities in case after case. Evidence of serious fraudulent practices by either a Republican or Democratic politician resulted in loss of his seat in the elective body.

Then, in the second period, 1894 to 1900, a combination of factors, the Walton Act, the recall of Federal Election Supervisors, the demise of the state Republican Party, fusion among Populists and Democrats, and the rise of Jim Crowism, caused undemocratic conditions to become the rule at the polls. Those conditions led to a public call for a new state constitution in 1901 to disfranchise all black voters in order to stop the

corruption.[124]

So for almost four-fifths of the postwar period 1867-1901 election practices in the Tidewater counties provided most men with the opportunity to vote. Not only did the majority of Tidewater men continue to have and use the franchise, but many held or ran for elective office. Like voting, officeholding was a right which came with citizenship, and the extent to which blacks or Republicans held elective offices, particularly at the county level, is an additional way to measure the extent of democracy in Tidewater society.

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[124]McDanel, Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902, pp. 25-34; Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, pp. 46, 47, 66-91.

CHAPTER VII

POLITICS, POLITICAL PARTIES, OFFICEHOLDING, AND THE NEGRO DURING RECONSTRUCTION

In 1867 Congress made Negro suffrage one of the prerequisites for re-entry into the Union, and Virginia politics, public opinion, and political parties changed rapidly thereafter. Virtually all Tidewater white men, and particularly its white political leaders had a very low opinion of the Negro as a citizen, yet they all expected him to exercise his voting rights fully.[1] And their expectations were justifiable as in the first election in which blacks were eligible to vote, October 1867, they participated fully. In Norfolk the conservative press published tally sheets by race and had a number of reporters in the surrounding counties mail in reports on the elections there. From Hampton came a typical report:

> The election passed off very quietly, the voting being confined almost entirely to the Freedmen. They commenced to assemble at an early hour in the morning, crowding the polls until their close

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[1] Norfolk Journal, October 24, 1865; Norfolk Virginian, October 10, 16, 22, 1867. A "grand" rally was held in Norfolk on October 22 to permit moderate white Republicans to address the crowd. Both candidates made specific appeals to the Negro voters.

> at sunset. The colored population seem fully determined to enjoy to its fullest extent this their first privilege of voting.[2]

In Norfolk the Journal compared the number of Freedmen registered to vote with those who did vote. By October 24, 1867 some 1,945 blacks had registered, and the newspaper counted 1,823 blacks at the polls, which meant that approximately 82 per cent of all black men in Norfolk in October 1867 participated in the election.[3] Furthermore, Norfolk's Freedmen voted as a block and elected two Radical Republicans, Henry M. Bowden and Thomas Bayne, the latter a Negro, to represent Norfolk at the Underwood Constitutional Convention in 1868.[4]

Since blacks in the Tidewater region voted consistently after 1867 Tidewater politics and political parties became polarized along racial lines. Former party labels such as Whig or Democrat became derivative in nature, and most men made voting decisions on the basis of race, not principles or personalities.[5] County and

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[2] Norfolk Journal, October 25, 1867.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Eckenrode, Virginia During the Reconstruction, p. 89.

[5] See Maddex, The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879, Chapter 17 for discussion on the Whig-Conservative Democrat issue. Maddex concluded that "The post-war roles of some former Whigs were symptoms of the Conservative's adaptive orientation, not its cause." (p. 287)

regional elections became contests to determine which race would control local government.

In Virginia, although white Conservatives won control of the state government in the July 1869 gubernatorial election the conversion to white control took longer in many Tidewater counties. For instance, in 1870 in Westmoreland County on the Northern Neck peninsula Radical Republicans filled all county offices but one, Overseer of the Poor.[6] Voters in Elizabeth City County in 1873 elected a complete slate of Republicans to county positions, and sent two Negroes to the state General Assembly.[7] In 1874, Middlesex County was still under the control of the Radicals, causing a white conservative correspondent to complain in his election day report to the Norfolk Virginian: "It should be remarked here that the whole election was in the hands of the black party, there being a Negro to receive the votes, three of the clerks Radicals, and only one Conservative on the list of registrars."[8] In addition Republicans controlled county governments in Prince George, Charles City, and Norfolk counties during the decade of the 1870's.[9]

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[6] Fredericksburg Herald, November 17, 1870.

[7] Norfolk Landmark, November 4, 1873.

[8] Norfolk Virginian, November 6, 1874.

[9] For Prince George see Election Abstracts, Clerk's Office Prince George County; For Charles City see this Chapter, p. 267; For Norfolk County see Election Abstracts, Clerk's Office, Norfolk County, Chesapeake, Va.

Thus blacks in the Tidewater in the first year of the Reconstruction proved their determination to exercise their franchise rights even though they did not control the state government. They voted whenever elections were held, and for every level of elective office: president through district constable. Party discipline ran high and party leaders, often black preachers, proved effective in maintaining unity.[10] Fortunately, a few counties preserved the requisite election records to prove persistent and consistent voting by black men.

Charles City County, a rural county located along the James River southeast of Richmond, had a stable population with blacks comprising 68 per cent of the electorate in 1870, 67 per cent in 1880, and 65 per cent in 1890.[11] A comparison of voting totals by party between 1869 and 1896 revealed a consistency in the number of voters supporting the Republican Party (Table 26). But can we equate consistent Republican majorities with participation by black voters? Probably so, for the abstracts reveal that in four years, 1877, 1879, 1883, and 1892 Negroes ran for office, and they received a majority of the county's votes each time. Throughout the Reconstruction period one rule of Tidewater politics precluded white men from

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[10] A. A. Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 206-207.

[11] See Chapter IV, Table 13, pp. 111-112.

crossing the color line to vote for Negro candidates for public office. And since voice voting was state law from 1876 to 1894, the probability is excellent that men in Charles City County voted by race.

TABLE 26

VOTING IN CHARLES CITY COUNTY, 1869-1896[12]

Year	Election	% of Electorate Voting	Democrat	Republican
1869	Governor	84%	382	628
1873	Governor	81%	384	589
1874	H. of Rep.	77%	358	570
1875	H. of Delegates	72%	368	500
1876	President	86%	397	654
1877	State Senate*	58%	250	461
1879	State Senate*	51%	240	383
1880	President	65%	331	464
1881	Governor	67%	358	467
1883	State Senate*	84%	424	601
1885	Governor	94%	372	661
1888	President	89%	303	684
1889	Governor	87%	336	633
1890	H. of Rep.	49%	135	401
1892	H. of Rep.*	79%	354	523
1894	H. of Rep.	56%	276	347
1896	President	54%	272	362

*Negroes running on Republican ticket.

According to the evidence in Table 26 voter participation in Charles City County followed closely the fluctuations of the state Republican Party. Whenever that party was strong; between 1869 and 1876, and again in the 1880's when the Republicans were led by William Mahone, the

[12] Election Abstracts, Clerk's Office, Charles City County Courthouse, Charles City, Virginia.

men of Charles City County responded with vigorous participation and large Republican majorities. But the Republicans did not have to depend on full voter participation for victory, for the blacks in Charles City County had a strong organization and the Republicans won every election between 1869 and 1896.

How did the whites respond to such persistent voting by the black community? In the first years of Reconstruction, Tidewater white men chose competition at the polls rather than intimidation and violence. Their Conservative Party attracted white men of differing political backgrounds, yet they all agreed that the vote of every white man in the county, town, or city was needed. Within the white community tension at election time ran extremely high in the years 1867-1873. But, unlike other white men in the south, Tidewater whites channeled their pre-election activities into traditional political activities: party meetings, rallies, registration drives and precinct work.[13]

The newspapers of the region often became over-zealous in their pre-election exhortations about the dangers of "black rule," and their coverage of election day activities clearly showed the intensity of the white

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[13] A student of the Klu Klux Klan activity in the South has concluded after his research, "In Virginia the Klan does not seem to have been active at all." Stanley F. Horn, The Invisible Empire (Boston, 1939), p. 281.

community's effort. In the gubernatorial election of 1869 the Conservatives in Fredericksburg were so well organized that the editor of the local Conservative press could boast "every white registered voter was polled in Fredericksburg except three, one of whom was obstinate, one sick, and the third the Conservatives were not anxious to have polled."[14]

During the same election a correspondent to the Norfolk Virginian reported that the "clans" were active in Mathews County. Yet he was not using the word "clans" to elicit racial fears, for he was describing groups of both black and white voters. Moreover, his account relays the intensity felt on election day, July 6, 1869, in Mathews County: "The clans mustered early, and by one o'clock nearly the whole vote of the county had been cast, but anxious parties were out in every direction in quest of the aged, the infirmed, the sick, and the weak hearted."[15] In 1869, Mathews County had 1,042 adult males over twenty-one years of age; of that number 1,032 cast a ballot for governor.[16] In the urban areas white men were equally zealous in persuading all eligible whites to vote. Of 2,422 whites registered in Norfolk, 2,064 voted in the

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[14] Virginia Herald, July 8, 1869.

[15] Norfolk Virginian, July 7, 1869.

[16] See Chapter V, Table 20, pp. 161-162.

1869 election.[17] Nor did such intense feeling in the Tidewater white community abate. In the next gubernatorial election in 1873 a correspondent from Northampton County boasted that the Radicals had carried his county by 100 votes, adding that "every white man on the registration books voted but one."[18]

With such extensive voter participation, the result of any election became almost predictable. In counties where a majority of the voters were black, Republican candidates won; conversely in counties or cities where whites had a majority, Conservative or Democratic candidates were victorious. Of course, this equation often broke down in county elections, where party labels merged into personalities.[19] For that reason city and county elections at times had third party or independent candidates who attempted to appeal to the voters of the two established parties.[20] By definition, independent candidates came from the white community.

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[17] Norfolk Journal, November 7, 1869. A turnout of 85 per cent of all those men registered. The blacks registered 2,470 men and 2,923 voted, or 84 per cent.

[18] Norfolk Landmark, November 6, 1873.

[19] The exact dating of redemption of each county remains unknown. However, the return of many Tidewater counties to the Democratic Party in national elections did not occur until the 1890's, and in state elections until 1889.

[20] This was particularly the case in the decade of the 1880's when many Readjuster politicians who were anti-Conservative party broke with the leader of the Readjusters, William Mahone when he tried to lead them into the Republican Party.

During the first years of Reconstruction the white/black split within the electorate became very rigid, and a few political opportunists moved into the stalemate. Traditionally considered carpetbaggers or scalawags, in the Tidewater these men represented the spectrum of political society. For example, after the Conservative Party had lost the town of Fredericksburg to the Radicals in the gubernatorial election of 1869, Conservative politicians organized a barbecue for blacks in hopes of winning their support in future elections. The speakers included the mayor of Fredericksburg, former U. S. Congressman John L. Marye, and two black men who addressed the crowd advocating a coalition of blacks and whites along Conservative lines. At the dinner following the speeches the men sat by race at separate tables, but they were served by white waiters and the fare included lemonade, mint juleps, and wiskey punch.[21] On the other hand, in Norfolk Radical Republican James H. Platt used federal employment to induce white laborers to vote for the Republican Party. In 1874, two months before he stood for reelection to Congress, Platt arranged for the Norfolk Naval Yard to put five hundred extra workers on the payrolls, and those workers were interviewed for the positions by the local Republican credentials committee![22] So both parties contained men

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[21] Fredericksburg Ledger, July 20, 1869.

[22] Chester H. Rowell, Digest of Contested Elections in House of Representatives, 1789-1901 (Washington, 1901), pp. 318-319.

like Marye and Platt who crossed racial lines and traditions in their search for votes.

The Conservatives responded in Norfolk to "Platt's boys" by forming committees to watch the polls on election day. Those groups, called Vigilance Committees, numbered approximately sixty to sixty-five white men whose function was to stand watch at each ward in the city on election day.[23] Prior to the election Norfolk's Conservative newspapers published the names of the Vigilantes and their ward assignment. Were the Vigilantes there to do more than watch the polls? Of course, they were present to coerce other white men into voting the Conservative ticket. Clearly, their presence did not intimidate many blacks in 1874, since Platt won reelection to Congress in a close vote.[24] Norfolk vigilance committee's were present at every election from 1874 to 1888;[25] yet, throughout the period blacks voted, and a two party system existed in the city. Apparently the committees existed to enforce party loyalty and not for nefarious purposes.[26]

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[23]Norfolk Virginian, November 3, 1874.

[24]Election Record No. 108, VSL.

[25]Norfolk Virginian, November 5, 1876; Norfolk Virginian, November 3, 1880; Norfolk Landmark, November 4, 1884; Norfolk Public Ledger, November 2, 1888.

[26]I could find only one documented incident of coercion by the Norfolk Vigilantes. The day following the gubernatorial election held on November 3, 1885 the Richmond Whig ran a correspondent's report from Norfolk charging the conduct of the election was "infamous and

Opportunistic white politicians like Congressman James H. Platt or James B. Sener of Fredericksburg worked well with black voters, but at times discord appeared. In 1874 Congressman Platt was running for re-election when a black merchant, Robert Norton of Yorktown, entered the race as a write-in candidate.[27] Norton had a cadre of approximately 350 followers, and in a close election those votes would be critical. In an attempt to resolve the issue Congressman Platt and a group of his supporters went to Yorktown three days before the election and confronted

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disgraceful." Colored men were beaten, tickets taken from the precinct workers, and in the Fourth Ward, the colored ward, over 1,000 voters deprived of their votes by corrupt election officials. But I could never verify the Whig's report from any other sources, newspapers, contested election documents. In fact, in Norfolk, an independent paper reported that "The colored vote turned out full force. Everything is going on peacefully and quietly. A full vote is likely to be polled." Public Ledger, November 2, 1885. And the Republican candidate carried the Fourth Ward by 450 votes out of 679 cast which indicates that fraud, if attempted, failed miserably.

This type of shoddy accusation is understandable given the partisan nature of the press, particularly the Republican Whig. But some historians have used such charges uncritically. Stanley P. Hirshson, Farewell to the Bloody Shirt (Bloomington, Indiana, 1963) cited the Whig in explaining the extent of intimidation of black votes in Charles City County. There, he explained, blacks had a population two and one half times as great as its white, yet in 1883 only sixty-one votes were cast for the Readjuster Party compared with 481 for the same party in 1882 (p. 119). The official election tally certified by the State Board of Canvassers showed 611 for the Readjusters to 405 for the Democrats in Charles City County in 1883. MS Vol. Election Record No. 63 (VSL).

[27] Norfolk Virginian, November 3, 1874.

Norton and his followers. An argument ensued, and Platt's men ransacked the town.[28] An angry Norton, who was the leading black merchant in Yorktown, reacted by refusing to withdraw his candidacy. Quickly an organ of the Conservatives, the Norfolk Virginian, tried to further the breech between the white Radical Republicans and the Black Republicans by supporting the native Virginian, Norton. In a classic editorial addressed "to our colored citizens" the Virginian stated that "we (the whites) would greatly prefer to be represented in Congress, or anywhere else, by one of their color, than to be misrepresented by an illiterate, black hearted, social equalizer, salary grabber, and carpetbagger, like James H. Platt, Jr. of Vermont."[29]

Newspapers from other sections of the Tidewater often took a similar paternalistic tone when addressing blacks. For example, the West Point Star, a small Democratic weekly circulated in the counties along the York River, warned blacks against voting for President Grant's re-election in 1872:

> We say it is time for the Negro to stop and think. Here in Virginia, where we were raised with him, know him, and like him, we will never permit our state government to be used for his injury or oppression. But if the Negro is guilty of the ingratitude of

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[28] Norfolk Virginian, November 3, 1874.

[29] Ibid., November 6, 1874.

> going and voting against Horace Greeley . . . then Cuffee, by his course, will have white friends neither in Washington nor in Virginia.[30]

Entreaties like those from the Virginian or the Star almost never worked. The Negro continued to vote with the Radicals until 1876, and then with the Readjuster/Republicans until the 1890's.

In the years when the black man had no active Republican Party to support, there is little evidence to suggest that he crossed over and supported Conservative/Democratic candidates. For example, in the election of 1877 F. M. W. Holliday, the candidate for the Conservatives ran unopposed for governor. As expected Holliday received fewer votes than previous Conservative candidates, and in fact his total was the smallest number of votes cast for any governor from 1865 to 1900.[31] How much of the vote for Holliday came from the Negro community? Very little, if the election returns from Charles City County are accurate. There, in addition to selecting a governor, the voters chose two other state officials, a delegate and a senator. When the Charles City Republicans nominated D. M. Norton, a Negro farmer, for State Senator the Conservatives immediately ran an opposition candidate. So,

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[30] West Point Star, August 8, 1872.

[31] Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902, p. 14. Wynes cites Holliday's vote total, 93,624, as indicative of the total vote cast in the state in 1877. In fact, voting was much heavier as the evidence from Charles City shows.

the Conservative ticket in 1877 in Charles City listed two men: F. M. W. Holliday for governor, and a state senate candidate who had to face Norton, the Negro Republican. The returns clearly show that virtually no crossover voting took place in Charles City County, for the Conservative Senator received 248 votes, the Conservative Governor 250 votes, and the Republican Norton 461 votes.[32] And since the other Republican candidate for the House of Delegates also received 461 votes, Charles City County sent two Republicans to the General Assembly in 1877. Apparently party discipline was rigorous for the probability that blacks crossed over to support the Conservative gubernatorial candidate is as remote as that of white men crossing over to support the Negro Republican running for the state senate.

The congressional election of 1878 revealed how Norfolk's black voters also shunned Conservative candidates when no Republican candidates were available. In that year John Goode, Jr., the incumbent Democratic Congressman had no Republican opposition until just before the election when a Norfolk Customs House employee, John F. Dezendorf ran as a write-in candidate.[33] Although Goode won

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[32] Election Abstracts, November 7, 1877, Clerk's Office, Charles City County Courthouse, Charles City, Virginia. Similar voting patterns emerged in other counties in the Tidewater. See Election Records No. 65 and 35, VSL.

[33] Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961, House Doc. 442, 85th Cong. 2nd Sess., p. 806.

re-election handily (Dezendorf, the Republican receiving only 627 of 1,813 cast) very few black men gave their votes to the winner.[34] The Norfolk Public Ledger noted that of Goode's supporters in Norfolk "all but seven were white."[35]

Two years later, 1880, the Republican Dezendorf started his campaign early, organized his black supporters, paid the poll tax, and defeated the Democrats in Norfolk.[36] (Incidently these election returns from Norfolk in 1880 provide additional evidence on the ineffectiveness of the poll tax in keeping blacks from voting.) In 1878 few blacks voted, primarily because no Republican party organization existed, and no candidate was active until just prior to the election. Thus most black men did not pay the one dollar poll tax prior to the election. But in 1880 circumstances had changed, a strong, organized Republican Party led by Dezendorf and Mayor William Lamb saw that their supporters were registered, the poll tax paid, and then had them out at the poll on election day. Clearly the Republican victory in 1880 was achieved through organization, and conversely their loss in 1878

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[34] Election Record No. 110, VSL.

[35] Norfolk Public Ledger, November 8, 1878.

[36] Warrock-Richardson Almanack, 1882 (James E. Goode, printer), p. 32.

resulted from a weak or no party effort, and not from a discriminatory poll tax against poor blacks.

When the white Conservatives failed to win Negro voters through integrated banquets, appeals to nativitism, or arguments for white paternalism, some white politicians turned to a more tangible appeal: money in the form of political bribes.[37] In the first years of Reconstruction, solidarity in the white and black communities precluded many attempts at bribery, but after 1876 white men became entrenched in power and bribery became commonplace, particularly when the Republican Party deserted the political arena. Furthermore groundbreaking in the fertile field of corruption came from competing factions within the Conservative Party. In 1876 Virginia enacted a poll tax and tied it to one's exercise of the suffrage; either a man paid it or he could not vote.[38] Almost immediately opportunistic politicians began to pay the poll tax for individuals who would pledge to vote for them.[39] In Norfolk a conservative paper, the Virginian, paid the poll tax of some six hundred blacks, thereby

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[37] J. A. C. Chandler, History of Suffrage in Virginia, pp. 69-71.

[38] Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, pp. 13-14.

[39] Chandler, History of Suffrage in Virginia, p. 70.

enabling them to vote in the city elections of May 1878.[40] Six months later in the congressional elections in November 1878 many of the blacks returned to the Republican Party to support Republican write-in candidate John F. Dezendorf.[41] The day following the election the conservative Virginian, but not the black voters, was severely castigated by its rival papers in Norfolk for its corrupt practices.[42]

Yet, bribery of black voters was never as pervasive as some white historians have portrayed.[43] Moreover a few white historians have linked the black's sale of his vote with other derogatory characteristics like indolence, apathy, ignorance, and poverty.[43] Clearly, the Negro was not ready for citizenship after the Civil War, they argued, because no "true" citizen would sell his vote, the fundamental right and

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[40] Norfolk Public Ledger, November 5, 1878.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., November 5-8, 1878; Norfolk Landmark, November 7, 1878.

[43] Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia, pp. 154-155; Morton, The Negro in Virginia Politics 1865-1902, p. 129; Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, p. 49; Eckenrode, Virginia During the Reconstruction, pp. 127-218; McDaniel, The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902, pp. 25, 27, 28, 153-154.

responsibility in a democratic society.[44]

Interpretations of such a racist nature can no longer stand for the Tidewater electorate during and after Reconstruction. Prior to 1894 the black man's party, the Republican Party, swept the region in most presidential election years, and consistently won more Tidewater counties than the Conservatives or Democrats in gubernatorial elections. Furthermore, Republicans held a majority of Tidewater delegates and senators in the General Assembly between 1869 and 1889.[45] Thus, the extent of bribery in the black community by white Conservative/Democratic politicans was either very limited or totally ineffective, for black men simply took the money and proceeded to vote for Republican candidates.[46]

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[44] For example, Pearson described the blacks in the 1880's, "And since their ignorance was stupendous and their credulity childlike, flattery, bribery, and threats were sufficient to win them . . ." (pp. 154-155).

[45] See Chapters V and VI for a record of Republican strength in federal, state, and local elections 1869-1900.

[46] Conservative politicians and negrophobes often admitted their disgust at black man's loyalty to the Republican Party. Frances G. Ruffin writing in a small pamphlet, White or Mongrel (Richmond, 1889), denounced the Negro race in bitter terms, and then stated, "All that the Democratic Party has ever been able to effect has been to purchase their [the blacks] neutrality to a partial extent." (p. 5).

But there is strong evidence of extensive bribing of voters in many elections in the 1880's and 1890's. Instead of interpreting bribery as retarding voting, or causing crossover voting, we should view it as a stimulant to voting Republican. For instance, the early 1880's saw William Mahone, an ambitious and able politician, create a strong Readjuster/Republican political machine built around black electorates in the Tidewater, Southside, and in Virginia's cities.[47] Mahone's agents did "buy" votes in the black community in the Tidewater, and they purchased them through the black preachers.[48] Apparently Mahone wanted a large turnout in the black counties to offset the white Conservative/Democratic vote in other parts of the state. It worked too. For the better part of the decade of the 1880's the Virginia Republican Party under the direction of William Mahone competed equally in state and national elections with the Democratic Party.[49]

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[47] Blake, William Mahone, pp. 262-265; Pearson, Readjuster Movement in Virginia, pp. 151-159.

[48] Blake, William Mahone, pp. 262-265; Pearson, Populism in the Old Dominion, pp. 53-54.

[49] By resorting to tactics of this nature Mahone participated in high treason in the white community and contemporaries, as well as native white historians, have castigated him for it. See Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia, pp. 154, 156, 175-177; Morton, Negro in Virginia Politics, 1865-1900, pp. 118, 119, 123, 126, 131-132.

Thus bribery became a factor in Tidewater politics after 1876, but it created no shifts of voters from one party to the other. Nor was it pervasive in every county in the region. Those counties that had a strong local Republican party and access to a local press continued to go Republican in the 1880's at approximately the same rate as previously.

And yet, discussions about bribery and blacks should be placed in the context of black political activity. In many Tidewater and Southside counties with black majorities bribery was never widespread. In those counties, or in other counties at the district level, a local Republican party always existed, and apparently functioned like any other political party, holding general meetings, nominating candidates for state and local offices, organizing campaigns, and watching over the polls on election day. From 1865 to 1900 black men participated in, indeed at times dominated, the local Republican organizations at every level.[50]

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[50]The nature of Republican leadership within these counties is virtually unknown. Counties like Charles City, Norfolk, Prince George, or Essex which had black majorities and went consistently Republican for twenty-five years after the Civil War must have had strong local leadership. Within the Mahone Papers evidence exists that throughout the 1880's the Republican State Central Committee gave financial support to the Negro Republican League Clubs which were still active in the Tidewater counties. Scrapbook XXXVIII, Mahone Papers, Duke University Library.

Within the leadership of the Virginia Republican Party white racism existed, particularly in the selection of candidates for office. In 1888 William Mahone opposed the congressional candidacy of John Mercer Langston, a Negro professor from Virginia State College, and selected a white Republican to run against him.[51] Also, the state Republican Party never nominated a black man for any national office, and only one black man, Dr. J. D. Harris who ran on the Radical Republican ticket in 1869, was ever put up for high state office.[52] Whether the Republican's record represented a capitulation to white racism or to political realities, or both, is open to debate.[53] Within the statewide electorate white men were in the majority, and a black candidate or office-holder at the national or state level was unacceptable and unthinkable.

At the county and city levels blacks could run

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[51]William F. Cheek, "Forgotten Prophet: The Life of John Mercer Langston" (unpublished diss., University of Virginia, 1961), p. 255-258, 275. Cheek reports Mahone stacked the district convention against Langston, and chose a local county judge, Arnold, to run on the ticket. Langston ran as an Independent Republican and won the election.

[52]Eckenrode, The Political Reconstruction of Virginia, p. 119. Harris ran for Lt. Governor in 1869 on the Radical Republican ticket.

[53]Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902, pp. 34-38, has an excellent discussion on General William Mahone's treatment of the Negro.

for office and if elected serve without hinderance. Luther Porter Jackson in his book, Negro Officeholders in Virginia, 1865-1900, presented a chronicle of black men elected to public office in Virginia. Jackson's research showed that in the Tidewater region electing black men to office was not uncommon between 1865-1900. Of 102 Negroes who held positions in either the Constitutional Convention of 1868, the Virginia House of Delegates, or the State Senate, forty-two represented Tidewater counties and cities.[54] On the county level Negroes held at various times every elective position, Board of Supervisors, Clerk, Treasurer, Commonwealth's Attorney, Sheriff, Constable, Surveyor, Justice of the Peace, Commissioner of Revenue, and Superintendent of the Poor.[55]

Furthermore, Jackson's research showed that blacks held elective office in seventeen of the region's twenty-seven counties.[56] At the same time according to the census reports blacks held a numerical majority in eighteen of the twenty-seven counties, a fact which indicated that politics were closely tied to race. In the region's two major cities, Norfolk and Portsmouth,

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[54]Luther Porter Jackson, Negro Officeholders in Virginia, 1865-1900 (Richmond, 1946), pp. 1-43.

[55]Ibid., pp. 61-67.

[56]Ibid., pp. 57-67.

where white voters outnumbered blacks, the Democratic Party triumphed in national or state-wide contests throughout the period, but in local elections many blacks won positions on city councils and other local boards.[57]

As in other revisionist studies on Negro office-holders Jackson's study was constricted somewhat by previous histories. By discovering that Negroes who held office in Virginia owned property, held responsible positions such as farmers, lawyers, doctors, merchants; were educated, and were not mulattoes, Jackson successfully refuted the generalizations of earlier historians.[58] And for that reason his work remains valuable, yet at times it is misleading for the Tidewater counties and cities. First, Jackson's work leaves an inaccurate impression about the extent of local officeholding by blacks in the Tidewater counties, for many more black men were elected to district and county positions than he recorded in 1946.[59] Also,

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[57] Jackson, Negro Officeholders in Virginia, 1865-1900, pp. 57-59.

[58] Compare Pearson, Readjuster Movement in Virginia, pp. 154-155, with Jackson, Negro Officeholders in Virginia, Chapter 3.

[59] For example Jackson, Negro Officeholders, (p. 62) lists seven Negroes who served in elective county positions between 1865-1895 in Elizabeth City County. Yet, county records reveal eleven Negroes were elected in 1883 in that county. Elizabeth City Court Order Book 4, pp. 295, 298, 300, 301. The Suffolk Herald, June 3, 1887 reported a Negro elected Commissioner of Revenue for Nansemond County and three others elected as constables. None of these men were listed by Jackson. Although Jackson stated his list of Negro officeholders was

Jackson failed to take into account the nominating process. Here, newspaper sources and court records clearly show that many more black men ran for political office than were elected, and they ran for many more years than Jackson suggested.[60]

The extent of Negro participation in politics within the Tidewater region during Reconstruction created a new consensus in which the society accepted the reality of black men voting, running for office, and winning offices at the local and state level. Though whites never liked the concept of the black man as a citizen, they acquiesed in its practical application over the years and it became part of the political fabric of the region. And black men contributed to the formation of the new consensus. By going to the polls consistently in large

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incomplete, others have taken his work as definitive and as such little research has been done in this area since 1946.

[60]The fact that blacks continued running for office, whether elected or not, reflected their continuing interest and participation in politics. Black men in the Tidewater ran for offices at every level of government: congressman through county justice of the peace. In 1892, D. L. Corrigan ran for Congress on the Negro Republican ticket and received 8,594 votes. Warrock-Richardson Almanac, 1893, p. 74. In 1893 Negroes were running for office in Louisa County and one was elected Justice of the Peace. Fredericksburg Free Lance, May 27, 1893. County elections in May 1897 in Nansemond County saw Negro Republicans enter almost a full slate of candidates, for supervisor, justice of the peace, constables, and overseer of the poor. Suffolk Herald, June 4, 1897.

numbers they showed that they were eager to vote when given an opportunity. By working or trying to work within the Republican Party at the state and local levels, they accepted and perpetuated the political heritage of the nation, state, and region. And by nominating many men of their own race, and electing a few, they helped to govern the society according to traditional standards.

Available evidence enables one to see how this new consensus operated within Tidewater society. In 1883 after an election to select a member for the House of Delegates from the city of Norfolk, the defeated candidate contested the election, charging that the Mayor of the city had violated tradition and custom by tampering with the election machinery. Prior to this election Norfolk had four wards, eight registrars, and six election judges for each polling place.[61] Traditionally, the judge of the corporation court appointed the six election judges for each polling place by race, three for the white and three for the black voters.[62] Apparently the judge's actions accommodated the two communities, because from 1869 to 1883 the same formula was followed in all national, state, and city elections.

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[61] House Journal and Documents, 1883/1884, pp. 291-295.

[62] Ibid., p. 297.

During the early years of Reconstruction the Norfolk papers reported the appointment of election judges as local news. The Tuesday before the election, on November 3, 1874 the Norfolk Virginian published a list of election judges for each ward and identified them by race. Each of the city's four wards had three black and three white men as election judges. And the Commissioners of the Election, the group which counted and certified the vote, consisted of three whites and two blacks.[63] Furthermore when the mayor of Norfolk chose to manipulate the traditional election machinery by eliminating some polling booths, election judges, and registrars, the state legislature ruled the poll invalid.[64]

As late as 1888 in Norfolk the corporation judge was naming black men to assist in conducting state and local elections. In that year a Norfolk judge selected three white men and four blacks for duty as special policemen to supervise an election in a small suburb adjacent to Norfolk.[65]

How extensively blacks were brought into the conduct of elections varied throughout the region.

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[63] Norfolk Virginian, November 3, 1874.

[64] House and Journal Documents, 1883/1884, pp. 291-295.

[65] Norfolk Public Ledger, November 2, 1888.

Generally, court order books did not list election officials by race, and newspaper articles outside of the cities were limited to the reporting of election day activities. However, those reports often contained a comment on the conduct of election officials. After the congressional elections of 1874, one "G. D.," a disgusted Conservative from Middlesex County, remarked that "the whole election (in Middlesex County) was in the hands of the black party, there being a Negro to receive the votes, three of the clerks Radical, and only one Conservative on the list of registrars."[66]

Prior to 1884 elections were conducted by local county officials: the sheriff, registrar, justice of the peace, and special appointed election judges. If a county's voting machinery was in the hands of the Radicals, or the "black party," as in the case of Middlesex County in 1874, then Radicals also controlled local government. On June 2, 1877, the Hampton Monitor published the results of local elections in Elizabeth City County and the Republicans virtually swept the county, electing the sheriff, two supervisors, three constables, two Commissioners of the Revenue, six magistrates, the Commissioner of Roads, and the Overseer of the Poor. These newly elected officials served with fellow Republicans who already held

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[66] Norfolk Virginian, November 6, 1874.

the offices of county clerk, registrar, and two justices of the peace. Furthermore in Elizabeth City County following the county elections of 1877 the Democrats controlled but one magisterial district and a single position on the Board of Supervisors.

The essence of Reconstruction for the Negro lay in his participation in the political process. The black men of the Tidewater had the franchise and used it selectively for the party and men of his choice. Throughout the Reconstruction years the Republican Party, the black man's party, was nominating candidates, seeing them elected, and governing in county after county without intimidation or interference from state officials. Tyranny against black citizens by some county officials unquestionably occurred within the region, but the degree was lessened by the power of the ballot to remove the offending official from office. Thus, the number of Negroes holding office is not as important as the existence of a political party where their constitutional rights could continue to find expression.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MEANING OF RECONSTRUCTION IN TIDEWATER VIRGINIA

Amid accounts of the failure of Reconstruction in the other states of the south, the political life of Tidewater Virginia between 1865-1900 was significantly altered by the constitutional changes wrought by the Civil War. Not only did white Tidewater society accept the directed verdicts of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments but the region's black citizens compiled a record of participation, political activity, and office-holding which forced acceptance of the constitutional mandate.

What made the political history of Tidewater Virginia during Reconstruction so different from other sections and regions in the lower south? Clearly, it was not an absence of Negroes in the region's population. Virginia in 1860 had more slaves than any southern state, and within the Tidewater slaves outnumbered whites in two-thirds of the region's twenty-seven counties. After the war and the adoption of the Thirteenth and Fifteenth amendments, Negroes remained in the Tidewater region and continued to outnumber whites. Though some blacks left

the region during Reconstruction, most remained. According to the Ninth Census, blacks held majorities in eighteen of the region's twenty-seven counties in 1870. Since the ratio of black to white counties remained stable until the end of the century, most of the same racial conditions were present in the Tidewater that caused polarization and violence in many states in the lower south.[1]

If the Tidewater's racial demography resembled that of other southern states, its reaction to Radical Congressional Reconstruction was markedly different. When federal troops reoccupied Virginia in March 1867 with instructions to register all black men as voters, Virginians did not resort to violence. The Klu Klux Klan never became active in the state, nor did any other terrorist group.[2] Furthermore, the first registration, completed in October 1868, showed that approximately 30,000 more white men were on the voting rolls than blacks, which meant "redemption" if whites remained unified on election

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[1] Allen W. Trelease, White Terror (New York, 1971), pp. 64-65. Trelease in this majesterial study of the Klu Klux Klan found that across the South the Klan and the resultant violence appeared where the racial population was evenly divided, and where the two parties were equal in strength (p. 64). Yet, Trelease found no evidence of Klan in Virginia after the spring months of 1867, and he carefully qualified his generalizations about the Klan in the South by beginning with the remark "except in Virginia . . . ."

[2] Ibid., pp. 65-68, 185; Stanley F. Horn, The Invisible Empire (Boston, 1939), pp. 281-283.

day.[3] Also the Army commanders in Virginia, principally General John L. Schofield, were instrumental in providing the firmness necessary to force the white community to accept universal manhood suffrage.

The culmination of Radical Reconstruction came in the election of July 1869. Not only did Virginians elect a Moderate Republican governor over a Radical Republican, but they accepted a new liberal constitution without proscriptive provisions. And there was virtually universal participation by the electorate. In the Tidewater 88 per cent of all men residing in the region voted in July 1869, and their participation set a precedent for elections over the next twenty-five years. Politicians, editors, and reporters who observed Tidewater elections between 1869 and 1900 expected to find large voter turnouts, orderly elections, and fair counts of the returns. Why? Apparently the gubernatorial election of 1869 set standards of measurement for judging voter participation, election practices, political party activities, and county majorities.

The returns from federal, state, and local elections show conclusively that in the Tidewater the standards established in 1869 did not deteriorate over the

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[3]Richard L. Morton, The Negro in Virginia 1865-1900 (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1919), p. 77.

next twenty-five years. Not until 1894 or 1895 did voter interest decline and one party monopolistic politics with its corrupt factionalism enter Tidewater politics. Prior to that time, most men based political judgements on the presumption that politics in the Tidewater region began with universal manhood suffrage.

Another presumption concerned the right of Negroes to hold elective office. Beginning in October 1867 with the election of representatives to the Underwood Constitutional Convention, blacks held elective office in Tidewater Virginia for the next thirty years. Of course, racial conditions limited black successes to certain areas--senatorial districts, counties, or districts within counties--where black majorities existed, yet the presence of black candidates on the ballot became an accepted part of the region's politics. Even after 1891, when Virginia's General Assembly became an all white legislative body, blacks continued to run for office in many counties and districts in the Tidewater.

With the constitutional mandate for universal manhood suffrage, the reality of heavy black participation at the polls, and racial polarization within society, men assumed the existence of a two party system. In the first election, July 1869, a two party system existed, and thereafter in every election through 1896 an opposition party, whether Republican, Readjuster, or Populist, worked against the white man's party (the Conservative party

before 1883, the Democratic party thereafter). Competition between political parties was extremely intense within the Tidewater, and at the county level it involved all elements of society.[4] Black voters always supported any party that opposed the Conservatives. The record of Republican successes in presidential elections from 1872 to 1888 indicates the importance of black men to that party.[5] And the Republican state committee, led by William Mahone, recognized blacks by inviting them to state and local conventions, by providing money for the Negroes' Republican League Clubs, and by circulating explicit instructions on how to report election irregularities to Federal Election Supervisors.[6] Throughout the Tidewater, county Republican organizations were aware of the Enforcement Acts of 1870 and 1871, and often they requested the Federal District Court to appoint supervisors to observe the polls.[7]

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[4]Although no records from the district meeting are extant, the newspapers published notices of "mass meetings" held at general stores, courthouses, and crossroads. See The Tidewater Liberal, July 28, 1883; and Virginia Citizen, May 6, 1892.

[5]See Appendix Table 29, for a compilation of the party of record in the Tidewater counties between 1872 and 1896 in presidential elections.

[6]Scrapbook XXXVIII, XXXIX, Mahone Papers, Duke University Library.

[7]Ibid. See letters to Mahone in the presidential campaign of 1888. Also, Gloucester Herald, October 26, 1872; Norfolk Landmark, November 4, 1884; Northern Neck News, May 30, 1879.

Clearly then, the presence of a competitive, opposition political party, which had a vested interest in maintaining the Negroes' civil rights, played a considerable role in keeping politics democratic.

Yet one should not place excessive weight on the "liberalism" of the Republicans or Readjusters, or the "enforcement" powers of the Federal Election Supervisors in maintaining the suffrage rights of all men. For by 1870 Tidewater society had accepted the concept of political equality implicit in the Reconstruction Amendments. In the absence of any legal requirement, the mayors of Norfolk between 1870 and 1883 followed the precedent, established in 1869, of appointing three white and three black election judges to serve at each precinct in the city in each election.[8] And Norfolk and Portsmouth mayors regularly assigned extra police to stand watch at the polling places on election day.[9] Officials also took action in the counties where sheriffs ordered the bars closed on election

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[8] House Journal and Documents, 1883/1884, pp. 259-260, 292-299. Testimony from a contested election revealed that the arrangement described above was changed by the Mayor in 1883. The protesters, who were Democrats, challenged the Mayor's authority, and the legislature sustained them, ordering new elections.

[9] Norfolk Public Ledger, November 2, 1888. The Mayor of Norfolk appointed extra policemen, three whites and four blacks, to watch the polls. Norfolk Virginian, November 3, 1874; Norfolk Landmark, November 8, 1876.

day.[10]

Furthermore the House of Delegates' Committee on Elections, which was dominated by Conservatives and Democrats, consistently ruled in disputed election cases in favor of Republican candidates, not because of any benevolence towards the Republican Party, but because the defeated Conservatives presented ridiculous and spurious claims. How could Virginia's Republican Party or the federal government influence an elections committee controlled by Conservatives to seat Negroes over whites, or Republicans over Conservatives, or Readjusters over Democrats? They couldn't; yet the Committee on Elections still ruled in favor of blacks, Republicans, and Readjusters in specific cases.[11] Also, throughout Reconstruction there were very few attempts at intimidation or coercion, and purposeful fraud by county election officials did not occur until the 1890's. Even in that decade a few Tidewater counties continued to hold elections along standards first established in July 1869.

For most men who lived in Tidewater Virginia between 1865 and 1900 the meaning of Reconstruction lay not in violence or radical rule, but in a changed set of

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[10] Northern Neck News, May 30, 1879; Fredericksburg Ledger, October 25, 1872.

[11] See Chapter VI, pp. 227-229, 230, 232, 242-244.

assumptions which endorsed universal manhood suffrage, competitive political parties, Negroes in public office, and political democracy. All of the evidence taken from election returns, contemporary news accounts, disputed elections, and state and county records confirmed that Tidewater Virginia was indeed different during Reconstruction.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Public Documents

Federal census publications were essential in determining demographic and economic data to measure the twenty-seven Tidewater counties against other regions in Virginia and other states in the Union between 1860 and 1900. Moreover federal census returns, 1870-1900, were particularly important in determining the number of eligible voters in an area, since all county registration books in Virginia were destroyed after 1904. Yet using the census as the basis for statistical judgements can involve problems. For example, the Ninth Census, 1870, failed to enumerate some 400,000 Negroes living in the South, and some Virginia historians have rejected its validity in Virginia counties with large Negro populations. But the Virginia returns were accurate since the county totals correspond closely with the lists of registered and excluded voters compiled in June, 1869 by the U. S. Army and published in Special Orders, First Military District Virginia, 1869-70 (Washington, D. C.: G. P. O., 1870). The two lists, although compiled separately, are remarkably similar, varying by less than five per cent for any one county or city in the Tidewater.

Publications from other governmental agencies supplemented the data in the census records. Ex-Confederate General John D. Imboden compiled an invaluable statistical report on Virginia which was published in Report on the Internal Commerce of the United States: 1886 House Documents, 49th Cong., 2d sess., 1886-1887, xviii. In 1867 The Report of the United States Commissioner of Agriculture (Washington: G. P.O., 1868) provided an estimate of the destruction caused by the Civil War in Virginia. The reports of the Virginia State Board of Agriculture were published in two forms, Handbooks of Virginia, and Reports of the State Board of Agriculture. In 1899 Virginia established a labor department, and its First Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics of the State of Virginia (Richmond: Saunders Printing Company, 1899) remains invaluable for its statistical data.

The legal basis for suffrage in Virginia was found in three sources: state constitutions, laws of the General Assembly, and compilation of legal notes. The New Nation, a Radical Republican newspaper, published the first complete Constitution of Virginia, 1868 (Richmond, 1868), and all subsequent compilations of laws, such as Lewis Munford's Code of Virginia 1873 (James E. Goode, printer, 1873) contained the constitution along with any amendments. For a single act consult Acts of the General Assembly of Virginia published in Richmond by a contract

printer. Of course, federal laws such as the Enforcement Acts are found in U. S. Statutes (Washington D. C.: G.P.O.) throughout the period.

Election Records

For the returns in federal elections between 1872 and 1900 two authoritative compilations, W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), and Edgar D. Robinson, The Presidential Vote, 1896-1932 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1934) were invaluable aids.

Unfortunately, no similar compilations exist for state elections in Virginia, so one must rely on the Virginia State Library, Archives Division, for the extant election records. After each state and federal election the county and city precinct boards sent the returns to the county clerk who then forwarded a statement to the State Board of Canvassers, whose members included the Governor, Attorney General, State Treasurer, and Secretary of the Commonwealth. Generally the Board of Canvassers released the official returns to the Richmond newspapers during the third week in November. There is a third source, the Warrock-Richardson Almanack (J. B. Goode, printer), but the editors of this series apparently copied the returns published in the press.

Returns from local county elections are available, but only in the clerk's office of the individual counties.

In many of the Tidewater counties the status of record keeping remains primitive. Not only are election records not indexed in any way (in one county the wall file was labeled simply "elections - old"), but when located the abstracts were in a rapidly decaying condition. Usually folded, and tied with string or a rubber band, the manuscript returns crack and tear when opened, and any attempt to replace them as originally found results in still further damage. Nevertheless the information within the county returns proved a valuable source for crosschecking voter participation in federal and state elections. The Tidewater counties with the best combination of manuscript returns were Essex, King and Queen, Prince George, Norfolk, and Charles City. Of the twenty-one county courthouses visited, those of the five counties just mentioned had the most complete set of abstract returns, although even in those five counties no poll books are extant.

One of the best sources on election practices came from testimony in disputed or contested election cases brought before the House of Representatives or the House of Delegates of the Virginia General Assembly. For the former, a digest of all cases was compiled by Chester H. Rowell, A Historical and Legal Digest of all of the Contested Election Cases in the House of Representatives of the United States from the First to the Fifty-Sixth Congress, 1789-1901 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1901); and for the latter consult the House of Delegates Journal and Documents

for the years 1869-1901. Supplementary evidence on disputed elections was found in a special report prepared by the U. S. Attorney General's Office entitled "Report 113, part 2, Repeal of Federal Election Laws, "Senate Documents, 53d Congress, 2d session (Washington, D. C.: G.P.O., 1893).

Newspapers

Fortunately most of the nineteenth century newspapers published in the Tidewater region have survived relatively intact. Four Norfolk newspapers, the Norfolk Virginian, Norfolk Journal, Norfolk Landmark, and the Public Ledger were reviewed for reports on election day activities in the city and the surrounding counties. The Portsmouth Daily Times provided news of elections in that city. Fredericksburg had an active press in the late nineteenth century, although not all of the papers, the Free Lance, Virginia Star, Fredericksburg Ledger, and Virginia Herald published for the entire period. Nevertheless, when in existence, the press in Fredericksburg gave extensive coverage to elections in the adjacent Tidewater counties.

Two invaluable newspapers which recorded the pulse of rural Tidewater on election day were the Democratic weeklies, the Northern Neck News, published in Warsaw the county seat of Richmond County, and the Suffolk Times, published in Suffolk in Nansemond County. Both Democratic

weeklies had lengthy, informative accounts of county, state, and presidential elections. Virtually complete sets of those two weeklies exist, enabling one to gain a perspective on elections over a twenty-to-thirty-year period.

Other regional newspapers were consulted, however the number of extant issues limited their use. The Williamsburg Gazette and James City County Advertiser was reviewed, although only two issues October 6, 13, 1886 are extant. In a similar vein the following local presses provided small but valuable bits of evidence: Surry Times, The Gloucester Mail, The Tidewater Liberal, Gloucester Herald, West Point Star, and The Tidewater Index.

The press in Richmond and Petersburg was very active, but provided little coverage of county elections in the Tidewater region. Generally, the newspapers would publish a news article already printed in a Tidewater paper. Even the Negro press, the Lancet, published in Petersburg, and the Richmond Planet published in Richmond, had very few special reports from the Tidewater counties.

Printed Sources and Contemporary Accounts

One valuable source on the failure of Virginia to attract immigrants is the Proceedings of the State Immigration Convention (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1895). The Warrock-Richardson Almanacks between 1865 - 1900 provide

statistical information on population, economics, and politics on the state of Virginia, while Chataigne's Virginia Gazetteer concentrated on local government and business. The latter listed for each county in the state the name of all county officials, judges through constables, and the principle farmers, all lawyers, teachers, preachers, carpenters, skilled tradesmen, merchants, and printers.

The Virginia State Board of Immigration sponsored a number of works during the Reconstruction years which were designed to publicize the state. One of the first, a pamphlet by Gaspar Tochman, Virginia: A Brief Memoir of Emigrating to the New World (Richmond: R. R. Nye, 1868) was published in three languages, German, French, and English. Later the Board of Immigration published two books of a descriptive nature: Jedediah Hotchkiss, Virginia: A Geographical and Political Summary (Richmond: R. F. Walker, printer, 1876); and Mathew Fontaine Maury, Physical Survey of Virginia, Her Resources, Climate, and Productions (Richmond: N. V. Randolph, printer, 1878). Within the Tidewater local promoters tried to publicize the area to immigrants in pamphlets like America: Homes for Englishmen in the State of Virginia (Norfolk: Charles W. Wilson, 1872), and "A City by the Sea" (Norfolk: Green, Burke, and Gregory, 1893).

Secondary Sources

General

The historiography of Southern Reconstruction reveals a vigorous historical debate over the last seventy-five years. William A. Dunning, Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877 (New York: Harper Brothers, 1907) began the procession of theses and counter theses which is so ably explained in Kenneth M. Stampp, The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1865). Reconstruction histories of note which appeared after Stampp's work were Rembert Patrick, The Reconstruction of the Nation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), Allen W. Trelease, Reconstruction: The Great Experiment (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), and Hans L. Trefouse, Reconstruction: America's First Effort at Racial Democracy (New York: Van Nostrand, Reinhold Co., 1971). Each of the three historians produced a synthesis of Reconstruction after doing extensive research in primary sources: Patrick in state monographs, Trelease on the Klu Klux Klan, and Trefouse with the Radical Republicans.

The post-Reconstruction years, beginning with 1877 are commonly labeled the era of "New South." C. Vann Woodward's seminal work Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951) remains the most valuable history on the period. While Woodward's book traced the rise of the Democratic Party to

predominance in the south, two newer books, Vincent P. De Santis, Republicans Face the Southern Question: The New Departure Years, 1877-1897 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), and Stanley P. Hirshson, Farewell to the Bloody Shirt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962) provide needed information on the activities of the Republican Party in the south after 1877. Recently, Paul Gaston, The New South Creed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970) supplemented, but did not alter significantly, Woodward's discussion on the myth of Southern progress through industrialization. Both works help to correct the tide of optimism so present in earlier histories like Philip Alexander Bruce, The Rise of the New South (Philadelphia: George Barrie & Sons, 1905). Bruce's history was useful only for its quantitative information concerning industrial growth in the Tidewater region.

With the exception of Bruce's work, which is essentially economic history, all of the historians mentioned above discussed voting rights and voter participation. Yet the most provocative work is C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, 3rd rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) although it is weak in methodology and documentation. More useful in analyzing voting behavior of southern electorates is V. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), although its focus is primarily on twentieth century southern politics. Mary L. Callcott, The Negro in Maryland Politics,

1870-1922 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969) successfully integrated an understanding of state politics in Maryland with V. O. Key's methodology in working with election returns. Callcott's work brings fresh, new evidence into the study of race relations in the postwar south.

Virginia: Reconstruction and Redemption

The earliest study is Hamilton J. Eckenrode, The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, 1904), although recent scholarship has altered Eckenrode's influence considerably. Yet for more than fifty years Eckenrode's standard interpretation of Reconstruction influenced scholarship in Virginia as is illustrated by the passage on Reconstruction in William E. Hemphill, M. W. Schlegal, S. E. Engelberg, Cavalier Commonwealth: History and Government of Virginia (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963) which remains the only state approved text for high school students in Virginia.

Yet most scholars now accept a different revisionist view of Virginia during Reconstruction. During the 1960's a series of doctoral dissertations at the Universities of Virginia and North Carolina led the way towards a new interpretation. Among the unpublished dissertations the best are Douglas C. Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction, 1865-1870" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of

Virginia, 1960), Robert R. Jones, "Conservative Virginian: The Post War Career of Governor James Lawson Kemper" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1964), Richard G. Lowe, "Republicans, Rebellion and Reconstruction. The Republican Party in Virginia, 1856-1870" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1968). Furthermore several dissertations were published: Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1961); Jack P. Maddex, Jr., The Virginia Conservatives 1867-1879 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1970); Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1968). In 1968 all of these specialized studies were placed into a synthesis, Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Prsss, 1968). Since Moger's work, only one other has appeared: Virginius Dabney, Virginia: The New Dominion (New York: Doubleday, 1971), a derivative work with little new for the informed historian.

Virginia: Politics

Between 1865 and 1900 Virginia's political history can be divided roughly into five periods; Reconstruction, Redemption, Readjusterism, Populism, and Democratic Ascendency. Specialized studies, in addition to those works on Reconstruction already mentioned, include Charles C. Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia (New Haven:

Yale University Press, 1917), Nelson M. Blake, William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond: Garrett & Massey, 1935), William D. Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935), and Ralph C. McDanel, The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, 1928). With the exception of McDanel's book, each has become the standard interpretation for the period. Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored has replaced McDanel in recent years.

There are only a few monographic studies on suffrage, yet scholarship in this area runs in the familiar pattern of standard-revisionist interpretation so prevalent in Reconstruction historiography. The earliest work, Julian A. C. Chandler, The History of Suffrage in Virginia (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, 1901) is impressionistic and anti-Negro, yet later scholars reaffirmed his conclusions. Both George M. McFarland, "The Extension of Democracy in Virginia from 1860 to 1895" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1934), and Allen W. Moger, "The Origins of the Democratic Machine in Virginia," Journal of Southern History, VII (May, 1942), pp. 183-209, relied on sources used previously by Chandler. In 1961 a revisionist study, Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902.

(Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1961) reversed prevailing opinion, although he too felt that between the years 1873-1879 and 1884-1899 politics conformed to the older view of unscrupulous Democratic politicians manipulating or coercing the Negro's voting rights.

Virginia: Negro History

For many years scholars of Virginia history after the Civil War have concentrated much of their effort on the Virginia Negro. The monographic works are excellent; for instance, the studies by John P. McConell, Negroes and Their Treatment in Virginia from 1865 to 1867 (Pulaski, Virginia: B. D. Smith, & Brothers, 1910) and Alrutheus A. Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia (Washington, D. C.: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926). Another early work, Richard L. Morton's, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1865-1902 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1919) is valuable for its discussion of Negro lynchings in the late 1880's and 1890's. In the 1930's one of America's best Negro historians, Luther Porter Jackson settled in Virginia and helped supervise a project, the WPA Writers Program, The Negro in Virginia (New York: Hasting House, 1940). Other works by Jackson include, "The Virginia Free Negro Farmer and Property Owner, 1830-1860," The Journal of Negro History, XXIV, no. 4 (October, 1939), pp. 390-439,

and Negro Officeholders in Virginia, 1865-1895 (Norfolk: Guide Quality Press, 1946). The latter remains the single most important work on blacks in local government in Virginia.

Since 1950 renewed interest among white scholars in Negro history has reopened the door to serious investigation of blacks in Virginia. William T. Alderson, "The Freedman's Bureau and Negro Education in Virginia," North Carolina Historical Review, XXIX (January, 1952), pp. 64-90 began a series of new monographs which included Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902; William F. Cheek, "Forgotten Prophet: The Life of John Mercer Langston" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1961); and Andrew Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1902-1965 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1967).

Virginia: Economics

In general, historians of Reconstruction in Virginia have concerned themselves with political rather than economic history, yet important research has been accomplished here too. An excellent work on ante-bellum landholding patterns in the Tidewater is Emmet B. Fields, "Agriculture Population of Virginia 1850-1860" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1953). Using quantitative methods Fields demonstrated that the yeoman farmer, owning less than 500 acres, with few slaves, was

the rule rather than the exception in the Tidewater region. There is no adequate study of postwar landholding for the Tidewater, but Katherine S. Perry, "A History of Farm Tenancy in the Tobacco Region of Virginia, 1865-1950" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Radcliffe College, 1956) investigates the counties in Southside Virginia. Farm prices, so essential for an understanding of an agricultural region, were compiled by Arthur G. Peterson, A Historical Study of Prices Received by Producers of Farm Products in Virginia, 1801-1927, Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station, Technical Bulletin, No. 39 (March, 1929).

Between 1865 and 1900 Virginia became the south's leading industrial state, although it remained behind many northern and midwestern states in total production. Nevertheless Virginia's recovery after the Civil War was an important aspect of its history and Allen W. Moger, The Rebuilding of the Old Dominion (published dissertation, Columbia University, 1940), and "Industrial and Urban Progress in Virginia from 1880 to 1900," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 66 (July, 1958), pp. 307-336, is the most knowledgeable historian on the topic. To date regional histories have concentrated on the major urban areas, and Thomas J. Wertenbaker, Norfolk: Historic Southern Port (Durham: Duke University Press, 1931), and Annie L. Jester, Newport News, Virginia 1607-1960 (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1961) provide brief but excellent accounts of their respective cities during Reconstruction.

APPENDICES

TABLE 27

VOTERS EXCLUDED BY THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT
IN TIDEWATER COUNTIES

	Total Adult Males Over 21	Number Excluded
State:		
Virginia	266,680	2,562[1]
Counties:		
Accomack	4,473	1
Charles City	1,207	4
Elizabeth City	2,001	60
Essex	1,978	12
Gloucester	2,193	5
Isle of Wight	1,834	30
James City	1,084	30
King & Queen	1,873	4
King George	1,165	12
King William	1,636	50
Lancaster	1,082	9
Mathews	1,339	5
Middlesex	1,037	22
Nansemond	2,562	18
New Kent	1,042	6
Norfolk	11,372	87
Northampton	1,889	24
Northumberland	1,385	5
Prince George	1,990	10
Princess Anne	2,032	4
Richmond	1,325	28
Southampton	2,671	49
Surry	1,371	2
Sussex	1,819	7
Warwick	438	22
Westmoreland	1,544	6
York	1,646	11
Totals	55,588	523

[1]Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, p. 637.

TABLE 28

COMPARISON OF TOTAL POPULATION WITH TOTAL ADULT MALES OF VOTING AGE BETWEEN 1870-1900

	1870[a]		1880[b]		1890[c]		1900[d]	
	T.P.	T.A.M.P.	T.P.	T.A.M.P.	T.P.	T.A.M.P.	T.P.	T.A.M.P.
State:								
Virginia	1,225,163	266,680	1,512,565	334,504	1,655,980	378,782	1,854,184	447,815
Counties:								
Accomack	20,409	4,473	24,408	5,487	27,277	6,419	32,570	7,945
Charles City	4,975	1,207	5,512	1,224	5,066	1,104	5,040	1,188
Elizabeth City	8,303	2,001	10,689	3,284	18,168	3,556	19,460	7,858
Essex	9,927	1,978	11,032	2,168	10,047	2,105	9,701	2,164
Gloucester	10,211	2,193	10,211	2,643	11,653	2,563	12,832	3,004
Isle of Wight	8,320	1,834	10,572	2,516	11,313	2,763	13,102	3,201
James City	4,425	1,089	5,422	1,355	5,643	1,373	3,688	893
King & Queen	9,709	1,873	10,502	2,090	9,669	1,887	9,265	1,924

[a]Ninth Census: 1870, I, Population, pp. 69, 70, 637.

[b]Tenth Census: 1880, I, Population, pp. 82-83, 665.

[c]Eleventh Census: 1890, I, Population, pp. 44-45, 787.

[d]Twelfth Census, 1900, I, Population, pp. 43-44, 1,003-1,004.

TABLE 28 (continued)

	1870		1880		1890		1900	
	T.P.	T.A.M.P.	T.P.	T.A.M.P.	T.P.	T.A.M.P.	T.P.	T.A.M.P.
King George	5,742	1,165	6,397	1,371	6,641	1,438	9,618	1,541
King William	7,515	1,636	8,751	1,920	9,605	2,016	8,380	1,825
Lancaster	5,355	1,082	6,160	1,322	7,191	1,689	8,949	2,192
Mathews	6,200	1,339	7,501	1,710	7,584	1,818	8,239	2,149
Middlesex	4,918	1,037	6,252	1,335	7,458	1,650	8,220	1,968
Nansemond	11,576	2,562	15,903	3,802	19,692	4,893	23,078	5,635
New Kent	4,381	1,042	5,515	1,295	5,511	1,191	4,865	1,106
Norfolk	46,702	11,372	58,657	15,141	77,038	21,374	50,780	13,951
Northampton	8,046	1,889	9,152	2,125	10,313	2,442	13,770	3,389
Northumberland	6,836	1,385	7,929	1,777	7,885	1,883	9,846	2,486
Prince George	7,820	1,990	10,054	2,431	7,872	1,720	7,752	1,843
Princess Anne	8,273	2,032	9,394	2,305	9,510	2,421	11,192	3,087
Richmond	6,503	1,325	7,195	1,545	7,146	1,535	7,988	1,585
Southampton	12,285	2,671	18,012	3,915	20,078	4,326	22,848	5,178
Surry	5,585	1,371	7,391	2,040	8,256	2,136	8,469	2,178
Sussex	7,885	1,819	10,052	2,323	11,100	2,592	12,082	2,719
Warwick	1,672	438	2,258	589	6,650	2,182	4,880	1,480
Westmoreland	7,682	1,544	8,846	1,842	8,399	1,820	9,243	2,167
York	7,198	1,646	7,349	1,651	7,596	1,694	7,482	1,790

TABLE 29

PARTY OF RECORD IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, 1872-1900 IN TIDEWATER COUNTIES[a]

County	1872	1876	1880	1884	1888	1892	1896	1900
Accomack	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Charles City	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	-
Elizabeth City	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D
Essex	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D*	D*
Gloucester	R*	D*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D*	D*
Isle of Wight	D*	D*	D	R	D	D	D	D
James City	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D*
King & Queen	R*	R*	D*	D*	D	D	D	D
King George	R	D	R*	R*	R*	R	R	R
King William	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*
Lancaster	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D	D	D
Mathews	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Middlesex	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D*	D*
Nansemond	R	D	D*	R*	R*	D*	D*	D*

[a]W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892, pp. 223-224; Edgar E. Robinson, The Presidential Vote, 1896-1932, pp. 354-363.

*Negro population 50% or higher.

TABLE 29 (continued)

	1872	1876	1880	1884	1888	1892	1896	1900
New Kent	R*	R*	D*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*
Norfolk	R	R	R*	R*	R*	D	R	R*
Northampton	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R	D	D
Northumberland	R	D	D	D	R	D	D	D
Prince George	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D*	D*
Princess Anne	R	D	D	D	R	D	D	D
Richmond	R	R	R	R	R	R	-	D
Southampton	R*	D*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D*	D*
Surry	R*	D*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D*	D*
Sussex	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D*	D*
Warwick	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D*	R*	D*
Westmoreland	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R	R	D
York	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	R*	D*	R*
County Totals								
Democratic	3	10	8	5	4	10	17	22
Republican	24	17	19	22	23	13	9	5

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