

“The property-holders shall rule this town!”
The Danville Massacre and the White Reactionary
Campaign Against Biracial City Government
1882-84

Nicholas E. Peang-Meth

Honors Thesis Submitted to the
Department of History, Georgetown University
Advisor: Professor Chandra M. Manning
Honors Program Chair: Professor Alison Games

May 4, 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
TIMELINE	iii
PRELUDE: Mr. Sherman's Inquiry	1
INTRODUCTION	8
CHAPTER I: The Origins of Racial Terror	18
INTERLUDE: Sharp Tongues and Quick Wits	39
CHAPTER II: Social Landscapes of the New South	44
INTERLUDE: Free People and Indominable Spirits	57
CHAPTER III: A Campaign of Racial Terror	59
CONCLUSION	77
EPILOGUE: Fresh Trouble in Danville	80
APPENDIX A: Diagram of the Danville Massacre	85
APPENDIX B: The Danville Circular	87
BIBLIOGRAPHY	91

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis would not have been possible without the dedicated tutelage and support of Professor Chandra M. Manning. Throughout five semesters, four seminars, and the year-long thesis program, Professor Manning has provided invaluable guidance, advice, and encouragement. Her assistance has made me the historian that I am today.

-N.E.P.

TIMELINE

The Rise and Fall of Virginia's Readjuster Party

1879

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25 – *Readjuster convention*. Disaffected Democrats and Republicans meet in Richmond and form a new political coalition with a platform centered around the readjustment of state debts, increased investment in public schools, and expanded civil rights for black Virginians. The Readjuster Party is born, with William Mahone selected as party leader.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4 – *Virginia state legislative elections*. Readjusters win majorities in both houses of the Virginia General Assembly.

1880

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2 – *U.S. presidential elections*. James Abram Garfield, an Ohio Republican, is elected as the 20th president of the United States. Democrat George C. Cabell is narrowly re-elected to the U.S. House of Representatives for Virginia's fifth district (containing Danville), defeating Readjuster John T. Stovall. Stovall contests the results alleging voter suppression.

1881

FRIDAY, MARCH 4 – *Mahone sworn in as senator*. Readjuster party leader William Mahone is sworn into the United States Senate.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8 – *Virginia gubernatorial election*. Readjuster William Evelyn Cameron defeats Democrat John W. Daniel in the race to succeed Democrat Frederick W. M. Holliday as Virginia governor. Republican John F. Lewis is elected Lieutenant Governor.

1882

MONDAY, MARCH 6 – *An act to divide the city of Danville into wards*. The Virginia General Assembly passes an act requiring a commission to divide the city of Danville into three wards for the purposes of voting in municipal elections. The wards system enhances black voting power and paves the way for the election of a Readjuster-led city council.

SATURDAY, JULY 1 – *New Danville city government sworn in.* Readjuster John Henry Johnston is elected as Danville mayor. The city’s lone incumbent black councilman, Henry Swann, is joined by three more black city councilmembers: Bird Lipscomb, D.F. Batts, and Julius W. Payne. A close ally of William Mahone, J.B. Raulston, is also elected to the twelve-man council.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7 – *Congressional elections.* Democrat George C. Cabell is re-elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Virginia’s fifth district (containing Danville), defeating Readjuster William E. Sims.

1883

SUNDAY, MARCH 4 – *Riddleberger sworn in a senator.* Readjuster Harrison Holt Riddleberger is sworn in as the junior U.S. senator from Virginia, joining fellow Readjuster William Mahone in the upper chamber.

OCTOBER – *Danville Circular.* An incendiary pamphlet entitled “Coalition Rule in Danville” is circulated in Danville calling on white Virginians to vote against the Readjuster ticket in November.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3 – *Danville Massacre.* Several black men are killed in a violent massacre at the city market in downtown Danville. News of the violence quickly makes headlines across the country.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6 – *Virginia state legislative elections.* A reorganized Democratic Party rides depressed black turnout and white racial anxiety to a large legislative majority, just days after the Danville Massacre.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7 – *City government turnover.* In the days after the massacre, three black city councilmembers and fourth white Readjuster councilmember resigned their posts and were replaced by white reactionaries. Additional resignations and replacements occur in a variety of appointed positions, and a new special police force composed of white reactionaries is formed to help restore order.

1884

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31 – *Investigation launched.* The U.S. Senate Committee of Privileges and Elections begins an inquiry into the Danville Massacre at the request of Senator John Sherman, an Ohio Republican. Over the coming weeks, they call dozens of witnesses to give highly publicized testimony about the massacre and surrounding events in Danville.

SATURDAY, MAY 17 – *George Adams beaten severely.* Just days before city elections, four white men severely beat massacre survivor George Adams.

THURSDAY, MAY 22 – *Danville municipal elections.* Incumbent mayor James Henry Johnston loses his campaign for re-election to massacre perpetrator William Pinkney Graves.

TUESDAY, MAY 27 – *Senate report published.* The U.S. Senate Committee of Privileges and

Elections publishes the results of its investigation into the Danville Massacre. The majority report forcefully concludes that the massacre was premeditated and politically motivated, while a minority opinion terms the event a riot and refutes the majority allegations. No further action is taken.

TUESDAY, JULY 1 – *New Danville city government sworn in.* Reactionary William Pinkney Graves is sworn in as mayor, replacing Readjuster John Henry Johnston. An all-white city council is also sworn in.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4 – *U.S. Presidential elections.* Democrat Grover Cleveland of New York defeats Republican James G. Blaine of Maine, becoming the first Democrat elected to the presidency since the Civil War. Democrat George C. Cabell defeats Republican J.W. Hartwell, winning a sixth and final term as U.S. congressman from Virginia's fifth.

1886

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1 – *Lee inaugurated as governor.* Democrat Fitzhugh Lee, a Confederate general and nephew of Robert E. Lee, is inaugurated as the 40th governor of Virginia, succeeding Readjuster William E. Cameron. The governorship would remain in Democratic hands for eighty-four consecutive years, until 1970. Democrat John E. Massey is inaugurated as Lieutenant Governor, replacing Republican John F. Lewis.

1887

FRIDAY, MARCH 4 – *Mahone's term ends.* Readjuster William Mahone is replaced by Democrat John W. Daniel as a U.S. Senator from Virginia.

1889

MONDAY, MARCH 4 – *Riddleberger's term ends.* Readjuster Harrison Holt Riddleberger, the last major Readjuster officeholder in Virginia, is replaced by Democrat John S. Barbour Jr. in the U.S. Senate. Democrats would hold both seats in the Virginia delegation to the United States Senate until 1970, when Harry F. Byrd Jr. switched his party affiliation to Independent.

PRELUDE

Mr. Sherman's Inquiry

Across the United States, Americans were greeted with sensational headlines in their Sunday morning papers on November 4, 1883. In the nation's capital, the *Washington Post* informed its readers of "Bloodshed at Danville – Several Negroes Killed and Two White Men Dangerously Wounded," while readers of the *New York Times* awoke to a report of "Whites and Blacks Rioting – Four Negroes and Two White Men Killed in Danville, Va." Chicagoans read reports of "A Race Riot – Deadly Collision Between Negroes and White Men at Danville, Virginia" in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, while on the west coast, a front-page headline in the *Los Angeles Times* read, "White Against Black – Race Collision in Danville, Virginia."¹

United States Senator John Sherman, a Republican from Ohio, read these headlines with alarm. As further details of the violence in the Virginia city trickled out over the following weeks, the veteran statesman's concern only grew. For one thing, it had occurred just three days between important and hotly contested statewide elections in which the conservative Democratic Party was seeking to reclaim power from the insurgent Readjuster Party, a progressive third-party movement that had swept into power a few years before on the backs of an unprecedented

¹ "Bloodshed at Danville – Several Negroes Killed and Two White Men Dangerously Wounded," *Washington Post*, November 4, 1883; "Whites and Blacks Rioting – Four Negroes and Two White Men Killed in Danville, Va." *New York Times*, November 4, 1883; "A Race Riot – Deadly Collision Between Negroes and White Men at Danville, Virginia," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 4, 1883; "White Against Black – Race Collision in Danville, Virginia," *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 1883.

biracial coalition of black and white voters. Adding to Sherman's concerns were accounts in some northern newspapers that the incident was less a race riot than a calculated attack on unarmed black marketgoers.² A brief investigation conducted by a group of Danville citizens known as the "Committee of Forty" in the weeks after the bloodshed blamed the violence on the "rude, insolent and intolerant" behavior of the city's black population and did little to assuage Sherman's discomfort with the situation in the southwestern Virginia community.³ In a January 1884 speech on the floor of the Senate, Sherman cited a "voluminous collection of ... various statements published in the papers of different political parties and from different persons," that suggested significant wrongdoing in Danville and offered a resolution calling for a formal senate investigation.⁴ The resolution passed by a 33 to 29 vote and was forward to the Committee on Privileges and Elections for action.⁵

Although routinely mocked by Democratic newspapers as "Mr. Sherman's Show," "Mr. Sherman's Comedy," "Sherman's Whereases," and "The Danville Farce," the Senate investigation into the violence in Danville proved remarkably thorough.⁶ The Committee on Privileges and Elections called on 179 witnesses to offer public testimony.⁷ Several witnesses

² "The Danville Affray," *New York Times*, November 26, 1883; "Shake the Bloody Shirt," *The Sunday Transcript* (Philadelphia, Pa.), November 11, 1883; "After the Danville Riot – The Reign of Terror in the Virginia Town," *The Richmond Whig*, November 30, 1883.

³ "The Danville Riot – Report of the Committee of Forty," *The (Baltimore, Md.) Sun*, November 22, 1883; *Danville Riot November 3, 1883 – Report of the Committee of Forty with Sworn Testimony of Thirty-Seven Witnesses, &c*, (Richmond: Johns & Goulsby, 1883).

⁴ The resolution also called for a simultaneous investigation into a politically charged murder in Copiah County, Mississippi. Resolution on Alleged Election Outrages in Virginia and Mississippi, *Cong. Rec.*, 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1884, vol. 15, pt. 1: 714-5.

⁵ Vote on Resolution on Alleged Election Outrages in Virginia and Mississippi, *Cong. Rec.*, 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1884, vol. 15, pt. 1: 718.

⁶ "Mr. Sherman's Show," *The Washington Post*, March 11, 1884; "Mr. Sherman's Comedy – Virginia Raked for Witnesses to Show the Effects of the Danville Disturbance," *The Washington Post*, March 6, 1884; "Sherman's Whereases – The Ohio Senator Manufacturing Campaign Material," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 24, 1884; "The Danville Farce Progressing," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1884.

⁷ For a complete index of witnesses to the Senate inquiry, see: Committee on Privileges and Elections, Report on the Inquiry into massacre of colored men at Danville, Virginia, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., 1884, S. Rep. 579, 1291-3.

were recalled to clarify previous testimony, and many witnesses – particularly black witnesses – endured withering cross examinations from skeptical Democrats on the committee.⁸ The final report, which included full transcripts of witness testimony, occupied nearly fourteen-hundred pages and stood in sharp contrast to the brevity and vagueness of the Committee of Forty report issued by a group of prominent Danville citizens in November.⁹ The Senate investigation was so exhaustive that within a month, the committee had exhausted its budget for traveling expenses for witnesses and had to request additional funds.¹⁰

The committee’s majority report reached unequivocal and damning conclusions about what transpired in Danville on November 3, 1883.¹¹ They found that the violence began when two black men – Hence Lawson and Davis Lewellyn – accidentally bumped into a white man, Charles Noel, near the city market in downtown Danville. After a brief altercation, Noel turned to his friends George A. Lea and W. R. Taylor, who had been attending a whites only political meeting at the city opera house less than a block away.¹² The three men, each armed with a Smith and Wesson revolver, returned to the market to seek out Lawson and confront him. While Lea and Taylor stood guard with revolvers drawn, Noel beat Lawson to within inches of his life.¹³ The

⁸ In one particularly brutal exchange, Senator Zebulon Baird Vance, a Democrat from North Carolina, grilled Val Patterson, a black man, over his familial and sexual histories. At one point, Vance asked how old Patterson was when he “commenced propagating his species.” When Patterson struggled with an answer, Vance replied, “I will never press a man with questions who cannot tell me how old he is; so you can stand aside,” and abruptly cut off Patterson’s opportunity to testify. Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 566.

⁹ The Committee of Forty called just thirty-seven witnesses and produced a final report that was just forty-seven pages long. Some witnesses also later reported that their testimony had been misquoted or misrepresented. *Report of the Committee of Forty*, 3. For discussion of misquoted testimony, see Walter Withers’ testimony during the Senate inquiry: Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 5.

¹⁰ Senator Sherman of Ohio, speaking on the Danville (Va.) Investigation, 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1884, vol. 15, pt. 2: 1417.

¹¹ The majority report was signed by Republican senators E.G. Lapham (New York), John Sherman (Ohio), George F. Hoar (Massachusetts), Angus Cameron (Wisconsin), and William P. Frye (Maine). The minority report contested the findings of the majority and was signed by Democratic senators Zebulon Baird Vance (North Carolina), Benjamin Franklin Jonas (Louisiana), James L. Pugh (Alabama), and Eli Saulsbury (Delaware). Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XLIII, LXXIV.

¹² Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XII.

¹³ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XIII.

committee found “satisfactory” evidence that Noel was wearing brass or iron knuckles during the beating.¹⁴ Another black man, George Adams, tried to intervene on Lawson’s behalf and ended up scuffling with Lea for his revolver. During the struggle, Taylor struck Adams over the head with a cane, leading Adams to flee. Lea took aim at the fleeing Adams and fired a single shot, missing Adams but fatally wounding another black man, Jerry Smith. Amid the ensuing chaos, the report found that “the order to fire was given” by an unidentified speaker and between seventy-five and two-hundred and fifty shots were fired at the crowds of black marketgoers.¹⁵ Black men, women, and children fled in all directions upon the outbreak of gunfire, and “were pursued by the whites, firing at them as they ran.”¹⁶

The report decisively refuted suggestions that some of the black men present were armed and exchanged fire with the white belligerents. They concluded that only one black man in the crowd was armed, and that “there is no reliable evidence he fired it.”¹⁷ Whereas “the whites...were generally armed, were expecting an outbreak, and obviously seeking a pretext for resorting to violence,” the committee determined that the black crowds were “unarmed and defenseless.”¹⁸ Moreover, the committee determined that while one white man, Walter Holland, was shot in the head, “the proof is very satisfactory that he was shot by the whites.” The report also found that Holland was armed with at least two revolvers and was actively firing at the black crowds when he was shot.¹⁹ Given the weight of all this evidence, the majority termed the event the “Danville Massacre,” and discarded the “riot” appellation that dominated the public discourse.²⁰

¹⁴ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XXV.

¹⁵ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XIII.

¹⁶ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XIV.

¹⁷ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XXII.

¹⁸ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XXII-XXIII.

¹⁹ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XXI.

²⁰ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XXII.

The report also found that the violence and terror did not end when the firing ceased. Armed white men – almost all Democrats – quickly flooded the town, and by the evening, “the white mob ruled the town.” By Sunday, as many of five hundred armed white men openly roamed the streets of Danville. Mayor John Henry Johnston reported that he “did not see a colored man armed between the massacre and the election [three days later], and if one had appeared on the street he would have been riddled with bullets.” Johnston also reported hearing threats that if he called upon the Douglass Guards, the city’s black militia company, to help restore order, they would be slaughtered by the armed white crowds. Eager to avoid further violence, he turned instead to the city’s white militia company, and sent a telegram requesting that the governor additional troops from Richmond.²¹ The committee found – unsurprisingly – that the city’s black community was deterred from voting as a result of these conditions. Although twelve-hundred black men were registered to vote, fewer than thirty dared go to the polls on Tuesday.²² The electoral impacts of the massacre were felt far beyond Danville, however. Across southwestern Virginia – previously a Readjuster stronghold -- “a great change in the vote was caused by...appeals to race prejudice and the [false] reports of violence on the part of the negroes in Danville.”²³

The Senate committee’s most damning finding, however, was that the massacre was planned and premeditated. The majority report meticulously cited fifteen different witnesses who reported participating in or overhearing conversations involving massacre perpetrators in which they openly discussed the impending violence.²⁴ The report also found that the city fire bell had been agreed upon as a signal to armed white men throughout Danville in advance of the

²¹ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XXXIX.

²² Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XLI.

²³ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XLI.

²⁴ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XXVI-XXXIII.

massacre, and that “three signals from the [fire] bell would raise a hundred men in arms at any time.”²⁵ Underlying this planning and premeditation, the report concluded, were political objectives. Democrats sought “to raise the race issue” to discourage black electoral turnout and to encourage white voters to “join with their own race” and vote for the Democrat ticket.²⁶ To advance that end, Democrats circulated exaggerated accounts of the massacre by telegram and through printed circulars in the days between the massacre and the election.²⁷ As further evidence of premeditation, the report noted that some of these accounts began circulating in the days *before* the massacre actually took place.²⁸

From the outset, John Sherman intended the Senate investigation to consider federal interventions in Virginia. In pitching his resolution to his colleagues, he touted the inquiry as an opportunity to show “our citizens in every State...how far the National Government will protect them in the enjoyment of their rights,” and suggested that the investigation would find “the proper constitutional remedy” to any wrongdoing.²⁹ As Sherman predicted, the final report determined that “no punishment will probably ever be inflicted upon the perpetrators of this foul wrong at Danville,” and that the only investigation by Virginia officials – the Committee of Forty Report – “was a partisan effort to screen the perpetrators of the wrong from punishment.”³⁰ To the authors of the Senate report, this inaction was unacceptable. “There should be found some remedy for such a state of affairs as this investigation discloses,” they wrote as before mentioning a dramatic remedy in their constitutional arsenal. “The Constitution of the United States provides that when the right to vote is denied or in any way abridged in any State the basis

²⁵ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XXXIV.

²⁶ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XLI.

²⁷ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XXXVI.

²⁸ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XXXIV.

²⁹ Senator Sherman of Ohio speaking on Alleged Election Outrages in Virginia and Mississippi, *Cong. Rec.*, 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1884, vol. 15, pt. 1: 716.

³⁰ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XLII.

of representation shall be reduced accordingly,” the report noted, in reference to an as-yet untested provision in Section 2 of the 14th Amendment.³¹ The committee stopped short of actually calling for the use of Section 2 powers and instead suggested that the option be reevaluated based on the outcome of the upcoming presidential elections.³² Still, the mere mention of its use brought a powerful new mechanism of civil rights enforcement to the forefront and created the promise of a new chapter in the flagging Reconstruction era.

That promise proved fleeting. The extensive investigation had dragged on over four months, and by its completion in May 1884, all momentum favoring decisive action had evaporated. Perhaps the *Atlanta Constitution* was right to accuse Sherman of “manufacturing campaign material” when he launched the inquiry.³³ Whatever his initial motivations, by the publication of the final report in late May, his attention had shifted from Danville to an ill-fated second bid for the presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention to be held during the first week of June. On May 27, the completed report was quietly entered into the Senate record and printed in limited quantities by the Government Printing Office. No discussion, debate, fanfare, or follow-up resolutions followed.³⁴ On May 28, a handful of newspapers gave serious consideration to the findings of the Senate inquiry.³⁵ Then, silence. The report would quickly be forgotten.

³¹ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, XLII; US Constitution, amend. 14, sec. 2.

³² This recommendation mirrored the committee’s recommendation in a separate report on the incident in Copiah County, Mississippi. Report of the Special Committee to Inquire into the Mississippi Election of 1883 with the Testimony and Documentary Evidence, 48th Congress, 1st Sess., 1884, S. Rep. 512, XXXVII.

³³ “Sherman’s Whereases – The Ohio Senator Manufacturing Campaign Material,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 24, 1884.

³⁴ Senator Lapham of New York, speaking on Alleged Election Outrages in Virginia and Mississippi, *Cong. Rec.*, 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1884, vol, 15, pt. 5: 4546.

³⁵ Among the newspaper reports which gave the Senate committee’s findings any attention were: “Southern Outrages – The Danville Riot,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28, 1884; “The Danville Riot – Report of the Sherman Committee – They Declare the Riot Premeditated,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, Md.), May 28, 1884; “Political Crimes South – The Democratic Murders at Danville,” *New York Times*, May 28, 1884.

INTRODUCTION

When Edward Pollock undertook to write a book about the history of Danville in 1885, he did so with a self-proclaimed “fidelity to fact.”¹ With authoritative confidence – and the benefit, at the time, of being the only author to tackle the subject matter – he offered a definitive account the violence that had beset the town less than two years prior. While he acknowledged that “the instrumentality of the powerful Northern Republican Press” had termed the incident as the “Danville Massacre,” his account adopted the “Danville Riot” appellation.² Pollock made no mention of the Senate inquiry into the violence or its disturbing findings in his book. Instead, he reprinted an abridged version of the Committee of Forty report, which dubiously claimed that “more negroes were seen with pistols in their hands... than there were white men,” and that “the crowd of negroes assembled to intimidate the whites by threats and menaces.” With the publication of Pollock’s book in July 1885, the entrenchment of the “riot” narrative into the public discourse began.

The narrative that the violence in Danville had been an unfortunate “race riot” quickly spread from Pollock’s writings to those of more serious scholars. Historians like Charles Chilton Pearson and C. Vann Woodward made unexamined references to “a street fight between whites

¹ Edward Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville, Va., Its Manufactures and Commerce. Illustrated.* (Danville: E. R. Waddill & Bro., 1885), Preface.

² Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 83.

and negroes,” and “the bloody Danville riot,” in their respective writings.³ James Tice Moore’s acknowledged the Senate report’s allegations that the violence was provoked by Democrats, but wrote, “the evidence on this point is inconclusive,” and proceeded to call the event a “riot”.⁴ Subsequent works by Steven Hahn and Jane Dailey interacted more extensively with the Senate inquiry, but both focused on witness testimony at the expense of the strong conclusions found in the majority report. Moreover, while Dailey gave some credence to the “massacre” narrative, she frequently lapsed into calling the event a “riot,” and Hahn used “riot” almost exclusively.⁵ Outside of academia the few online public histories that mention the violence in Danville use the “riot” appellation even more universally.⁶ One hundred and thirty-six years after the Danville Massacre, no one seems to remember it as such.

Was the Senate committee correct to call the violence a massacre, and conclude that it was premeditated and politically motivated? If not, does the prevailing narrative correctly term the incident a race riot? Or are both accounts inadequate? This thesis seeks to answer these questions by reexamining the violence in Danville on November 3, 1883 and the events which surrounded it.

By rigorously examining this incident and seeking answers to these questions, this thesis can make two key contributions. First, it can fill a glaring hole in Danville public history. One

³ C.C. Pearson, “The Readjuster Movement in Virginia,” *The American Historical Review* 21, no. 4 (July 1916), 734-49; C. Vann Woodward, *A History of the South*, vol. IX, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, ed. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 105.

⁴ James Tice Moore, *Two Paths to the New South: The Virginia Debt Controversy, 1870-1883* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1974), 117.

⁵ Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 404, 410, 602; Jane Dailey, “Deference and Violence in the Postbellum Urban South: Manners and Massacres in Danville, Virginia,” *The Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 3 (August 1997), 553-90.

⁶ See, for instance: “Danville Riot,” The History Engine, accessed April 17, 2020, <https://historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/506>; “Nov. 3, 1883: Danville Riot,” Zinn Education Project, accessed April 17, 2020, <https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/danville-riot/>; Brendan Wolfe, “Danville Riot (1883),” Encyclopedia Virginia, last modified June 29, 2015, accessed April 17, 2020, https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Danville_Riot_1883.

hundred and thirty-six years after the deadly violence, the episode has been all but erased from the public memory. No historical markers indicate the location of the violence to modern visitors, and the Danville Historical Society makes no mention of the event on their website.⁷ Meanwhile, several key players in the violence are actively remembered and revered. The city's historic Green Hill Cemetery highlights the elegant obelisks honoring men like Benjamin Brooke Temple, William Pinkney Graves, Harry Wooding, John W. Holland and Charles H. Conrad. Aside from their Confederate service, these men all share the distinction of having played active roles in the violence in Danville and its aftermath. While these memorials are marketed to historically minded tourists, the adjacent Freedman's Cemetery, which likely houses the unmarked graves of some of the black men they killed, lays in a state of disrepair. Even more prominent than the memorials in Green Hill Cemetery is the imposing statue of Wooding in front of the Danville Municipal Building, which honors his decades of service as mayor but makes no mention of his involvement in the violence in 1883. By reinvestigating this episode, this thesis can rediscover lives long since forgotten and provide a more complete understanding of those that have been remembered.

Aside from these contributions to public history, this thesis can make important contributions to key historiographical discussions surrounding the post-Civil War South. First, it can lend new insights into the demise of Reconstruction and the nineteenth century civil rights movement. Referred to as "the darkest page in the saga of American history" by renowned Reconstruction scholar Eric Foner, this period saw a spate of promising reforms lose momentum and give way to a decades-long nadir in American race relations.⁸ Explanations of the demise of

⁷ "Early Danville History," DanvilleHistory.org, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.danvillehistory.org/history.html>.

⁸ Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), xii.

Reconstruction and the resurgence of conservative Redeemers typically highlight a variety of federal enforcement failures. Countless historians have pointed to the withdrawal of federal troops from the South as the death knell for Reconstruction, and the end of military Reconstruction in 1877 is widely used as the end date for Reconstruction more generally.⁹ Other scholars have suggested that the leading proponents of Reconstruction-era reforms gradually lost interest in the cause and grew apathetic about protecting the rights of black Southerners.¹⁰ Others still have highlighted the failures of the federal government to crack down on organized racial terrorist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the weaknesses of enforcement acts targeting private actors.¹¹ The Senate investigation into the violence in Danville, with its open consideration of the enforcement mechanisms contained in the Fourteenth Amendment, suggests another critical failure of Reconstruction.

Each of the three Reconstruction amendments to the United States Constitution featured broad and powerful enforcement provisions that have gone largely unused. Section 2 of the Thirteenth Amendment, Section 5 of the Fourteenth Amendment, and Section 2 of the Fifteenth Amendment each featured language that gave Congress the “power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.” Even more forcefully, Section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment called for proportional decreases in congressional representation for states that failed to protect the right to vote. Recent scholarship by Eric Foner has brought the legal and constitutional significance of these amendments to the forefront, but even he pays little attention to their unused enforcement

⁹ For a convincing discussion of the military causes of the demise of Reconstruction, see: James K. Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 181.

¹⁰ See for example Heather Cox Richardson’s analysis of the “Northern abandonment of African-Americans during Reconstruction,” in: Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹¹ For more on the phenomenon of racial terror in the South and the inability of the federal government to effectively counteract it, see: George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984).

provisions.¹² The active consideration of these provisions in investigations into the Danville violence suggests that they should not be ignored. Clearly, congressional leaders remained conscious of these powerful civil enforcement powers years after military Reconstruction had come to an end.

The central focus of this thesis, however, is not on congressional Republicans or the federal response to the violence in Danville. Rather, it is on the local actors in this saga, from the victims of the bloodshed to the perpetrators. Accordingly, the central historiographical contributions of this thesis relate to Southern society. Danville offers a perfect case study of the New South – a common trope in the historical literature that emphasizes the modernizing influence of the commercial and entrepreneurial class in the post-Civil War South. An urban setting with an economy driven by tobacco manufacturing and a nascent textile industry, Danville was dominated by the businessmen and entrepreneurs of the New South, not the plantation-owners of the antebellum Old South. Accordingly, the violence in Danville offers a golden opportunity to critically examine the motives, interests, and behaviors of New South businessmen and to reassess conventional historical interpretations of this group.

The term “New South” originated as a popular slogan pushed by Southerners seeking to rehabilitate and restore the South in the aftermath of the Civil War. Henry Woodfin Grady – perhaps the most notable proponent of this creed – claimed that the New South was forward looking and “rejoices that slavery has been swept forever from American soil.”¹³ According to Grady’s logic, the end of slavery created new opportunities for Southern commercialism and entrepreneurship that could propel the region back to prominence. While serious historians

¹² Eric Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2019).

¹³ Henry Woodfin Grady, *The New South* (New York: Robert Bonner’s Sons, 1890), 146

would later study Grady's claims about the New South with more critical eyes, central aspects of his New South mythology remained unchallenged. Historians of the New South have emphasized the emergence of a modernizing urban business class out of the collapse of the aristocratic plantation elite.¹⁴ For the businessmen and professionals of this group, they argue, commercial interests outweighed antiquated loyalties to the institution of slavery and ties to the Northern business community overcame old sectional tensions.¹⁵ Historians frequently attribute the dramatic economic modernization and industrialization that would define the Southern economy for decades after the end of Reconstruction to the enterprising businessmen of the New South.¹⁶ While honest about the shortcomings of the New South, historians have widely agreed that it charted a path forward for the war-ravaged South.

In conflict with this consensus, variety of other historical works have examined issues that should cast doubt on the rosy and optimistic interpretations of the entrepreneurial New South. A number of historians have commented on the persistence of rebellion and insurgency after the end of the Civil War, arguing that "surrender marked a turning point, not an end point, for the state of war," in the South.¹⁷ If Southern rebellion continued, albeit in subtler forms, after the fall of the Old South and the ascent of the entrepreneurial business class, then perhaps the New South was less forward-looking than previously thought. Similarly, Jonathan Martin's

¹⁴ For an excellent overview of New South historiography, see: James S. Humphreys, "New South Historiography," in *Interpreting American History: The New South*, ed. James S. Humphreys (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2018). The seminal work on the New South is: C. Vann Woodward, *A History of the South*, vol. IX, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, ed. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971).

¹⁵ For a discussion on the cultural linkages between Northern and Southern business communities, see Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

¹⁶ Edward L. Ayres, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 428.

¹⁷ Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 11. See also: Rable, *But There Was No Peace* and Mark Grimsely, "Wars for the American South: The First and Second Reconstructions Considered as Insurgencies," *Civil War History* 58, no. 1 (March 2012), 6-36.

analysis of the practice of slave hiring, for instance, sheds light on a common practice that united the wealthy slaveholding elite of the Old South with the businessmen of the New South.¹⁸

Martin's work shows that while the businessmen who drove economic progress in the New South may never have held significant property-rights in slaves, many nevertheless relied heavily on the institution of slavery during the antebellum period. Again, this scholarship casts doubt on notions of the New South as entirely-forward looking.

In order to assess how the violence in Danville fits into these conversations, this thesis relies on a combination of old and new sources. The investigations conducted by the Committee of Forty in Danville and the Committee on Privileges and Elections in the U.S. Senate serve as logical starting places. The reports of each committee provide two thorough, albeit competing, narratives that summarize the events and circumstances surrounding the violence on November 3, 1883. Even more valuable, both reports appended the full transcripts of the witness testimony gathered during the conduct of their investigations. In particular in the case of the Senate investigation, which gathered nearly thirteen-hundred pages of testimony, these transcripts provide a valuable array of perspectives on the situation in Danville and preserve the voices and experiences of both black and white residents. A critical re-examination of these sources can find details omitted, neglected, or misinterpreted by the original reports.

In addition, a range of sources are to supplement and complement the witness testimony and investigative reports. The official minutes of the Danville City Council are preserved on microfilm at the Library of Virginia and provide rich detail on the inner workings of city government. These records are particularly valuable because they document the appointment process for all city government jobs. Surviving newspapers document a variety of aspects of life

¹⁸ Jonathan D. Martin, *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

in Danville during this period and featured detailed coverage of the massacre and surrounding events. While few local papers survive, there is a wealth of coverage in papers from across the United States. Records held by the Clerk of the Circuit Court in Danville provided additional insights into the working of local government during this period. Finally, political ephemera held in a variety of archival collections, including the William Mahone Papers at Duke University, offer key glimpses into the political climate in Danville and across Virginia.

The stories these sources told were remarkable. The Readjuster Party came to power in Danville during the 1882 municipal elections, and black representation in city government increased in turn. Four black men were elected to two-year terms on the twelve-seat city council, a sizeable jump from 1880, when the city elected its first black councilman alongside eleven white councilmembers. The Readjuster-led city council in turn distributed a sizeable share of appointed positions to black residents. Among the black appointees were the clerk of the city market, the sanitary commissioner, the city janitor, and one of eight city policemen.¹⁹ Though black representation in city government far exceeded previous levels – and would prove to be a high-water mark for decades to come – it was hardly proportional. In a city with a black majority, only about a third of elected and appointed positions were held by black men. As a convenient but imperfect shorthand, this thesis will refer to this period in local governance as Danville’s “biracial city government.” By law, this government served a two-year term ending in the summer of 1884, but in reality, the biracial city government began to crumble after the violence in November of 1883.

The focus of this thesis is on the violence, its causes, its motivations, its perpetrators, and its aftermath. Chapter I begins by assessing the competing narratives of what actually occurred

¹⁹ Police officers were appointed to six-month terms. A year after Walter Withers became the first black police officer, a second black man, Robert J. Adams was also appointed to the force.

on November 3, 1883 and determines that the findings of the Senate investigation are most credible, and that the violence is best be termed the Danville Massacre. The chapter then continues to explore the racist and white supremacist ideologies underlying the violence and traces their origins. It finds that emergence of a biracial city government in 1882 inflamed the white supremacist sensibilities of Danville's most committed racists and sparked a menacing reactionary movement. Chapter II finds that the white reactionaries who perpetrated the massacre were a homogenous group of prominent local businessmen, merchants, and property-holders – in short, the epitome of the New South. The particular social dynamics of this group contributed to strength of the white reactionary movement, while persistent inequities undermined the black community they targeted. Finally, Chapter III examines the concrete actions these white reactionaries took to ensure the downfall of Danville's biracial government. It uncovers an extensive and coordinated campaign featuring violence, intimidation, political subterfuge, legal attacks, and voter suppression.

The narrative uncovered by this thesis is centered around the white businessmen who organized, led, and implemented the reaction against biracial government in Danville. This focus is deliberate and necessary in order to understand how the imperfect but promising inclusion of black men in city government came to such a violent, decisive, and lasting end. In turn, these findings lend themselves to valuable insights into the New South and Reconstruction. Despite the merits of such an organization, there is one glaring shortcoming. By focusing on white reactionaries, the black men and women of Danville are often relegated to the sidelines of this thesis. In an attempt to correct for this imbalance, two brief interludes highlight a handful of the black men and women at the receiving end of the white reactionary movement. Though undoubtedly insufficient, these vignettes aim to depict these impressive figures not as victims but

as the independent, self-assured, and defiant people they were.

The thesis that follows tells just one small chapter in a grim saga of racial terror and violence across the American South – and even at times in the North – during the late nineteenth century. By focusing on a narrow slice of the history of a small city in rural Virginia, it is able to delve into fine grain detail. Wherever possible, it seeks to identify individuals and assign responsibility for decisions rather than make vague allusions to ill-defined forces. Most fundamentally, it seeks to understand Danville at a human level. The results are imperfect, but hopefully take an important step towards better understanding not only this event, but the larger historical trends it implicates.

CHAPTER I

The Origins of Racial Terror

Although the explanations of the violence in Danville in November 1883 diverge in many respects, they converge on one important point. Whether a riot or massacre, all accounts agree that the violence was significantly tainted by race. Race, then, is a natural starting point for any investigation into the circumstances of the violence. A close examination of the racial discourse in Danville surrounding the outbreak of violence reveals a contingent of white reactionaries who were deeply troubled by the emergence of a biracial government in Danville. Motivated by a white supremacist ideology, these reactionaries frequently expressed deep-seated fears of an inversion of the antebellum racial order and anger over shifting political and social roles for black people in Danville society. Unsurprisingly, latent racist ideologies in Danville had impacts beyond the substance of political and public debates. Throughout the months and years leading up to the bloodshed in 1883, white supremacy was also translated into numerous acts of racial violence. Between public discourse and periodic violence, white supremacists in Danville created a toxic racial climate which culminated in the deadly violence of November 3, 1883.

Before launching any further into an inquiry of the circumstances and events in Danville on November 3, 1883, however, it is necessary to better understand what happened. Competing narratives have long confused historians and muddled their analyses of the violence. On the one

hand, a group of citizens in Danville charged a commission of prominent local men with investigating the violence and determining if any actors merited prosecution under the law. Known commonly as the Committee of Forty because of the commission's size, this group released a report in late 1883 that called the violence a riot. Their report found that violence had been provoked by unruly crowds of black people.¹ In contrast, an investigation by a U.S. Senate committee in early 1884 characterized the violence as a lopsided massacre and affixed blame on white Democrats. According to this report, these white offenders provoked the violence to advance their political and electoral aims.² Adding to the confusion, Democratic senators on the Senate committee published a dissenting minority report which concurred with the Committee of Forty report and blamed "uncontrollable" and armed black crowds for the outbreak of violence, which they also termed a riot.³ To make sense of these competing narratives, a critical comparative analysis of these reports is needed.

A comparison of the thoroughness and intensity of the Senate and Committee of Forty investigations lends greater credence to the massacre narrative promulgated by the majority report in the Senate inquiry. Both reports premised their conclusions on witness testimony collected by investigators. There, the similarities end. The Committee of Forty collected deposition testimony from thirty-seven witnesses, while the Senate committee interrogated 179 witnesses.⁴ The Senate investigation also outdid the Committee of Forty investigation in terms of the quality of witness testimony. Testimony in the Committee of Forty investigation was

¹ *Danville Riot November 3, 1883 – Report of the Committee of Forty with Sworn Testimony of Thirty-Seven Witnesses, &c.* (Richmond: Johns & Goulsby, 1883), 4.

² Committee on Privileges and Elections, Report on the Inquiry into massacre of colored men at Danville, Virginia, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., 1884, S. Rep. 579, III-XLIII.

³ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, LIII.

⁴ Witness testimony from the Committee of Forty investigation can be found in: *Report of the Committee of Forty*, 10-44. For a complete index of witnesses to the Senate inquiry, see: Committee on Privileges and Elections, Report on the Inquiry into massacre of colored men at Danville, Virginia, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., 1884, S. Rep. 579, 1291-3.

gathered by local lawyer and notary public F.F. Bowen and consistent entirely of witness statements. In contrast, witnesses in the Senate investigation were questioned extensively and often contentiously by both Republican and Democratic senators. As a result, while the testimony in the Committee of Forty report spanned just thirty-four pages, the transcripts of testimony in the Senate report covered nearly thirteen hundred pages. The disparity in thoroughness between the two investigations is also evidenced by the duration of each. Whereas the Committee of Forty published their final reports by late November 1883 – just weeks after the violence – the Senate investigation lasted four months, between January and May 1884. All these measures of comprehensiveness add to the credibility of the Senate findings.

The relative credibility of the massacre narrative is also supported by the undisputed facts of the violence. Both investigations agreed that several black men were killed during the violence, but no white men lost their lives.⁵ This racial disparity amongst the casualties of the violence casts doubt on the Committee of Forty's narrative that the violence was driven and instigated by black crowds. It also undermines claims advanced by the Committee of Forty and Senate Democrats that the black crowds were equally or even more heavily armed than the white crowds during the violence. These casualty figures instead align with the Senate report's findings that the black crowds were largely unarmed victims of white aggression.

Meanwhile, the findings of both the Committee of Forty report and Senate minority report are both undercut by obvious racial prejudices. Both reports used language that emphasized white virtue and black inferiority. In their minority report, Senate Democrats routinely justified discounting or disregarding the testimony of black witnesses by characterizing

⁵ *Report of the Committee of Forty*, 5; Committee, *Inquiry into Massacre*, I. Sadly, the exact death toll remains unknown. Estimates range from three to over a dozen black men killed in the violence. In the climate of fear created by the violence, many black people lived in hiding or fled the city altogether, meaning many of the dead and wounded simply would not have been reported or recorded in official records.

them at various points as “ignorant negroes,” “ignorant and untruthful negroes,” “ignorant and unreliable negroes.”⁶ At one point, the minority report went so far as to write of black witnesses, “much of what they tell is of that wild and unreliable character of which the emotional and imaginative nature of the negro is so prolific.”⁷ In contrast, white witnesses were hailed at various points as, “intelligent and unimpeached gentlemen,” “intelligent white men,” and numerous times as “respectable.”⁸ Obvious racial bias not only distorted the way these reports weighed black testimony, it also influenced the violence itself was interpreted. The Committee of Forty report, for instance, described Danville’s black population as “rude, insolent and intolerant to the white citizens of the town,” while the Senate Democrats characterized them as “boisterous,” and “uncontrollable.”⁹ In contrast, the white participants in the violence were characterized as, “leading men in character, intelligence, and property.”¹⁰ Perhaps most astoundingly, the Senate Democrats even tried to blame the death of one of the black victims of the violence on the failings of the black community. They emphasized that he died of “neglect,” implying the gunshot wounds he sustained were merely secondary.¹¹ All of these statements make crystal clear that the ideology and assumptions of white supremacy was integral in the reasoning of those who called the violence a race riot. Between the shortcomings of the Committee of Forty and Senate minority reports and the thoroughness and consistency of the Senate majority report, it is clear that the violence on November 3, 1883 is best termed a massacre.

Having concluded that the violence in Danville is most faithfully characterized as a

⁶ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, LII; Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, LVI; Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, LVII.

⁷ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, LXI

⁸ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, LVIII; Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, LVII

⁹ *Report of the Committee of Forty*, 4; Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, LIII.

¹⁰ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, LIII.

¹¹ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, LV.

massacre, racist ideologies are a natural next line of inquiry. Four bodies of primary source material offer critical insights into the racial ideologies of the white reactionary movement. First, a pamphlet entitled “Coalition Rule in Danville,” and popularly known as the Danville Circular, served as a de facto manifesto of the movement and galvanized public discourse throughout Virginia and beyond.¹² The sheer volume of responses and rebuttals to the Circular attest to the political damage it had caused.¹³ A variety of other political literature and ephemera – including responses and supplements to the Danville Circular – from this era, though less influential and less widely circulated, provide similar insights into the racial discourse surrounding the white reactionary movement. Third, between the Committee of Forty and Senate investigations, the testimony of dozens of white reactionaries is preserved for history and illuminates their racial thinking. Finally, apologist reports like the Committee of Forty and Senate minority reports embody the racial thinking of the white reactionaries they exonerated.

The most striking and recurrent racial theme in the white reactionary discourse during this period was a deep fear about inversions to the racial and social order. The central goal of the Danville Circular, according to its authors, was to reveal, “the injustice and humiliation to which our white people are daily undergoing by the domination and misrule of the radical or negro party.” Indeed, the document described instances of blacks wielding political power and influence over whites, and argued that, “wherever it was possible for anything to be done by the

¹² The Danville Circular even resonated with readers outside of Virginia. In Maryland, it was reprinted as a warning, with the comment, “Something for Marylanders as well as Virginians to Ponder.” “Results of Black Republicanism,” *The Sun* (Baltimore), November 3, 1883.

¹³ Among the responses to the Danville Circular are: “Exposure of the Infamous Circular Addressed to the Citizens of the South West and Valley of Virginia Entitled ‘Coalition Rule in Danville,’” Box 216, Danville Riot and Newspaper Comments (scrapbook), William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University (hereafter cited as WMP); “To the People of Virginia,” October 26, 1883, Box 216, Danville Riot and Newspaper Comments (scrapbook), WMP; “Funder Lies Nailed! Coalition Rule in Danville Explained!” *Spirit of the Valley—Supplement*, November 2, 1883, Box 216, Danville Riot and Newspaper Comments (scrapbook), WMP; “Nailed to the Wall! The Circular of the Danville Partizans Exposed.” *The Valley Virginian.---Extra*. Box 216, Danville Riot and Newspaper Comments (scrapbook), WMP.

[biracial, Readjuster-led] council or its magistrates that would irritate and wound the pride of the whites, it was executed with the keenest relish.” Among the irritations listed were the appointment of blacks as policemen, as the town’s health officer, and as weighmaster at the public scales and clerk of the market. Equally abhorrent to the circular’s authors was the fact that, “out of 24 stalls and stands at the market, 20 are *rented out by the council to the negroes*” (emphasis theirs).¹⁴ The Committee of Forty report echoed these complaints about the city’s black citizens mistreating their white neighbors after electoral gains in 1882.¹⁵

White reactionary fears about social inversion were perhaps most pronounced as they related to the presence of black men on the city police force. At various points in the circular, the authors lamented that, “negro policemen...watch our town while its inhabitants sleep,” and claimed that “white men are arrested for the most frivolous acts by negro policemen.”¹⁶ Importantly, concerns about inverted social and racial orders completely distorted the realities of the situation in Danville, where expansions to black power and social influence were decidedly modest.

In at least one case, exaggerated fears of black power extended beyond the social and political realms and into the purely physical. The transition from the targeted beating of Hense Lawson to indiscriminate shooting on the day of the massacre hinged on the intervention of George Adams. Adams, a respected figure in the black community, stepped in the middle of the beating of Hense Lawson and implored the crowd of bystanders not to allow Lawson to be killed. When Adams intervened, Lea drew his gun, which he justified by noting that Adams was far larger than he was, and thus an immediate physical threat. Contrary to Lea’s fears, however,

¹⁴ “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

¹⁵ *Report of the Committee of Forty*, 4.

¹⁶ “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

Adams reported that he weighed only 160 pounds, not 200, and that the two would have been evenly matched in an altercation.¹⁷ Hypersensitivity to black power apparently led Lea to overestimate Adams' physical size, in addition to his misjudgments of the extent of black political power.

Throughout the document, the Danville Circular's authors characterized blacks as fundamentally inferior and whites as fundamentally superior. Dichotomous depictions of civic-minded, polite, clean, and civilized white gentlemen and selfish, impolite, unclean, uncivilized black men recur throughout the circular. The first grievance enumerated in the circular argued that whites bore the lion's share of the city's tax burden and suggest in contrast that, "it appears that the negroes of the town do not contribute one single dollar to the use of the town."¹⁸ These dueling racial characterizations grew more pronounced and more insidious when the circular discussed the city market. Whereas some stalls were run by, "polite white gentlemen, with their clean, white aprons, and the most enticing meats and vegetables upon their boards," the circular's authors claimed that the stalls run by blacks were overrun with "filth, stench, crowds of loitering and idle negroes, drunkenness, obscene language, and pettit [sic] thieves."¹⁹ The circular also decried the attempts of "indignant," and "incendiary," blacks to counteract, "the earnest work that was going on by the whites to register all of their voting strength."²⁰ Depictions of blacks as savage and subhuman were the most prevalent and vulgar in the circular. According to the circular, white men placed under arrest were followed to court by "swarms of jeering and hooting and mocking negroes...and then followed to jail by the same insulting rabble," and

¹⁷ Committee, Inquiry into the Massacre, 230.

¹⁸ "Coalition Rule in Danville," Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

¹⁹ "Coalition Rule in Danville," Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

²⁰ "Coalition Rule in Danville," Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

“large numbers of idle and filthy negroes...infest the streets and sidewalks in squads.”²¹ Finally, for the benefit of any obtuse readers for whom the depictions of black depravity were too subtle, the document’s authors offered unsubstantiated and deliberately inflammatory anecdotes about grown black men striking white children and a black man seducing and having “criminal intercourse,” with a girl.²²

The authors of the circular also seemed to take issue with the failure of blacks to accept an inferior and submissive social standing. In an extended diatribe, the circular’s authors claimed about the supposedly undeferential and assertive behavior of blacks in otherwise mundane and inconsequential situations. “*Negro women* have been known to *force ladies* from the pavement and remind them that they will ‘*learn to step aside next time,*’” (emphasis theirs) they wrote of instances when whites and blacks passed each other on sidewalks. The authors also reported with disgust and indignation that, “it is a very common practice for the negroes who are employed about out houses to allude to white ladies and gentlemen as *men* and *women*, and to negroes as *ladies* and *gentlemen*” (emphasis theirs).²³ Not only had the Readjuster-led city government given blacks too much political power, the circular argued, but it had emboldened black people to act in defiance of their proper position of subservience. Only by voting the Readjusters out of office, they argued, could blacks be forced back into social submission.

Aside from concerns about etiquette, racial discourse also seemed to express fundamental opposition to the involvement of black people in the citizenry. In the second paragraph of the circular, the authors acknowledge that Danville was a majority-black city when measured by the 1880 census, and that in subsequent years, the population of the town increased with “there being

²¹ “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

²² “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

²³ “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

a much larger proportion of blacks now than in the year 1880.”²⁴ This acknowledgement of a growing black majority in the city ostensibly counteracts or contradicts the circular’s criticism of the increased representation of blacks in city government and suggests that the circular’s authors fundamentally oppose any black representation in government, regardless of the demographics of the citizenry. The circular also repeatedly decries the use of tax dollars on black public education. The authors write that, “every dollar, and much more besides, paid by the members of the race in the nature of taxes, is returned to them and applied to the education of their children.”²⁵ The implication of these lines of argumentation is that the proper role of government is to represent white citizens and serve their needs. Any government representation of black citizens and any use of tax dollars to benefit black citizens was a misuse of the government, they argued.

The racial ideology of the Danville Circular is thus notable for its omnipresence within the document, and the extent of its white supremacy. All but one of the fifteen paragraphs in the body of the Danville Circular made at least one angry reference to “blacks,” “negroes,” or “colored” people, with the lone exception being the shortest in the document. Indeed, every grievance that the circular’s authors raised against the Readjuster-led city government was in some way related to race. The racial ideology implicit in the circular’s arguments against the Readjuster-led government not only reinforced negative characterizations and stereotypes about blacks, but also implied that they should be relegated to a very specific and limited social standing. That is, the circular takes issue with blacks holding political office, failing to be deferential and subservient to whites, and even benefiting from and being represented in their own government. The distribution and reaction to the circular make clear that its arguments

²⁴ “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

²⁵ “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

resonated with the Virginians to whom it was addressed. Therefore, the Danville Circular demonstrates the central role played by racial attitudes in the eventual overthrow of the Readjuster-led city government.

While the Danville Circular was undoubtedly the most important and influential political document produced in the fall of 1883, it was hardly the only one. Other political leaflets and circulars also demonstrate the acuity of racial issues in local politics. A tract entitled “To the Voters of Pittsylvania And Adjoining Counties in Virginia” published by the Democratic Committee of Danville featured a number of racial appeals. It decried instances of the Readjuster-led legislature replacing “many of the truest and best officials in the State,” with those “of an inferior color and race,” accused Readjuster party leader William Mahone of attempting to “Africanize the State,” and promised a Democratic government would ensure “no mixed schools but separate schools for white and colored children, and no colored trustees for white schools.”²⁶ An undated and unattributed flyer that circulated in Virginia during this period featured the bold and unambiguously racist slogans, “Down with the Negroes,” and “Colonize the Negroes.”²⁷ Meanwhile, a leaflet distributed after the massacre and subsequent overthrow of Readjuster government makes clear that the turmoil was racially motivated. The flyer’s bold headlines celebrated that, “Virginia is Safe!” and “No More Negro Rule!”²⁸ On the other end of the spectrum a Republican candidate for the General Assembly, the unfortunately-named B. B. Dumville, centered his appeal to voters in a campaign flyers on his pledge “to advocate, urge and support the civil rights of colored citizens.”²⁹ The political literature distributed prior to the 1883

²⁶ “To the Voters of Pittsylvania And Adjoining Counties in Virginia,” Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

²⁷ “Down with the Negroes,” Box 216, Danville Riot and Newspaper Comments (scrapbook), WMP.

²⁸ “Virginia is Safe!” Box 216, Danville Riot and Newspaper Comments (scrapbook), WMP.

²⁹ “To the Republicans of Nansmond County!” Box 216, Danville Riot and Newspaper Comments (scrapbook), WMP.

Virginia elections made one thing abundantly clear: the future of race relations were the central and defining political issue of the moment.

The political literature circulating in the fall of 1883 in Virginia also made clear that political alliances with black voters were a political liability in the eyes of many white voters. A pair of competing flyers in Prince George County disputed whether white reactionaries had attempted to appeal to black voters. The first circular, entitled “Fundens Hugging Negroes!” alleged that at a political dinner held in Spring Grove, Virginia, “the most prominent attendants were...well-known white Bourbon Fundens,” and that they, “partook of the feast with colored ladies present, at a table specially set apart for them and these ladies.” The incident proved, according to the undated circular, that “the ‘Democratic’ and ‘White Man’s’ leaders [are] playing their game of deceit.”³⁰ That the flyer attacked conservative Democrats for allegedly making biracial appeals, shows the extent to which even the appearance of a biracial coalition had become politically toxic. Likewise, the fervor with which Democrats rebuked the original circular’s allegations in their rebuttal circular demonstrated the seriousness with which these accusations were viewed. The response, entitled “A Falsehood Nailed!” denounced the original flyer as “a dirty handbill” and “a falsehood,” questioned the “manliness” of the circular’s anonymous authors, and even urged sympathizers to append the rebuttal to the original circulars.³¹ All of this excitement over a relatively mundane interaction with black voters is further evidence of the white reactionary attitudes towards biracial government.

The racial attitudes and dynamics borne out in contemporary political literature were explicitly affirmed by the testimony of William P. Graves, a prominent white reactionary in Danville. The transcripts of his testimony before the congressional subcommittee investigation

³⁰ “Fundens Hugging Negroes!” Box 216, Danville Riot and Newspaper Comments (scrapbook), WMP.

³¹ “A Falsehood Nailed!” Box 216, Folder 31, WMP.

the massacre in Danville are laden with evidence that white supremacist racial ideologies were the catalyst for the overthrow of the Readjuster-led government in Danville. Perhaps most blatant was his statement that, “I was very sure there was bound to be a collision between the races...and I thought it was necessary for every one of us, every white man, to be prepared to defend himself [by procuring a gun].”³² Beyond this remarkably frank admission that he and other whites had armed themselves with revolvers in anticipation of racial conflict, his testimony also reveals his deep seated ideology of white supremacy. Graves recounted one instance at his tobacco warehouse when two black laborers carrying a basket of tobacco brushed past him and bumped his leg. When one of the men did not take kindly to Graves “remonstrat[ing] a little with them for doing so,” the encounter turned violent. “I hit him over the head with my stick, sir,” he flatly, and perhaps proudly, admitted to the Senate panel.³³

Perhaps the most notable aspect of Graves’ testimony, however, was his discussion of sidewalk etiquette. In response to a senator’s question about, “what other menace, if any, was there, which prompted you to buy [a] pistol,” Graves launched into an extended diatribe about trivial encounters with black people on Danville’s sidewalks. “Frequently,” he complained, “in walking the streets I have encountered negroes, more particularly negro women,” who failed to yield to him, and caused him to “strike them with my shoulder and pass on.”³⁴ Historian Jane Dailey has compellingly interpreted these breaches of ‘sidewalk etiquette’ as deliberate acts of subversion and resistance on the part of Danville’s oppressed blacks. In an analysis that leaned heavily on Graves’ comments to the congressional panel, she concluded that, “when black men and women stood their ground on the streets of Danville insisting on the impartial rule of law,

³² Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 212.

³³ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 213.

³⁴ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 213.

white men responded violently and reclaimed the streets, and ultimately the political arena, for themselves.”³⁵

It is worthwhile to pause here for a moment and take a closer look at William P. Graves. A prominent white citizen dating to before the Civil War, and the successor to John Henry Johnston as Danville’s mayor, Graves epitomizes the reactionary white supremacist sentiment that boiled to the surface in 1883. During his testimony before the Senate panel, he admitted (somewhat evasively) to being involved in the slave trade. After replying in the negative to a question asking if he had been a slave dealer, he casually stated that, “I owned some, and if I found one that didn’t suit me I sometimes sold him. I sold a few, and I bought a few others to supply their places.”³⁶ His nonchalant manner of speaking about the exchange of human beings as property a full two decades after the practice had been outlawed should suggest to even the most forgiving observer that Graves clung to a bygone racial order.

The adult life of William Pinkney Graves is an excellent example of this pattern. Slave schedules in the 1860 U.S. Federal Census identified Graves as the owner of eighteen slaves – including nine children under the age of 12.³⁷ While he later refuted the suggestion that he had been a “slave dealer” in Senate testimony, he readily admitted to regularly buying and selling slaves, and stated that he typically owned around twenty.³⁸ At the outbreak of Civil War, Graves took up arms for the Confederacy – no doubt in part motivated to protect his sizable investment in human chattel – and was appointed as the captain of Company A of the 18th Virginia Infantry – known commonly as the Danville Blues, after the local militia from which they formed.³⁹ In

³⁵ Jane Dailey, “Deference and Violence in the Postbellum Urban South: Manners and Massacres in Danville, Virginia,” *The Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 3 (August 1997), 558.

³⁶ Committee, *Inquiry into Massacre*, 274.

³⁷ 1860 U.S. Federal Census, “Schedule 2—Slave Inhabitants in The Southern District in the County of Pittsylvania, State of Virginia,” 65.

³⁸ Committee, *Inquiry into Massacre*, 274.

³⁹ James I. Robertson, *18th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1984), 3.

1862, Graves left his post with the Blues to serve as aide to General George Pickett, where he would serve for the remainder of the war.⁴⁰ The capstone of Graves' military service to the Confederacy came in the final days of the war, when he ran a reconnaissance mission at the direct request of Jefferson Davis.⁴¹ After the war, Graves followed in the footsteps of other disaffected Confederate veterans and became involved with the Ku Klux Klan. In 1870, he was briefly arrested for his role in a conspiracy to break imprisoned Klansmen out of a North Carolina jail.⁴² In the fall of 1883, Graves proudly affixed his name to the inflammatory and racially charged Danville Circular.⁴³ In fact, he later testified that he had "emphatically" signed not only the circular but several resolutions endorsing its content.⁴⁴ Finally, Graves flatly admitted that on November 3, "I fired in the crowd [of black marketgoers]," in the midst of the deadly Danville Massacre.⁴⁵ These continuities – from slaveholder and trader, to Confederate leader, to avid Ku Klux Klan member, to Circular signer, to massacre co-perpetrator – reinforced and redoubled the strength of Graves' convictions.

Much like Graves, a clear line of continuities can be traced throughout the adult life of William Harry Wooding Jr.⁴⁶ Known by his middle name throughout his life, Harry Wooding was born into a very wealthy slave owning family. Census records from 1860 estimated his father's combined personal and real estate value at \$82,200 and indicate that the family enslaved

⁴⁰ James I. Robertson, *18th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1984), 44.

⁴¹ Edward Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville, Va., Its Manufactures and Commerce. Illustrated.* (Danville: E. R. Waddill & Bro., 1885), 56-8.

⁴² "The Militia Troubles in Alamance County—Caswell County Officers Arrested," *Chicago Tribune*, July 20, 1870; "North Carolina Troubles," *The (Richmond) Daily Dispatch*, July 29, 1870.

⁴³ "Coalition Rule in Danville," Box 216, Folder 31, William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁴⁴ Committee, *Inquiry into Massacre*, 205.

⁴⁵ Committee, *Inquiry into Massacre*, 206.

⁴⁶ In what can only be described as part-coincidence and part-testament to the lasting impacts of the Danville Circular and Danville Massacre, Graves and Wooding would collectively control the Danville mayoralty for half a century. Graves was elected mayor in 1884 – the first municipal elections after the Massacre – and served for one term. In 1892, Wooding was elected mayor. He served until his death in 1938, in the longest mayoralty in city history.

sixty people.⁴⁷ Like Graves, as a teenager Wooding took arms to defend his family's slaveholding way of life and enlisted in a local militia. He served the first two years of the Civil War in the Company B of the 18th Virginia Infantry, commonly known as the Danville Grays, then transferred to a cavalry company.⁴⁸ His brother's death while serving in a Danville Light Artillery company would only have hardened his Confederate sympathies.⁴⁹ As an adult, Wooding signed the Danville Circular.⁵⁰ Finally, after the Danville Massacre, he was appointed to the city council to replace black councilman Bird Lipscomb, clear evidence of his continued involvement with unreconstructed Confederates.⁵¹ Continuities throughout the lives of these unreconstructed Confederates served only to reinforce their convictions and embolden their actions. Men like Graves and Wooding did not become active participants in the reaction against biracial governments on a whim, but rather in continuation of a lifetime spend participating in, defending, and attempting to restore a bygone Southern social order. It would then be uncharacteristic of them to sit idly by while black men assumed important political offices in their city. Rather, these continuities in their lives made reaction – and violent opposition – to biracialism in Danville a predictable outcome.

White supremacist attitudes in Danville also manifested themselves in the form of violence against black citizens, and not just in inflammatory leaflets and political talking points. In the three years preceding the massacre alone, newspapers reported on several sensational acts

⁴⁷ 1860 U.S. Federal Census, "Schedule 1—Free Inhabitants in the Southern District in the County of Pittsylvania, State of Virginia," 141; 1860 U.S. Federal Census, "Schedule 2—Slave Inhabitants in The Southern District in the County of Pittsylvania, State of Virginia," 56.

⁴⁸ "Company B, 18th Virginia Infantry Regiment roster and history, 1859-1864." Accession 25382, Organization records collection, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

⁴⁹ The American Civil War Research Database – George W. Wooding died of wounds on Feb 1 1863 at Thomas Yerby's, Spotsylvania

⁵⁰ "Coalition Rule in Danville," Box 216, Folder 31, William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵¹ "November 9th, 1883," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 265.

of violence perpetrated by whites against blacks in Danville. In June of 1881, an altercation between two laborers – one white and the other black – on a farm outside of Danville ended with Obadiah Yatts, the white man, striking Walter Carter, his black counterpart, in the head with his hoe, “killing him instantly.”⁵² Two months later, an altercation between a white man, C. R. Barksdale, and “a negro named Bob,” ended with Barksdale fatally shooting the otherwise-identified “Bob” in the breast.⁵³ In July of 1880, Joseph H. Estes assaulted a black girl for harvesting vegetables in his garden without permission. The assault provoked a second confrontation between Joseph Estes and Clem Estes, a black relative of the girl, wherein Joseph was shot and killed, and Clem shot and wounded (Clem Estes and his family had previously been owned as slaves by Joseph Estes and his family).⁵⁴ Finally, in June of 1882, when a black man named Richmond Venable died after being run over by “at least two freight trains,” in Danville, newspapers reported that “there are some circumstances that point to,” Venable having been “killed and put on the track to be run over.”⁵⁵ Each of these acts of violence against blacks received only brief, matter-of-fact coverage from the newspapers; for instance, the murder of Walter Carter merited a mere four sentences. As such, it is fair to assume that those incidents which made it into the newspapers represented just a small sampling of the instance of racial violence in Danville leading up to the massacre.

Also of note in the handful of instances of white violence against blacks that merited mention in newspapers is the general lack of consequences for such actions. Excluding the Estes case, where the white assailant ended up dead, newspapers made no mention of any of the white assailants facing legal consequences for their attacks. In the case of the murder of Walter Carter,

⁵² “Deadly Work With the Hoe,” *The Washington Post*, June 17, 1881.

⁵³ “A Negro Killed by a White Man,” *The New York Times*, September 1, 1881.

⁵⁴ “Crimes and Criminals,” *The New York Times*, July 8, 1880.

⁵⁵ “Danville News,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, Md.), June 26, 1882.

although “the authorities of the county have taken measures for his arrest,” the killer, Obadiah Yatts had fled Danville after fatally striking Carter, and had not been seen since.⁵⁶ There are no records to suggest Yatts was ever apprehended. Meanwhile, in the case of the murder of “a negro named Bob,” implied the killing was justified as Bob was drunk and had “attempted to kill Mr. Barksdale.” No evidence is given to substantiate the threat to Barksdale’s life, or of any form of investigation into Bob’s death. Presumably, the white man’s claim of self-defense was simply accepted at face value. Finally, despite “circumstances” suggesting Richmond Venable had been murdered, the Baltimore *Sun* made no mention of any investigation into his death. Violence against blacks was thus not only prevalent in Danville in the years prior to the massacre, but apparently also tolerated.

The relative absence of newspaper interest in or legal consequences for violence against blacks in Danville becomes even more glaring when compared to a sensational case in August of 1883, when three black men were accused of murdering a white man. This case, with its white victim and black perpetrators, drew widespread and extended newspaper coverage for nearly two months.⁵⁷ More remarkably, the three alleged perpetrators, Sawney Younger, Reuben King, and Isaac Evans, nearly faced extralegal lynching on multiple occasions. The day after the murder, a lynch mob boarded a train they thought was transporting the newly arrested suspects. Only after a thorough search of the train did they realize their targets were not on board.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, “ever since the arrest large crowds have been pouring into Chatham [the county seat] with the purpose of lynching the murderers.”⁵⁹ In anticipation of bloodthirsty lynch mobs, the prisoners were

⁵⁶ “Deadly Work With the Hoe,” *The Washington Post*, June 17, 1881.

⁵⁷ The murder occurred on Friday, August 11, 1883 and was first reported in papers on August 12 (“Particulars of the Murder of Mr. Sheppard Near Danville, Va.,” *New York Times*, August 12, 1883). The accused murderers were executed on September 28, which merited mention in newspapers the following day (“Four Negroes Executed,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1883).

⁵⁸ “A Lynching Party Foiled,” *The Washington Post*, August 13, 1883.

⁵⁹ “Three Negroes Charged with Murder in Danger of Lynching,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 14, 1883.

ultimately transported to the county jail under armed guard. Somewhat ironically, the men were protected by the Danville Grays, the local militia with origins in the Confederate Army.⁶⁰ The end result for the three accused men was distinguished from a lynching only by its legal sanction, and brief delay. On Friday, September 28, less than two months after the crime, the accused were sent, “swinging on one gallows.” Though only a “private” crowd of fifteen witnessed the execution, a much larger crowd gathered “in the vicinity,” and newspapers filled in gory details by reporting that, “Mr. Younger’s neck was broken and the other two died from strangulation.”⁶¹ Few events drew more interest, excitement, and enthusiasm in Danville in the months before the massacre than this legally-sanctioned killing of three black men.

The presence of racial animus and violence in Danville leading up to the massacre of black men in the city market was not an isolated or new phenomenon, but rather a continuation of dynamics that existed throughout the post-war period. A letter dated May 7th, 1865 – less than one month after the Confederate government, then temporarily seated in Danville, had fallen – described to an episode of racial violence much like those that defined the fall of 1883. The letter, written by a Union soldier stationed in Danville to his family in New York, describes arresting a white man for viciously beating a black man:

I must tell you about arresting a citizen. Day before yesterday I was out with some prisoners cleaning up some dirt & I heard a man say “God Damn Niger, if you don’t tell me where my horse is, I will kill you dead right here.” I thought he was trying to scare the Negro, but kept watching him. He had a gun barrel in his hands. He quarreled with the Negro a few moments & struck at him with both hands with the barrel. The Negro dodged, he hit him on the side of the head & knocked him down. If he had hit him on the top of the head he would killed him dead.⁶²

Jewell’s story suggests that the phenomenon of white violence against Danville’s black residents

⁶⁰ “In Danger of Lynch Law,” *The New York Times*, August 13, 1883.

⁶¹ “Four Negroes Executed,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1883.

⁶² Altus H. Jewell to Mrs. Asa B. Jewell, May 7, 1865, Personal Papers Collection, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

had begun long before the Danville Massacre. Moreover, it bears striking resemblance to subsequent acts of violence against blacks in Danville for its openness and publicness – the assailant in this case was bold enough to threaten and then beat a man in the presence of an on-duty uniformed soldier.

An 1870 episode just across state lines in North Carolina adds another layer of important context to the racial landscape in Danville. An emboldened and expanding Ku Klux Klan committed a series of brazen acts of racial violence, including the lynching of a black town commissioner, Wyatt Outlaw, and the assassination of a Republican state senator, John Walter Stephens.⁶³ In response, North Carolina Governor William Holden, a Republican, appointed Confederate veteran George Washington Kirk to form a militia to take on the Klan. Kirk raised a force of 670 men and arrested dozens of alleged Klansmen, including public officials. Among those arrested were the sheriffs of both Alamance and Caswell Counties.⁶⁴ The arrests prompted a failed attempt by white supremacists to break imprisoned Klansmen out of the Caswell County jail in Yanceyville – just fifteen miles from Danville. At least one prominent Danville resident, William P. Graves, participated in the attempted jailbreak and was briefly detained by North Carolina authorities.⁶⁵ The entire episode became known as the Kirk-Holden War for the aggressive guerrilla tactics employed by Kirk and his militia. The effort successfully dampened KKK activity in the region but resulted in serious consequences for both Governor Holden and Kirk. Kirk was charged with false arrest and forced to leave the state, while Holden endured a grueling impeachment trial which ultimately resulted in his being removed from office.⁶⁶ By

⁶³ Jim D. Brisson, “‘Civil Government Was Crumbling Around Me’: The Kirk-Holden War of 1870,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 88, no. 2 (April 2011), 140.

⁶⁴ Brisson, “Civil Government Was Crumbling,” 146.

⁶⁵ “The Militia Troubles in Alamance County—Caswell County Officers Arrested,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 20, 1870; “North Carolina Troubles,” *The (Richmond) Daily Dispatch*, July 29, 1870.

⁶⁶ Brisson, “Civil Government Was Crumbling,” 156.

1871, the war was over.

The Kirk-Holden War offers a few key insights into the racial situation in Danville. First, the incident offers a dramatic example of an early attempt at civil rights enforcement. Governor Holden's effort would be followed by the passage of a series of Enforcement Acts beginning in May 1871.⁶⁷ The decidedly mixed results of the effort showed both the promise and the limits of civil rights enforcement efforts. On the one hand, aggressive enforcement could make meaningful impacts on racial violence – especially organized racial violence. On the other, aggressive crackdowns had the potential to spark equally potent reactionary efforts by white supremacists, making the sustainability of enforcement highly questionable. The proximity of Danville to Caswell and Alamance Counties and the direct involvement of at least one Danville resident in the Kirk-Holden War suggest the episode had impacts on the racial situation in Danville. There are no surviving statistics documenting trends in the prevalence of racial violence during this period, but it is conceivable that the crackdown on the KKK put a temporary damper on white supremacist activities in Danville, or even disrupted KKK networks that crossed state lines. More likely, the episode demonstrated the potential for white supremacist backlash to counteract attempts at civil rights enforcement and advancement. Danville's white reactionaries surely had this example in mind as they implemented their own attacks on biracialism in 1883.

The takeaways from an analysis of racial dynamics in Danville paint a bleak picture. A closer look at existing investigations into the violence paints a clear picture of a premeditated racial massacre. The public discourse on race in the weeks and months leading up to the massacre revealed that the deadly attack on black Danville residents was a product of reactionary

⁶⁷ Brisson, "Civil Government Was Crumbling," 156.

movement steeped in the ideology of white supremacy. White reactionaries in Danville had publicly obsessed over exaggerated and irrational fears of inversions to the social order and gripped with anger over modest improvements in the social, political, and economic standing of the city's black community. The prevalence of racial fear and anger in Danville reflected the deep insecurities that white reactionaries had about their own standing within society. Finally, episodes of brutal and largely unpunished racial violence targeting black people in Danville revealed how racist ideologies translated into action. This context clearly demonstrates that the racial violence on November 3, 1883 was not an isolated incident, nor an accident. Rather, the Danville Massacre represented the culmination of an extended campaign of racial terror and violence that had roots dating back to the antebellum period.

INTERLUDE

Sharp Tongues and Quick Wits

Even at the peak of Danville’s biracial government, black men and women faced inequality and intolerance in every facet of their lives. The axis of power in Danville had always fallen squarely within the city’s white population. For many black people in Danville, the answer to persistent disadvantages was one of assertiveness, confidence, defiance, and even acerbity.

This spirit was on full display during the Senate investigation into the Danville Massacre. While Republican senators John Sherman and Elbridge Lapham earnestly and respectfully probed black witnesses for their experiences in Danville before, during, and after the massacre, the senior Democrat on the panel, Zebulon Baird Vance, was far less welcoming. When it came his turn to cross examine black witnesses, he taunted them, berated them, and badgered them to try and get them to retract, revise, or contradict their testimony.¹ In one particularly brutal exchange, Vance pressed witness Val Patterson with questions about how old he was when he “commenced propagating [his] species” and other personal details. When Patterson struggled to provide his exact age, Vance abruptly ended the questioning and declared Patterson an unfit witness.² While Patterson was given no opportunity to speak up for himself, when Vance went

¹ Vance called a couple of self-identified black Democrats to testify about how black Republicans and Readjuster ostracized them for their political beliefs. Their testimony supported a counternarrative that he advanced throughout the investigation, but that had no apparent relevance to the massacre itself. These were the only black witnesses that Vance treated respectfully.

² Committee on Privileges and Elections, Report on the Inquiry into massacre of colored men at Danville, Virginia, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., 1884, S. Rep. 579, 566

head-to-head with other black witnesses, they proved to be formidable adversaries.

On several occasions, Vance interrupted the testimony of black witnesses to press them on trivial details, evidently in an attempt to distract or derail their testimony. Jack Redd had been testifying about the post-massacre fear that gripped black voters and kept them from turning out to the polls on Election Day 1883 when Vance launched into an extended back-and-forth over the precise distances between polling places. “Is not that nearer to Danville than New Design,” he asked of one precinct. When Redd replied honestly (and understandably) that he did not know the exact distance off the top of his head, Vance doubled down. “Oh, yes, you do,” he retorted. Perhaps to Vance’s surprise, Redd did not buckle under the insistent questioning of a powerful United States Senator and give him the answer he wanted to hear. Instead, he calmly doubled down on his testimony: “No, sir; I don’t; I don’t know,” he politely but firmly replied.³ A similar exchange over the minutiae of distances broke out during the testimony of Granderion Poteat. This time, Vance wanted to know the distance between to buildings. “Was it 20 yards,” he suggested. Poteat demurred. “I am unable to say,” and he hesitated to hazard a guess because, “upon my oath I don’t give nothing but what I know to be so.” Vance tried the question about a dozen times, but Poteat would not budge. Finally, an exasperated Vance pressed him: “It is true this is a much more important matter than the pistols?” Like Redd, Poteat was clear-eyed and unfazed in his response. “It may be with you,” he told the veteran senator, “but not with me.”⁴ No amount of badgering or leading questions could get these men to offer testimony they did not believe in.

Squire Taliaferro was even more forthright than Redd or Poteat. A longtime political leader in black and Republican circles in Southwestern Virginia, Taliaferro rarely bit his tongue.

³ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 16.

⁴ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 496.

“I have always talked right straight out,” because, he noted sourly, “I thought I was in a free country.”⁵ For Taliaferro, talking straight even meant speaking candidly about himself. During his testimony, he flatly and honestly told senators that when he saw tensions rising on the day of the massacre, “I thought it was just best for Squire to look out for Squire, and I walked away.”⁶ Vance seized on this admission and tried to exploit what he saw as glaring character defect. “I just want to ask you one question, just for curiosity,” he began, “Are you really proud of your cowardice?” Sensing Vance’s sarcasm, Taliaferro replied in kind, “Yes, I am proud of it,” he began. Then he turned the question on its head and continued, “and I am ashamed, too, in another sense, that I have to act the coward for men trying to kill me without a proper cause.”⁷ Taliaferro may have taken his cue from Violet Keeling, who had testified a few days prior. In her testimony, Vance had tried to get her to concede that white people in Danville were “good friends to the colored people.” Keeling’s reply was even more acerbic than Taliaferro’s. “Yes, friends to them; rather kill them,” she replied.⁸ Keeling and Taliaferro’s testimonies came nearly a century before the advent of C-SPAN, and testimony transcripts did not capture non-verbal reactions, but one can only imagine the stunned silence Vance sat in upon receiving such biting retorts. In a war of words, he had been handily outdueled, twice.

While testimony transcripts from the Senate investigation capture more black voices than other sources, they are not the only examples of biting commentary from Danville’s black community. City councilmember D.F. Batts was similarly unrestrained when he submitted his resignation from the council days after the Danville Massacre. Like two fellow black councilmembers, Batts had apparently decided that given the climate of racial violence in

⁵ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 571.

⁶ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 569.

⁷ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 582.

⁸ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 189.

Danville, it was no longer safe for him to serve in public office. In fact, he evidently felt it would have been unsafe even to appear at the council meeting to resign. Instead, he submitted a resignation letter that was read by a Readjuster colleague, J.B. Raulston. Before Raulston could finish reading the letter, Councilmember Albert Gerst, a prominent white reactionary, objected, saying, “the language of Mr. Batts was considered discourteous.” With that, the letter was struck from the record.⁹ Though the language of his letter has since been lost to history, it is fair to assume that Batts used the otherwise mundane and procedural document to bluntly and honestly condemn the bloody massacre and the campaign of racial terror sweeping the town. Even from political exile, D.F. Batts spoke his mind.

Perhaps the most incisive comment on the situation in Danville and beyond came from the Reverend J. Hudson Riddick. A week after the Danville Massacre, fifteen hundred people packed into the Augusta Street Church in nearby Staunton to hear the esteemed black orator and theologian offer his thoughts on the violence. Riddick’s speech attracted not only his usual black congregants but also a sizeable contingent of “leading white people of the city.” The Reverend pulled no punches and left no room for equivocation in his speech. “There was no riot at Danville,” he told a rapt audience, “these six men were...murdered.” More to the point, Riddick argued the violence was emblematic of a deeper issue in Southern society. “The masses of ignorant people in the South are like intoxicated men with torches in their hands going into a powder magazine,” he proclaimed, “just so long as the people of the South continue to spell Negro with a small n, two g’s and an i, just so long will the South remain in the rear.”¹⁰ In so doing, Riddick bluntly and unabashedly the prominent white Southern gentlemen in his audience

⁹ “November 7th, 1883,” City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 263.

¹⁰ J. Hudson Riddick, *The Danville Riot, An Address by the Rev. J. Hudson Riddick, of the Washington Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, Delivered in the Augusta Street Church, Staunton, Va., Sunday Evening, November 10, 1883*, (Baltimore: Oliver W. Clay & Co. (limited), 1884).

that they were the problem.

The comments Redd, Poteat, Taliaferro, Keeling, Batts, and Riddick show more than just the sharp tongues and quick wits of their speakers. They reflect a level of confidence, self-assuredness, and defiance. Vance put incredible pressure on Redd and Poteat to give him the answers he wanted to hear. Keeling and Taliaferro surely felt out of place and far from home when they testified in Washington and fired back sarcastic replies to Vance's ignorant inquiries. It would have been far easier – and probably much safer – for Batts to have quietly and politely resigned and slipped out of the public spotlight. And surely Riddick knew his white audience members wanted to hear a milder take on the Danville Massacre. Despite these overwhelming pressures to the contrary, in each case, these people spoke their minds. Each comment, then, deserves to be viewed an act of great personal courage and conviction, and serves as a powerful testament to the character of everyday black residents in Danville.

CHAPTER II

Social Landscapes of the New South

INTRODUCTION

A striking commonality united nearly all the perpetrators of the Danville Massacre, signers of the Danville Circular, and loudest proponents of white supremacy in Danville. Nearly all of the most active participants in the city's white reactionary movement hailed from the city's narrow but powerful commercial class, which included doctors, lawyers, merchants, property-holders, and other well-to-do businessmen. The homogeneity of the white supremacist backlash can be explained by structural forces within Danville society. Meanwhile, the intricacies of Danville's social landscapes begin to reveal how such a relatively small group of disaffected white reactionaries managed to affect such a dramatic and decisive reaction. Interconnections across the familial, matrimonial, associational, business, and political lives of these white reactionaries facilitated their political activities and strengthened their commitment to their cause. At the same time, Danville's black residents encountered social dynamics that reinforced inequities and weakened their political clout. Finally, Danville's unique Confederate legacy created a particularly virulent strain of Confederate memory in Danville that further bolstered white reactionaries and further tormented the city's black population. Certainly, these aspects of the social landscape in Danville do not paint a complete portrait of life in the city and cannot

alone explain the Danville Massacre and its aftermath. Nevertheless, social factors contributed to this chapter of Danville history in meaningful ways and merit serious consideration.

Most fundamentally, structural forces and social landscapes played important roles in determining who participated in the reaction to biracial government in Danville. Political and social dynamics left a narrow swath of the city's white population – namely, professionals, merchants, and property-holders – to take up the mantle of opposition to black participation in city government, while the city's white factory workers and laborers had almost no involvement. To an extent, these trends in reactionary activity reflected broader political dynamics in Virginia. The Readjusters who ushered in biracial government in Danville and throughout Virginia swept into power on the backs of a populist coalition of white yeomen farmers and laborers and newly enfranchised black voters and opposed a conservative Funder Party comprised of big landowners and merchants.¹ While these partisan affiliations may have influenced the composition of the reactionary movement, deep-seated anxieties dictated the movement's intensity. On an economic and political level, the prospect of a biracial political coalition of working class black and white voters threatened to relegate the merchants and landowners to minority status in the political system. Meanwhile, on a social and racial level, the prospect of black men serving on the city council and in important appointed positions – including the police force – threatened to upend the social order these reactionaries had known their entire lives. As business owners or supervisors in labor intensive industries like tobacco manufacturing, many of these men employed or managed large numbers of black laborers. Many had also employed slave labor as owners or renters before emancipation. The emergence of a biracial city government in Danville threatened to upend this hierarchy in ways these reactionaries simply could not accept. In

¹ Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 366.

defense of the political, social, economic and racial dynamics that had advantaged them for so long, these men turned to vitriol, and then to violence.

Numerous and overlapping interconnections between the white reactionaries who most strongly opposed biracialism reinforced their ideological resolve and strengthened their social and political networks. Perhaps the most obvious interconnections between the unreconstructed Confederates who led the backlash against biracial government were familial. The list of signatories of the Danville Circular features several repeated family names: Thomas L. Poindexter signed with his son, R.B. Graham signed with his brother, and the Booth, Wooding, Lee, Jordan, Gerst, and Covington families each contributed two signatures to the treatise.² Other rosters of unreconstructed Confederates and their allies abound with family relations, too. The special police force appointed immediately after the Massacre featured a pair of Williamses and two relatives of Circular signatories – N.K. Covington and S. D. Ragland.³ Likewise, the rolls of local Confederate companies teemed these familial interconnections. In the 18th Virginia Infantry, the Coleman, Gravely, Holland, and Wooding – each of which produced Circular signatories – were among the Danville families to contribute multiple soldiers to the Confederate cause.⁴ Matrimonial bonds often expanded upon familial relations to further intertwine unreconstructed Confederates. Circular signer Harry Wooding, for instance, married the daughter of fellow circular signer Daniel Coleman, and in the 1880 census the two even lived in the same household.⁵ These interconnections only begin to unravel the tangled web of familial and matrimonial bonds that united the white men who most actively opposed Readjuster biracialism.

² “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.

³ “November 7th, 1883,” City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 262.

⁴ American Civil War Research Database.

⁵ 1880 U.S. Federal Census, “Schedule 1—Inhabitants in Danville, in the County of Pittsylvania, State of Virginia,” 38.

The network of unreconstructed Confederates who opposed biracialism in Danville was also strengthened by professional and associational interconnections. Among the forty signatories of the Danville Circular, twenty-two signed alongside at least one business partner, and one signed on behalf of their company – Morotock Manufacturing Co. – rather than as an individual.⁶ Importantly, the business affiliations of Circular signers and other unreconstructed Confederates cut across familial and marital interconnections. For instance, the two members of the Wooding family who signed the Circular did not sign together, but rather with their respective business partners.⁷ Meanwhile, social organizations provided yet another avenue for unreconstructed Confederates to form interconnections with each other. The leadership of Danville’s “Morotock” Lodge, No. 210 featured unreconstructed Confederates James Wood, F.B. Gravely, J.E. Schoolfield, and E.G. Mosely.⁸ Mosely also held the title of Vice Dictator of the Knights of Honor Spartan Lodge No. 937, where served alongside Circular signer J.G. Covington.⁹ Circular signer Daniel Coleman held membership in the International Order of Odd Fellows “Bethesda” Lodge No. 57 alongside members of Danville’s conservative Ayres family.¹⁰ Through their work as business men and their engagements as members of social clubs and organizations, unreconstructed Confederates expanded upon and complemented their familial and matrimonial ties to form stronger social networks.

Political associations formed a final layer to the complex and interconnected web of

⁶ “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁷ Harry Wooding signed with business partner John H. Estes, while Samuel T. Wooding signed with business partners Peter T. Booth and Christopher S. Booth.

⁸ Edward Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville, Va., Its Manufactures and Commerce. Illustrated.* (Danville: E. R. Waddill & Bro., 1885), 110. Gravely and Schoolfield both signed the Danville Circular. As a merchant, Schoolfield was also one of the primary suppliers of guns to anxious white men in the fall of 1883. Wood was the town sergeant who called upon the Danville Grays to restore “order” in Danville after the Massacre, and Mosely was one of the white men appointed to the city council after the mass resignation of black and Readjuster officeholders.

⁹ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 112.

¹⁰ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 112.

relationships and contacts between unreconstructed Confederates in Danville. The city council that served in Danville just prior to the election of a biracial Readjuster government in 1882 featured many familiar names, including Circular signers Matt Jordan, J. Covington, and Daniel Coleman.¹¹ Unreconstructed Confederates also formed interconnections with each other as members of local Democratic Party committees. A flyer circulated by Danville's Democratic Party was signed or endorsed by nine of the same men who signed the Danville Circular, including one – William P. Graves – who held a position of leadership as the chairman of the party's Advisory Committee.¹² This flyer demonstrates that many of the most hardline opponents of biracialism were also active within traditional political party structures, and thus that political associations added yet another layer to the web of interconnections between unreconstructed Confederates in Danville.

The effect of this tangled web of interconnections between the most fervent opponents of biracial government was twofold. First, the interconnections reinforced the ideological resolve and unity of unreconstructed Confederates. Consider Daniel Coleman, for instance. Whatever racial or ideological impulse first drove him to oppose Danville's new biracial government would have been reinforced in just about all facets of his life. His family's record of service in the Confederacy lingered in the back of his mind and led him to yearn for the bygone social order of the South. Then, at work, he would spend the day alongside colleagues like S.H. Holland, the co-owner of his tobacco warehouse and a fellow Circular signer, who further echoed and reinforced his sentiments. Evening meetings at the Odd Fellows Lodge, he would yet again interact with conservative viewpoints. Finally, at home, his son-in-law Harry Wooding

¹¹ Ross A. Smith, *The Danville City Directory for 1881-'82* (Lynchburg: Southern Directory & Publishing Co., 1881), 61, 108.

¹² Committee, *Inquiry into Massacre*, 943.

would offer yet another likeminded and sympathetic voice. To Coleman and others, these constant interactions with likeminded ideologues across all aspects of daily life created an echo chamber which only amplified their reactionary attitudes. Moreover, these interconnections facilitated organization, scheming, and coordination necessary to pull off an orchestrated and effective overthrow of biracial government. Aside from strengthening the resolve and clout of committed unreconstructed Confederates, interconnections allowed them to reach and influence more ambivalent but sympathetic neighbors. A white man without strong feelings about the city's newly biracial government might be gradually swayed towards a more hardline stance by repeated contact with these ideologues. He might be introduced to the ideas of these unreconstructed Confederates by a relative, then encounter them again at work, or at the lodge, or at a Democratic committee meeting. By the time the hardliners distributed the Danville Circular, these repeated interactions may have primed him to read it with a sympathetic eye, and then to join their cause.

The businessmen of Danville's white reactionary movement were also deeply invested in the city's Confederate legacy. To understand the role of Confederate memory in Danville, consider for instance Edward Pollock's 1885 *Sketch Book of Danville* and its decidedly Confederate-sympathizing, white reactionary take on the city's history. The book features 108 pages detailing the history of Danville and covers over 150 years from the first settlement through the book's publication. A full thirty pages are dedicated to the Civil War era – from the election of 1860 to the end of the war.¹³ An additional three-page section is dedicated to a history of the city's Confederate monument.¹⁴ In all, Pollock dedicates nearly one-third of his history to the Confederacy. To Pollock – and many more white reactionaries in Danville – the Confederacy

¹³ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 40-70.

¹⁴ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 102-105.

was at the core of the city's identity.

Much of this Confederate sentimentalism is rooted in the eight-day period in which Danville served as the capital of the Confederacy at the end of the Civil War. News of the evacuation of Petersburg by the Army of Northern Virginia had reached a beleaguered Confederate government in Richmond on April 2, 1865. Finding their capital city increasingly vulnerable to advancing Union forces, Confederate leaders decided to retreat deeper into Confederate territory. That evening, Confederate president Jefferson Davis boarded a train leaving the city, "very much depressed," and bearing, "the appearance of an exceedingly haggard and careworn man."¹⁵ When the trains carrying Davis, his cabinet, and the hastily gathered archives of the Confederate government reached Danville on the afternoon of April 3, they propelled the "then insignificant town," into the national spotlight as the third (and, as it would happen, final), capital of the Confederacy.¹⁶

Danville's white reactionary residents viewed the arrival of the Confederate government in their city as a solemn and momentous occasion and sought to support the floundering Davis administration in whatever ways they could. In his book, Edward Pollock unironically prefaced his description of this period by writing, "[e]ven a brief description of the scenes and incidents which marked these few anxious days would exceed the limits of this volume." He continued to describe that, "[t]he excitement and apprehension among the resident population, the distress and eager solicitude of the newly arrived, were, in truth, almost indescribable."¹⁷ According to Pollock, Danville's white reactionaries translated these emotions into action on behalf of the Confederacy in its final days. "The suspense was indeed terrible," he wrote, "but right nobly did

¹⁵ "Richmond," *New York Herald*, April 6, 1865.

¹⁶ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 51.

¹⁷ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 52.

the brave men and women of Danville bear their burden, deeming no sacrifice too great to offer in the now almost hopeless cause of Southern Independence.”¹⁸ The city’s mayor and town council arranged a “Committee of Reception” to triumphantly welcome the retreating officials to Danville.¹⁹ White Danville residents eagerly opened their homes to the beleaguered and fleeing Confederate officials. Somewhat fittingly, the local tobacco mogul William T. Sutherlin scored the biggest houseguest, opening his mansion to the “refugee President,” Jefferson Davis.²⁰ The town council also arranged for a “commodious” brick house to be converted into “the Executive office of the Confederate Government.”²¹ According to Pollock, William Graves, a prominent local businessman and captain of one of Danville’s militia companies, performed a final and futile reconnaissance mission at the personal request of Jefferson Davis. In fact, according to the story Graves is the one to give Davis official word of Lee’s surrender.

The defiant and provocative language of Jefferson Davis’ final address “To the People of the Confederate States of America,” likely also fueled the militant attitudes of white reactionaries in post-war Danville. Penned shortly after Davis’ arrival in Danville, the address was published in the *Danville Register* on April 5 and widely circulated throughout the town. Downed telegraph lines delayed the transmission of the message beyond city limits however, and most Confederate sympathizers would not have read Davis’ words until after the fall of the Confederacy had rendered them inert, if they read them at all.²² As a result, Davis’ final and defiant message held exclusive resonance for the white reactionaries in Danville. In part, he wrote:

“It is...unwise and unworthy of us, as patriots engaged in a most sacred cause, to allow our energies to falter, our spirits to grow faint, or our efforts to become

¹⁸ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 52.

¹⁹ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 52.

²⁰ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 52.

²¹ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 55.

²² The *Baltimore Sun*, for instance, did not publish Davis’ address until April 17, by which point the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln had long rendered his words obsolete. “Davis at Danville—Appeal to His Followers—The State of Virginia to be Held,” *The Sun*, April 17, 1865.

relaxed, under reverses however calamitous...I announce to you, my countrymen, that it is my purpose to maintain your cause with my whole heart and soul ; that I will never consent to abandon to the enemy one foot of the soil of any one of the States of the Confederacy...no peace ever be made with the infamous invaders of her territory...If by stress of numbers we should ever be compelled to a temporary withdrawal from her limits, or those of any other border State, again and again we will return, until the baffled and exhausted enemy shall abandon in despair his endless and impossible task of making slaves of a people resolved to be free...Let us meet them with fresh defiance, with unconquered and unconquerable hearts.”²³

It is hard to read these words as anything other than a call to Confederate sympathizers to remain loyal to the Confederate cause at all costs and continue fighting for the Confederacy even after defeat. Danville’s white reactionary residents took this message to heart, to the point that the desk Davis used to write the speech became something of a local relic (Pollock’s book bragged that it “is still in the possession of Major Sutherlin”).²⁴

Danville’s white reactionary residents continued to demonstrate a particularly zealous loyalty to the Confederacy after the Civil War ended. In June 1872, less than a decade after the conclusion of hostilities, a group of young women formed the “The Ladies’ Memorial Association of Danville,” with the express purpose of building a, “monument to the memory of the beloved and honored Confederate dead.”²⁵ Six years later, a sixteen-ton, twenty-five foot obelisk made of granite from Virginian quarries was erected in the city’s Green Hill Cemetery, where it overlooked the railroad.²⁶ The monument was among the earliest in the country, and long predated similar statues in Richmond and Montgomery – the other two capitals of the Confederacy.

If the act of dedicating an imposing statue to the Confederacy in 1878 left any ambiguity as to the depth of Confederate sympathy and sentiment amongst Danville’s white reactionaries,

²³ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 54.

²⁴ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 53.

²⁵ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 102.

²⁶ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 103.

the festivities surrounding the monument's dedication should remove all doubt. Although the monument was dedicated on a weekday – Tuesday, September 3, 1878 – the event was “was probably the grandest pageant ever witnessed in Danville.”²⁷ All business in the city were closed, and, “flags, mottoes and festoons” adorned nearly every street. The event attracted visitors – distinguished and ordinary alike – from across North Carolina and Virginia.²⁸ Even Virginia's governor, Frederick Holliday, made the trip to Danville for the occasion.²⁹ A dozen years after the fall of the Confederacy and five years before the Danville Massacre, Confederate pride and sympathy was alive and well in Danville.

While social and societal dynamics in Danville reinforced the power and standing of the city's reactionary white population, they had the opposite effect for black residents. A variety of social and societal dynamics reinforced societal inequities and undermined advancements in political equality for black people in Danville. Arguably the most striking of these dynamics was the legacy of slavery. Almost all of Danville's adult black residents in 1883 had been born into slavery, and for many, their enslavers continued to roam in their midst. Take for instance Walter S. Withers, the city's first black policeman. His surname, age, and birthplace suggest that he was born enslaved by the powerful Withers family.³⁰ Withers was not unique for having to live in the presence of his former enslavers. Among Danville's most prominent businessmen – and by

²⁷ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 105.

²⁸ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 104.

²⁹ “Southern News Notes,” *The Washington Post*, September 2, 1878.

³⁰ Marriage records indicate Withers was born in Campbell County, Virginia around 1849. Census records show Withers living in Danville by 1870. This is consistent with the movement of Robert E. Withers and other members of the Withers family, who originated in Campbell County but moved to Danville around 1858. Moreover, 1860 slave schedules show that E.D. Withers owned several boys around the age of Walter Withers. Robert Withers was the colonel of the 18th Virginia Infantry and served as a U.S. Senator before being unseated by a Readjuster. E.D. Withers was a physician and E.B. Withers worked as an attorney. All lived in Danville at the time of the massacre. “Virginia Marriages, 1785-1940,” database, *FamilySearch*, Walter S. Withers and Louisa Holland, August 28, 1878; 1860 U.S. Federal Census, “Schedule 2—Slave Inhabitants in The Southern District in the County of Pittsylvania, State of Virginia,” 57-8; James I. Robertson, *18th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1984), 3; Ross A. Smith, *The Danville City Directory for 1881-'82* (Lynchburg: Southern Directory & Publishing Co., 1881), 97.

extension largest employers – were many former slave owners. Tobacco warehousemen George C. Cabell and William P. Graves, and chewing tobacco manufacturers John R. Pace and John W. Holland were among the many local business leaders who previously owned slaves.³¹ Put simply, many of Danville’s black residents were forced to go about their lives in the presence of the people who had once enslaved them. In all likelihood, some black men were employed by former owners. Thus, even as Danville’s government became increasingly biracial, strides towards black equality were tempered by the imposing legacy of slavery.

Apart from the legacy of slavery, uncomfortable labor dynamics also troubled Danville’s newly minted black officeholders. For instance, Bird Lipscomb, one of four black men elected to the city council in the summer of 1882, worked as a laborer for A.G. Fuller & Co., a local chewing tobacco manufacturer.³² A.G. Fuller, the proprietor of this company and Lipscomb’s employer and boss, was an avidly unreconstructed Confederate who signed his name to the inflammatory and racially charged Danville Circular.³³ Unlike his white colleagues, Lipscomb had to balance his own political objectives and interests against the rabid racism of his boss. After all, a man who signed a document calling on white men to, “throttle this viper [sic] of *Negroism* that is stinging us to madness and death,”³⁴ probably would not have any qualms about firing a black employee who advanced racial equality from his seat on the city council. Although records for other black officeholders tell a less comprehensive story, they suggest that Lipscomb did not face unique challenges. City directory records indicate that a second black

³¹ 1860 U.S. Federal Census, “Schedule 2—Slave Inhabitants in The Southern District in the County of Pittsylvania, State of Virginia,” 47, 63, 65-6.

³² Ross A. Smith, *The Danville City Directory for 1881- '82* (Lynchburg: Southern Directory & Publishing Co., 1881), 61, 108.

³³ “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.

³⁴ “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.

councilmember, D.F. Batts, and the clerk of the city market, Benton T. Fields, both also worked as laborers.³⁵ Census records similarly indicate that the city's first black policeman, Walter S. Withers, worked as a laborer in a tobacco factory.³⁶ Although none of their employers are specified, it is a near certainty that all three worked for white men. Moreover, as laborers, all three – like Lipscomb – would have been easily replaceable by their bosses. In short, Lipscomb, Batts, Fields, Withers, and other black officeholders had to tread lightly in their new positions to avoid jeopardizing their employment.

The labor dynamics experienced by Lipscomb, Batts, Fields, and Withers also applied to black residents in Danville who did not enter the political arena. A brief survey of an 1881 commercial directory for the city reveals deep structural inequities in the Danville economy. The directory reveals only about three dozen black-owned businesses, out of hundreds in the city. Moreover, black businessmen were confined to only a handful of industries – all seven of the city's barbers, three of seven blacksmiths, 14 of the city's 18 shoemakers, and 11 of 54 grocers were black.³⁷ A single restaurateur and a single boarding house rounded out the list of black-owned businesses.³⁸ Meanwhile, key sectors of the including attorneys, banks, insurance, and all subsectors of the city's chief industry, tobacco, completely excluded black businessmen.³⁹ The appointment and election of black men to political office in Danville seem like hollow advancements when considered in the context of these deep economic inequalities. An economy owned and operated almost exclusively by white men to the exclusion of blacks would prove incompatible with lasting and meaningful racial equality.

³⁵ Ross A. Smith, *The Danville City Directory for 1881-'82* (Lynchburg: Southern Directory & Publishing Co., 1881), 22, 40.

³⁶ 1880 U.S. Federal Census, "Schedule 1—Inhabitants in Danville, in the County of Pittsylvania, State of Virginia," 4.

³⁷ Smith, *Danville City Directory*, 61, 100-8.

³⁸ Smith, *Danville City Directory*, 21, 100-8.

³⁹ Smith, *Danville City Directory*, 100-8.

In sum, a close examination of the social landscape in Danville during the 1880s casts an important light on the Danville Massacre and subsequent overthrow of the city's biracial government. An understanding of the consistencies and continuities between reactionary sentiment and action in 1883 and similar involvement in previous years also sheds light on the hardline opposition to biracialism in Danville. The political strength and ideological fervor with which unreconstructed Confederates opposed and ultimately defeated the biracial Readjuster coalition is explained by the layered and overlapping interconnections they formed with each other and with others throughout their personal, professional, associational, and political lives. On the flip side, a thoughtful consideration of the social and economic dynamics faced by Danville's black population helps to explain in part their vulnerability to the intense reactionaryism of unreconstructed Confederates. Persistent inequities plagued even the most prominent black leaders and officeholders in Danville and contributed to their suppression at the hands of white reactionaries. Add to these dynamics the persistence of Confederate sympathies amongst segments of the city's white population and it is easy to see how a virulent and violent white reactionary movement could emerge, and how expanding political and racial equality could prove short lived.

INTERLUDE

Free People and Indominable Spirits

The words of black witnesses in the Senate investigation reveal something even more profound than their sharp tongues and quick wits. They reveal a fiercely independent, free people. Unable to rely on the charity or even humanity of their white neighbors, Danville's black community instead relied on themselves.

No one demonstrated this independent spirit better than Violet Keeling. At one point during her testimony, Senator Zebulon Baird Vance patronizingly asked her for the source of her opinions. "I don't ask anybody to tell me," Keeling replied assertively the senator, "I can know and feel for myself."¹ Among Keeling's stronger opinions was her notion that, "if the race of colored people that has got no friends nohow, and if they don't hang together they won't have none while one party is going one way and another the other."² In other words, she felt strongly that black voters should vote as a bloc to reject the Democratic ticket and its white supremacist affiliations. Vance was intrigued by this notion. "Suppose your husband should go and vote a Democratic ticket," he probed. Once again, Keeling's response left no room for equivocation. "I would just pick up my clothes and go to my father's, if I had a father, or would go to work for 25

¹ Committee on Privileges and Elections, Report on the Inquiry into massacre of colored men at Danville, Virginia, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., 1884, S. Rep. 579, 193.

² Committee, Inquiry into the Massacre, 188.

cents a day.”³ As it stood, Keeling already worked in a Danville tobacco factory and was accustomed to earning her own wages, so it was not unreasonable for her to imagine living life independently, if she had to.

Keeling’s independent spirit – and her willingness to leave her husband over deeply held personal and political beliefs – even impressed the racist correspondent for the *Atlanta Constitution*. Although the witness, who he pejoratively and inaccurately (Keeling was actually in her mid-twenties) described as “an old negro woman...was somewhat embarrassed at the beginning of her examination,” the correspondent editorialized that she “gathered courage as [her testimony] progressed, and pronounced her brief political creed in reply to Senator Vance’s inquiries with self possession and distinctness.”⁴

The fiercely independent spirit of Violet Keeling can help to explain the virulence of white reactionaries in the fall of 1883. While the balance of power in Danville may still have rested firmly with the city’s white population, more substantial shifts had occurred in social and racial norms. No longer were black men and women like Keeling subservient to white superiors. No longer did they humbly and politely refer to their white neighbors as sir or ma’am. And no longer did they do as their white neighbors pleased. Violet Keeling may have lacked political clout, but she had her freedom and an indomitable spirit. This scared the white men accustomed to unquestioning obedience, and provoked a violent reaction.

³ Committee, *Inquiry into the Massacre*, 188.

⁴ “Danville Riot – Progress of the Investigation Yesterday,” *Atlanta Constitution*, February 19, 1884.

CHAPTER III

A Campaign of Racial Terror

The white supremacist businessmen and property-holders of Danville were not content to hurl the occasional epithet towards their black neighbors and grumble amongst themselves about the expansion of black political representation in local government. Instead, they took advantage of their interconnected social networks to undermine black Danville residents in a variety of ways. Most visibly, they amassed large quantities of weapons and other means of violence which they used to perpetrate an extended campaign of intimidation. Between private gun ownership, militia activity, and formal law enforcement roles, white reactionaries created deep imbalances in the distribution of physical force in Danville that would contribute significantly to the lopsided outcome of the massacre. White reactionaries also worked doggedly to undermine their black neighbors through more subtle political and legal mechanisms. Finally, for years these reactionaries perpetrated a series of blatant attempts at voter intimidation and suppression in local, state, and federal elections. Taken together, these actions represented a concerted effort on the part of Danville's well-connected white reactionaries to undermine and ultimately unseat the biracial city government they so bitterly opposed.

The campaign of coordinated violence and intimidation targeting black people in Danville began with the proliferation of private gun ownership amongst white reactionaries.

Numerous white reactionaries admitted that they had purchased new guns in the days, weeks, and months leading up to the massacre. George Lea reported that he had purchased his five-barrel, .38-caliber Smith & Wesson several months before the massacre, while George E. Coleman reported that he purchased his gun – “The first Smith & Wesson I ever owned,” – about two months before the massacre.¹ N. P. Jordan already owned one pistol, which he kept at home, when, three or four days before the Massacre, he turned to merchant Richard Valentine for another. “I purchased it for my protection and for the protection of my family,” he noted, and because, “negroes were turbulent and insolent.”² Yet another white belligerent, George E. Coleman, For his part, Confederate veteran William P. Graves reported that he had decided to buy himself a gun about a month before the riot. He visited a hardware merchant and selected what he judged to be the “most effective arm he had,” and within a few hours, he was proudly toting a fully loaded revolver.³ He justified the purchase by noting that “I was very sure that there would ultimately be some collision between the races, and I thought it was necessary for every one of us, every white man, to be prepared to defend himself and his family.”⁴ In a case of either perversely fortuitous timing or last-minute preparation, prominent local attorney F. F. Bowen purchased his Smith and Wesson revolver on the morning of the massacre, ensuring that he too would be armed when confronting his black neighbors.⁵

The extent of the ballooning demand for new firearms is perhaps even better attested to

¹ Fittingly, Lea, who was one of the first men to open fire during the massacre, was also one of the first to buy a gun in the gun-buying frenzy that fall. Committee on Privileges and Elections, Report on the Inquiry into massacre of colored men at Danville, Virginia, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., 1884, S. Rep. 579, 86. Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 917.

² Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 125.

³ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 207.

⁴ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 212.

⁵ What is there for an esteemed lawyer do on a lazy Saturday morning besides go shopping for guns? Bowen led the Committee of Forty investigation into the massacre and authored its staunchly racist findings. Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 991.

by the local merchants who supplied the white reactionaries. One report suggested a shipment of 800 revolvers had arrived in Danville from Richmond during the fall.⁶ Richard W. Valentine, a local merchant and popular supplier of firearms later confessed that in the two months prior to the Massacre, he sold so many guns he simply lost count. When asked for an estimate, he demurred, but stated that, “[w]e buy these cheap pistols; we never buy less than a hundred at a time.”⁷ Another local retailer, Tyack, Doe, & Co., offered even more remarkable evidence of the frenzied rush for guns. After the Massacre, they resorted to posting the following message in the *Danville Register*:

NOTICE.-- Individuals and firms borrowed GUNS and PISTOLS of us during the evening of the riot. Some of them have failed to return them, and it was impossible in the rush for firearms to take a memorandum of the names of all the parties. We call upon our friends to refresh their memories and examine their premises, and if they should find any property of the kind here advertised not returned or properly accounted for to attend to the matter at once.

TYACK, DOE & Co.⁸

Evidently the gun-buying fervor had become so intense that they had simply stopped requiring payment or keeping track of those who they had armed.

Although white reactionaries offered contradictory testimony, the bulk of the evidence suggests that at the same time as Danville’s white reactionary residents rushed to buy guns, the number of black residents who owned or carried firearms was on the decline. Gun dealer Richard Valentine tried to suggest that he sold guns to black people as readily as he did to whites, but as one might expect, the man who sold guns by the hundreds in the months prior to a deadly riot was less than compelling. He told senators that he sold “more pistols to colored people than [ever before],” but on the very next question admitted, “our trade is better with the whites than it is

⁶ “Memo,” Box 216, Danville Riot and Newspaper Comments (scrapbook), William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁷ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 1073-4.

⁸ “After the Danville Riot -- Reign of Terror in the Virginia Town.” *Richmond Whig*. November 30, 1883.

with the colored.”⁹ The rest of his testimony was equally vague and inconsistent. A more consistent and believable narrative about black gun ownership comes from the testimony of Robert J. Adams. He reported that in the months leading up to the massacre, a grand jury indicted numerous citizens, including police officers, for violating concealed carry laws.¹⁰ Indeed, violations of concealed carry laws were among the most common indictments in Danville in this period.¹¹ Historian Jane Dailey has explored this prosecutorial phenomenon and noted that in October, the list of those indicted under this law “reads like a Who’s Who of Danville politics,” because political opponents used routinely reported each other for violations.¹² Although both Democrats and Readjusters made use of the law, Adams’ testimony makes clear that the results of the prosecutions were lopsided. “The colored people being poor, they couldn’t pay [the fine] for carrying a pistol 15, 18, or 20 dollars,” he explained, so, “those that had been carrying pistols stopped.”¹³ Adams conceded some black residents retained firearms despite the threat of a hefty fine, but insisted, “I don’t believe there was five pistols in the whole crowd of colored people.”¹⁴ The seemingly petty use of concealed carry violations to undermine political opponents in Danville had left the city’s black residents effectively disarmed in the weeks leading up to the Massacre.

In concert with their consolidation of private gun ownership, white reactionaries also

⁹ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 1073.

¹⁰ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 242.

¹¹ In fact, when Mayor John Henry Johnston shot and killed John Hatcher, the city’s former police chief in 1882, he was acquitted of murder but convicted of a concealed carry violation and fined \$15. In what can only be described as a rich irony, the foreman of the jury that convicted Johnston of the concealed carry violation was J.E. Schoolfield, a local merchant known for selling guns. “File 355,” Ended Criminal Cases, A-Z. Defendants Prior to 1936. Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Danville, Virginia; “File 358,” Ended Criminal Cases, A-Z. Defendants Prior to 1936. Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Danville, Virginia.

¹² Jane Dailey, “Deference and Violence in the Postbellum Urban South: Manners and Massacres in Danville, Virginia,” *The Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 3 (August 1997), 568n43.

¹³ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 243.

¹⁴ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 243.

maintained power through the city's white militia company, the Danville Grays. The history of the Grays extended to before the outbreak of Civil War and is defined by white supremacist and neo-Confederate ideologies. According to historian James I. Robertson, radical abolitionist John Brown was the "godfather" of Grays and their parent regiment, the 18th Virginia Infantry. News of Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1859 inflamed Danville-area men and inspired them to enlist in the militia. The city's long-standing, rag-tag militia company, the Danville Blues, grew so large a second company, the Danville Grays, had to be formed.¹⁵ Both companies, apparently fueled in large part by reactionary white supremacist anger over abolitionism, would play an active role throughout the Civil War, with many prominent Danville leaders serving stints as company officers. At some point after the war, locals resurrected their Civil War-era militia companies. For the most part, the Danville militias served ceremonial and civic functions – performing public drills¹⁶ and participating in local ceremonies like the dedication of the Confederate Soldiers' Monument.¹⁷ Curiously, and certainly not coincidentally, the local militia dropped its original name (the Blues) in favor of the decidedly Confederacy-evoking name of its offshoot company (the Grays) in most of its post-Civil War activities.

By the 1880s, the resurrected Danville Grays featured an organized rank structure and performed a legitimated societal function on par with its heyday. According to a company officer, at the time of the massacre, the Grays maintained a small armory of fifty guns (supplemented of course by privately-owned pistols) and corresponding ammunition and had around sixty-five members.¹⁸ For reference, the complete roster of company members during the

¹⁵ James I. Robertson, *18th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1984), 1.

¹⁶ "Set 'em Up," *Daily Danville News*, November 20, 1877.

¹⁷ Pollock, *Sketch Book of Danville*, 104.

¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, the Grays saw a surge in their ranks after the Massacre and reported 101 members in early 1884. Committee, *Inquiry into Massacre*, 114.

five years the company was active during the Civil War lists a total of just 145 names.¹⁹

Considering that none of these men were present for every engagement, and at any given point during the war many of these men would have been absent, wounded, killed, furloughed, or had not yet enlisted, it is fair to say that the membership of the Grays on November 3, 1883 would have been comparable to average wartime levels. Moreover, the company had a robust rank structure parallel to that of its wartime predecessor, with a captain, lieutenants, and sergeants. Testimony even suggests turnover in the militia's leadership, another indication of an active and robust military organization.²⁰ Evidence also suggests that the Grays were routinely called upon by city officials to perform semi-official functions. At least twice they guarded soon-to-be-executed black men from lynch mobs.²¹ The post-war Grays had become so legitimated by the 1880s that the Virginia General Assembly reimbursed them for their work "in the service of the State," during the Massacre.²² In effect, the Danville Grays, a neo-Confederate militia company with a long history of being animated by white reactionary anger, had become fully state-sanctioned.

Aside from the Danville Grays, some white reactionaries in Danville managed to exercise legitimate hard power as law enforcement officers. John E. Hatcher, a member of a prominent white reactionary family in Danville, served as the city's police chief prior to the election of a Readjuster-majority council. When the Readjuster government took power in July 1882, they did not reappoint him as chief, but he did retain a position on the police force until his death later

¹⁹ "Company B, 18th Virginia Infantry Regiment roster and history, 1859-1864." Accession 25382, Organization records collection, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

²⁰ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 4.

²¹ In 1882, they guarded Dock Wright on his way to the gallows after being convicted of the murder of a white man. In 1883, they guarded three black men accused of murder from lynch mobs, ensuring that their deaths by hanging would be state-sanctioned. "The Gallows in the South," *Baltimore Sun*, April 1, 1882; "Guarded Against Lynching," *New York Times*, August 15, 1883.

²² "Letter From Richmond," *Alexandria Gazette*, February 2, 1884; "Legislative," *Alexandria Gazette*, August 22, 1884.

that year.²³ The man elevated to the rank of police chief under the post-Massacre conservative-led council, R. M. Lowrie, also served as a rank-and-file officer under the Readjuster administration.²⁴ Most notably, James Wood held the position of town sergeant-at-arms.²⁵ Prior to the massacre, the position appears to have been largely ceremonial. City council records demonstrate that the day-to-day business of law enforcement was carried out by the police force, not by Wood in his capacity as town sergeant.²⁶ Whatever the official duties of the position were, when efforts by the police force to prevent the massacre failed,²⁷ Wood stepped into the void and used his position to assure an outcome of the violence favorable to white reactionaries, by calling on the Danville Grays to patrol the streets and effectively impose martial law.²⁸ Wood's actions to assume control over the town and impose militia law were almost certainly extralegal, but no one seemed to take notice.²⁹ Rather, the post-Massacre, conservative-led council implicitly endorsed his expanding profile by creating a special police force under his leadership to help "preserve order."³⁰

Despite some protestations to the contrary by some of the white reactionary perpetrators

²³ In a plot twist fit for a soap opera, Hatcher's death came at the hands of the city's newly elected Readjuster mayor, John Henry Johnston after a dispute over fine collection. Johnston was acquitted of murder and would later claim that the deadly confrontation was provoked by his political opponents (i.e. white reactionaries). "Deeds of Criminals," *New York Times*, November 6, 1882; "The Mayor of Danville Acquitted of Murder," *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 6, 1882; "File 358," *Ended Criminal Cases, A-Z. Defendants Prior to 1936. Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Danville, Virginia*; J. H. Johnston, "Address to the Voters of Danville," Call number JS804.4 A15 J12, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

²⁴ "July 6th, 1882," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 35, page 374; "December 4th, 1883," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 312.

²⁵ "Mahone's Massacre," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 6, 1883.

²⁶ City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reels 35-36.

²⁷ Witness testimony suggests that several policemen, including black officers Walter Withers and Robert J. Adams, were present during the riot and made brave but futile efforts to calm the angry crowds and prevent violence. Meanwhile, the Chief of Police, J. W. Hall, left town at the first sign of violence and waited out the bloodshed from afar. He was promptly charged with cowardice by the city council and removed from office. Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 6; "November 9th, 1883," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 267.

²⁸ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 991.

²⁹ Puzzled Senate investigators asked several witnesses if Wood had the authority to issue these orders, and none seemed to know or care. "I do not know whether he did or not," replied one witness matter-of-factly. Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 9.

³⁰ "November 7th, 1883," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 261.

of the Danville Massacre, the preponderance of the evidence makes clear that the event was a clash between heavily armed white men and unarmed and defenseless black men, women, and children. Robert J. Adams happened to be on the corner of Market and Main Streets, the epicenter of the massacre, when the violence erupted. Adams, the second black man to be appointed as a police officer under the Readjuster government, testified that he saw two white men waving pistols in the air and a third standing with a double barrel shot gun at the ready.³¹ The scuffle escalated, and George Lea, one of the armed white men, fired a shot. Once the first shot rang out, the crowd of white men on the street quickly swelled to twenty-five and of them, “everybody up there had pistols.”³² In post-riot investigations, white reactionaries refuted the notion that they had fired on an unarmed crowd with vague assertions that they had seen black men carrying guns. Although he could not name any assailant, or even offer an estimate of how many black men were armed, George Lea insisted that he “saw weapons in their hands,” and more to the point, “I saw them pointed right at me, too.”³³ All of the testimony by white reactionaries who claimed to have seen black men with guns did so vaguely and cagily like Lea. In contrast, the witnesses who reported that the black men were unarmed were unequivocal. “No, sir; I did not,” said Walter Withers when pointedly asked if he saw any black men with pistols on the day of the massacre.³⁴ Even if Lea’s hazy testimony was accurate, and he did see black men with guns during the massacre, they must have been inert. Both sides seemed to agree that no white men were killed during the massacre, while several black men lost their lives.³⁵ The

³¹ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 238.

³² Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 239.

³³ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 92.

³⁴ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 5.

³⁵ The exact death toll of the massacre is uncertain. The decidedly conservative Atlanta *Constitution* (which blamed the massacre on Readjuster party leader William Mahone) reported that seven black men died as a result of injuries from the riot. Others reported slightly lower numbers. In the climate of overt racial violence and intimidation immediately after the riot, it is no surprise that many of the dead and wounded were not publicly identified or

allocation of the means of force and violence during the Danville Massacre was, quite simply, lopsided.

Just half an hour after the crowds dispersed on November 3, the town was placed “under guard,” by heavily armed white reactionaries, at the request of the town sergeant, James Wood.³⁶ Wood, a white reactionary whose position was separate from the recently integrated city police force, called a local militia company, the Danville Grays, to patrol the streets starting that night.³⁷ Beyond simply patrolling the city’s streets, some armed white men took a more active approach to, “keeping the peace.” Squire Taliaferro, a vocal leader in city politics and the black community reported that the night after the riot, a group of armed white men came to his home: “[t]hey said they intended to kill me; I couldn’t live in this town, and I think I had a notice shoved under my door,” he told Senate investigators.³⁸ One witness recognized some of the militiamen called to patrol the streets that night as having been among the crowd of armed white men that had opened fire during the massacre.³⁹ Within days, the ranks of Danville’s armed peacekeepers were supplemented with two militia companies from Richmond sent by the governor,⁴⁰ and a fifteen-man special police force placed under the command of the city sergeant.⁴¹ Overwhelming displays of military, quasi-military, and private hard power resources in the aftermath of the Danville Massacre solidified the outcome of the violence and crystallized

reported. Historian Jane Dailey, for instance, has documented that only two of the dead were reported by the Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics. Seven deaths reported: “Mahone’s Massacre,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 6, 1883. Six deaths reported: “Negro Riot in Danville!” *Alexandria Gazette Extra*, November 4, 1883. Four of five deaths reported: “The Danville Riot,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 5, 1883. See also: Jane Dailey, “Deference and Violence in the Postbellum Urban South: Manners and Massacres in Danville, Virginia,” *The Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 3 (August 1997), 579n82.

³⁶ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 991.

³⁷ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 991.

³⁸ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 578-9.

³⁹ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 90.

⁴⁰ “The Negroes Decline to Vote at Danville,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 7, 1883.

⁴¹ “November 7th, 1883,” City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 262.

the power of the newly instated white reactionary regime.

White reactionaries supplemented physical force with a series of political maneuvers. Throughout the post-war period, and even as black men assumed key elected and appointed positions in the aftermath of the 1882 municipal elections, these conservative antagonists retained key offices of their own. More to the point, unreconstructed Confederates actively used what power they retained to undermine or subvert efforts at greater political equality. They used their clout within the legal system to target Readjusters and black political leaders for arrest and prosecution. On the city council, white reactionaries like Albert Gerst moved to undercut and undermine black political appointees and blocked black councilmen from important committee assignments. The Danville electoral system itself bore the fingerprints of white reactionaries seeking to undermine black political power who drew ward boundaries to underrepresent black voters. Unreconstructed Confederates would still have to turn to extralegal means (namely, the massacre of black citizens on November 3, 1883) to effectuate the overthrow of biracial government, but these mostly legal, albeit malevolent, political tactics played an important role in chipping away at the Readjuster regime in Danville.

Essential to the use of political sabotage by white reactionaries to undermine Readjuster and black leaders was their retention of some political offices of their own. Serving alongside Danville's four black councilmen elected in 1882 was Albert Gerst, an unreconstructed Confederate who signed the Danville Circular.⁴² Likewise, serving alongside the newly appointed black policeman Walter Withers was Robert M. Lowrie. Lowrie, a longtime city policeman, was later appointed sergeant of the special police force proposed by Gerst and established by the council after the Danville Massacre, an appointment which demonstrates

⁴² "July 6th, 1882," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 35, page 374.

Lowrie's involvement with the white reactionary movement.⁴³ Meanwhile, in the legal system, former slave owner William Rison served as the clerk of the Circuit and Corporation Courts in Danville.⁴⁴

From these retained positions, white reactionaries actively sought to sabotage and undermine black political leaders. In the legal system, criminal charges often served to advance white reactionary political aims. For instance, one of Danville's most vocal and longest-active black political leaders was Squire Taliaferro.⁴⁵ His political activism placed a target on his back and throughout the 1870s he was subject to mostly minor criminal charges. In 1875, he was charged alongside a black pastor for, "creating disturbances amongst the negroes," and four years later, he was charged with "the illicit trade in spirits."⁴⁶ Never one to mince words, Taliaferro offered this blunt assessment of his legal troubles: "technicalities beat men and beat me."⁴⁷ A favorite tactic of white reactionaries was to report Readjuster and black political leaders for the concealed carry of firearms and other weapons.⁴⁸ Among those charged with this violation were: Readjuster mayor J.H. Johnston, Squire Taliaferro, and black policemen Robert

⁴³ "November 7th, 1883," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 261.

⁴⁴ Rison owned eight slaves according to 1860 slave schedules. 1860 U.S. Federal Census, "Schedule 2—Slave Inhabitants in The Southern District in the County of Pittsylvania, State of Virginia," 51; Ross A. Smith, *The Danville City Directory for 1881-'82* (Lynchburg: Southern Directory & Publishing Co., 1881), 78.

⁴⁵ His political leadership dated back at least to 1875, when he was reported to have chaired a Republican Party convention in nearby Chatham, Virginia. "Stormy Radical Convention in Pittsylvania," *Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), October 19, 1875.

⁴⁶ "Letter from Danville," *Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), November 11, 1875; "Danville," *Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), February 17, 1879.

⁴⁷ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 578.

⁴⁸ Historian Jane Dailey wrote, "the list of those indicted in October [1883] for violating the concealed weapons laws reads like a Who's Who of Danville politics," as political opponents of all stripes reported each other for violations. While it is true that both Readjusters and Democrats reported each other, black men bore the brunt of these prosecutions, as they struggled to pay the hefty fines associated with the offense. Jane Dailey, "Deference and Violence in the Postbellum Urban South: Manners and Massacres in Danville, Virginia," *The Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 3 (August 1997), 568n43; Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 243.

J. Adams and Walter Withers.⁴⁹ Convictions for the offense carried fines in excess of \$15 and proved a particular financial burden for the poorer black men hit with such charges.⁵⁰ The legal system thus offered white reactionaries and opportunity to undermine and weaken Readjusters and black political leaders.

Evidence of political sabotage aimed against black political leaders is even more apparent in the actions of white reactionaries on the city council. When the newly elected council met on July 10th, 1882, council president J.D. Blair appointed councilmembers to ten standing committees which subdivided the work of the council and would serve for the duration of the council's term. The resulting committee assignments vastly overrepresented white councilmembers and underrepresented black councilmembers. Of the four black men on the council, two were appointed to two committees and two were appointed to just one. In contrast, the eight white councilmembers received far more committee assignments. Six white men received at least four committee assignments; the other two were Blair, who as council president did not appoint himself to any committees, and J.B. Raulston, whose strong Readjuster politics drew the derision of his more conservative white colleagues and earned him an appointment to just one committee. Blair also carefully dispersed black councilmembers across committees. No committee had more than one black member, ensuring two-to-one white majorities.⁵¹ Not only was the distribution of committee assignments unequal in quantity, but also in quality. No black councilmembers were appointed to the finance committee, arguably the council's most powerful. Black councilmembers were also excluded from control over all city utilities, with both the

⁴⁹ "File 355," Ended Criminal Cases, A-Z. Defendants Prior to 1936. Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Danville, Virginia; "File 378," Ended Criminal Cases, A-Z. Defendants Prior to 1936. Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Danville, Virginia; "File 380," Ended Criminal Cases, A-Z. Defendants Prior to 1936. Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Danville, Virginia.

⁵⁰ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 243.

⁵¹ Nine of the ten committees had three members. A tenth, the Sewage committee, had five members, all white.

Sewage committee and the Gas and Water committee being comprised of only white councilmembers. The Market and Hay Scales committee, which would have overseen new black appointee Benton T. Fields in his role as Clerk of the Market, was also comprised solely of white councilmembers, ensuring Fields' power would be kept in close check. The committee structure for the city council elected in 1882 was thus designed in such a way to minimize the influence of black members over the conduct of council business.

Perhaps less surprising, though equally important, black councilmembers were largely excluded from positions of leadership on the council. Over the course of the 1882 city council term, councilmembers voted on a council president several times. In each case, the candidates for the title were all white men.⁵² The only black councilmember to chair a council meeting was D.F. Batts, and he did so for only a matter of minutes before Blair was first elected as permanent president.⁵³ Batts was also later appointed as president pro temp of the council, but in a subsequent motion, Albert Gerst, his white reactionary colleague, was unanimously appointed to fill the chair in the absence of council president J.D. Blair, so the title appears to have been purely ceremonial.⁵⁴ Indeed, when Blair was absent for a series of meetings in February 1883, it was Gerst and not Batts who filled the chair and assumed thus assumed the powers associated with the title of president pro temp.⁵⁵ Councilmembers voted on a president pro temp again in October 1883, re-electing Gerst from a slate of three white candidates.⁵⁶ To be sure, the powers

⁵² When the council was first formed, J.D. Blair was elected by a 6-4 vote over Readjuster J.B. Raulston (a tally that likely indicates a vote along racial lines). Blair resigned as president a year into his term and was replaced by a "reluctant" J.B. Raulston. Blair was reinstated as president a few months later. "July 1st, 1882," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 35, page 371; "July 6th, 1883," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 155.

⁵³ "July 1st, 1882," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 35, page 370.

⁵⁴ "September 19th, 1882," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 35, page 487-96.

⁵⁵ Gerst chaired the council meetings on February 9, 20, 23, and 27, 1883. "February 9th, 1883" City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 35, page 628-3.

⁵⁶ "October 2, 1883," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 225-38.

of the president of the council were limited, and the duties primarily functional and ceremonial.⁵⁷ Even if the prestige of the position was in its title alone, however, white councilmembers evidently viewed as too much of an honor and responsibility to bestow on any of their black colleagues.

Although the city council appointed several black men to important municipal offices, it did not do so without attempts at sabotage by white reactionary councilmembers. When the new council moved to fill the position of clerk of the market, they considered the applications of Benton T. Fields, a black man, and two white men.⁵⁸ Before councilmembers cast their ballots, councilman Albert Gerst moved to limit the fee collection powers of the position, a motion that easily passed. Fields was elected on the first ballot, but thanks to Gerst's motion, he was elected to a weakened position.⁵⁹ The appointment of Walter Withers as the city's first black policeman proved equally rocky. The council considered twenty-three men for eight positions on the police force, and easily elected six on the first ballot. The final two slots proved far more contentious. Only after several rounds of balloting were the position filled, by Walter Withers and J.E. Hatcher, a white man.⁶⁰ This pattern repeated itself when Withers' first six-month term elapsed. In January 1883, councilmembers again filled six of eight positions on the police force in their first ballot. A seventh white officer, W.A. Cook, was elected on the third ballot, and only after four rounds of balloting did Withers earn reappointment as policeman.⁶¹

The appointment of Squire Taliaferro as sanitary policeman proved less contentious, but

⁵⁷ In fact, the position appears to have been largely undesired. In the August 7, 1883 meeting, in which the council considered replacements for J.D. Blair as president, the first two councilmembers nominated to fill the position temporarily promptly withdrew their names. J.B. Raulston was finally selected unanimously, only after making clear to his colleagues that he did not desire the position. "August 7th, 1883," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 157-81.

⁵⁸ A fourth candidate was withdrawn from consideration.

⁵⁹ "July 6th, 1882," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 35, page 377.

⁶⁰ "July 6th, 1882," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 35, page 380.

⁶¹ "January 3rd, 1883," City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 35, page 593-605.

he too withstood attacks from white councilmembers. At a council meeting on October 11th, councilman Albert Gerst – by now a frequent antagonist of black officeholders – conveniently noticed a technical error by the council. Apparently, under the city charter the sanitary policeman was a seasonal position with a term ending on September 30th. Previously unaware of this provision, the council had not told Taliaferro that his term had ended, an omission Gerst quickly moved to correct.⁶² Whether to pay Taliaferro for the eleven days he had worked in October proved a point of contention, and it took until the December 15th meeting for the council to agree to pay him for his work. When time came to elect a sanitary policeman again in April 1883, Taliaferro was reappointed, but only after several rounds of contentious balloting. Moreover, he again faced an attempt by Gerst to undercut his position. This time, Gerst moved to reduce the sanitary policeman’s salary by thirty percent, from \$50 to \$35.⁶³ The motion failed but the message was clear – not everyone was happy with a black man serving as sanitary policeman.

Political sabotage undermined biracial government in Danville even before Albert Gerst and his allies on the city council doggedly sought to undermine black appointees. The election of a biracial Readjuster council in 1882 would not have happened without the passage of “An Act to Divide the City of Danville into Wards,” by the Virginia General Assembly. By creating wards instead of electing city officials from a single citywide district, the Readjuster state

⁶² “October 11th, 1883,” City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 35, page 511-19. In spite of Gerst’s conveniently timed attempt to retroactively end Taliaferro’s term as sanitary policeman, council meeting on October 11th ended on a happy note. City janitor Moses Green regaled councilmembers with ice cream, wines, and cakes. Before the council adjourned, Gerst moved to extend to Green (a black man) a hearty thank you for the gift. The motion was unanimously agreed to.

⁶³ “April 4th, 1883,” City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 35, page 9-27. The council members were forced to slog through this meeting without the advantage of the delicious treats they had last time they discussed the sanitary policeman. Their deprivation from decadence would prove short-lived, however. On June 5th, the council once again enjoyed a treat of ice cream and cake, before realizing they did not have a quorum and promptly adjourning. “June 5th, 1883” City Council Proceedings, City of Danville Microfilm, reel 36, page 71.

legislators sought to increase the representation of blacks in city government.⁶⁴ In order to comply with the legislature's mandate, the Hustings Court in Danville appointed a five-man commission to draw ward boundaries in March 1882. The commission – whose work would have lasting impacts not only for white voters, but for the black voters who made up the majority of the city's electorate – was composed all white males.⁶⁵ Essential for the task of subdividing the city was an accurate census of the city's residents. In the two years since the last federal census, the city's population is reported to have boomed, with the black population growing disproportionately large.⁶⁶ Rather than commission a new census, commission member James Wood tasked his son, James Wood Jr. with conducting a supplemental census of only certain Danville neighborhoods. The final ward boundaries were thus based on old federal census data and an unscientific supplement generated by Wood. This process so worried commission member L.C. Barkley Jr. that he submitted a dissenting letter along with the commission's final report. The supplemental census was liable to be wrong, he argued, and the commission should have resurveyed the entire city.⁶⁷ The selective recanvassing of certain Danville neighborhoods by an all-white commission reeks of black voter suppression, and thus appears to be another instance of political sabotage aimed against black political power.

A final attack on black political rights in Danville predated the emergence of a biracial city government in 1882. In December 1880, John T. Stovall, the Readjuster candidate for the Virginia's fifth congressional district (which includes Danville) formally contested the results of

⁶⁴ This was a point made by white reactionaries in the Danville Circular. While most of their claims were tainted by racial bigotry, their political analysis proved valid in this case. "Coalition Rule in Danville," Box 216, Folder 31, William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁶⁵ In order to ascertain the races of the five commissioners, see Ross A. Smith, *The Danville City Directory for 1881-'82* (Lynchburg: Southern Directory & Publishing Co., 1881).

⁶⁶ "Coalition Rule in Danville," Box 216, Folder 31, William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁶⁷ "File 345," Ended Criminal Cases, A-Z. Defendants Prior to 1936. Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Danville, Virginia.

the November elections. Stovall alleged that supporters of his Democratic rival, George C. Cabell, used violent threats, intimidation, and other means of voter suppression to keep large numbers of Stovall's supporters from voting.⁶⁸ While Stovall's challenge failed, it did precipitate an investigation into the matter which collected depositions from dozens of witnesses who reported a variety of irregularities. Julius W. Payne, a black political organizer who would be elected to the Danville City Council in 1882, reported that black voters were required to present certificates and undergo extensive and arbitrary questioning before being allowed to vote. Consequently, four white men were able to vote in the time it took a single black voter to make it through the process. When the polls closed at Payne's precinct, he counted 228 black men who had not been given the chance to vote.⁶⁹ Aside from the procedural hurdles described by Payne, some black voters reported more overt obstacles to voting. Sandy Motley reported being ordered to leave his polling place under threat of arrest by a white election official, while Ed Green reported that police stood on the steps of his precinct and kept him and other black voters back until the evening.⁷⁰ The testimony clearly demonstrates a coordinated and multi-faceted attempt to keep black voters from exercising their right to vote during the election.

White reactionaries made similar attempts at voter suppression in November 1883, albeit in cruder form. Jack Redd reported an unusual and chilling spectacle on election day: "the men that day walked on to election with guns as if they were going to war."⁷¹ For Redd and other black voters in Danville, the message was clear. "I was afraid of the same thing that occurred on Saturday," he said, referring to the massacre.⁷² Between the unrestrained public violence of the

⁶⁸ Papers and Testimony in the Contested-Election Case of J.T. Stovall vs. George C. Cabell, from the Fifth Congressional District of Virginia, 47th Cong., 1st Sess., January 21, 1882, Mis. Doc. No. 29, 5.

⁶⁹ Stovall v. Cabell, 278.

⁷⁰ Stovall v. Cabell, 200; Stovall v. Cabell, 210.

⁷¹ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 11.

⁷² Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 15.

Danville Massacre and the enduring presence of armed white men throughout Danville in the days afterwards, white reactionaries managed a very effective campaign of voter intimidation. While some black voters ventured to the polls in rural precincts outside city limits, almost no black voters exercised their right to vote in Danville during that election.

While white supremacist ideologies and Danville's uneven social landscape may have made substantial contributions to the fall of biracial government in Danville, ultimately it was the coordinated campaign of racial terror that ensured the outcome. For months and even years before the Danville Massacre, white reactionaries assembled a hegemony over the means of force in the city. Disparities in private gun ownership coupled with ex-Confederate militias to give them an advantage not only in the violent massacre, but in the fight for control over the city thereafter. Aside from violence, white reactionaries used what little political power they retained to consistently undermine and undercut black officeholders and the Readjuster movement more generally. Similarly, they used the legal system to their advantage, charging black leaders with petty offenses to burden them with fines. In case all of these machinations failed, they used voter suppression and intimidation to keep black voters away from the polls during important elections. Alone, each of these actions were nefarious. Together, they were dangerous.

CONCLUSION

The central finding of the Senate investigation – that on November 3, 1883, armed white men massacred crowds of black marketgoers in a premeditated and politically motivated attack – is supported by a critical reexamination of available evidence, with a few key modifications. First, the Senate inquiry understated the extent of the white supremacist ideology underpinning the violence. While white reactionaries undoubtedly stoked racial tensions for political aims, they also did so because they genuinely believed that the proper racial order was under attack. The Senate report also captured only a small portion of the white reactionary campaign against biracial city government in Danville. While the Danville Massacre and its immediate aftermath were important components of this effort, they were just two small pieces of a far larger undertaking. For months leading up to the violence, white reactionaries paired political and legal machinations with consolidations of the means of physical force. An even longer history of voter suppression and intimidation added yet another layer to the conspiracy. White reactionaries did not stop after the massacre and subsequent statewide elections, either. They continued to place incredible pressure on black public figures, driving most to resign from public office in the weeks and months after the massacre. They were quickly replaced with white reactionary loyalists in a further consolidation of power. Finally, the Senate report inaccurately blamed the violence on “the whites” and “white Democrats” writ large. In reality, a far more precise

characterization can be made of the actors in this campaign of racial terror. In almost every facet of the white reactionary campaign against biracial city government, white businessmen, professionals, and property-holders led the way. In contrast, white laborers and factoryworkers were conspicuously absent from most of the white reactionary activity in Danville.

These findings lend themselves to three key insights. First, they suggest an unexpected level of organization, coordination, and pre-planning surrounding the racial violence in Danville. By tying the massacre to a series of other attacks on the biracial city government, this thesis disputes the prevailing assumption that episodes of brutal racial violence are unplanned and isolated incidents.

This thesis also highlights the central weakness of federal civil rights protections during the Reconstruction era. The federal government had recently endowed itself with powerful enforcement provisions aimed at securing the fundamental political rights of all Americans for generations to come. The Danville Massacre, which clearly had been organized and planned by white reactionaries for their own political and electoral gains, provided the federal government with grounds to use these new powers – or at least to try to use them.¹ And the Senate even went so far as to meticulously document evidence to that effect. Despite all of this, the federal government opted for inaction and in turn effectively legitimated the disenfranchisement of black voters in Danville and beyond. In this sense, the decision not to follow up on the findings of the Senate investigation represents a critical turning point in Reconstruction and the nineteenth century civil rights movement. The failure to use the powerful civil enforcement measures of the Fourteenth Amendment represented a glaring missed opportunity to stem the resurgence of white supremacist-led governments and entrench the still-nascent political rights of black people in the

¹ Surely any attempt at using Section 2 powers of the Fourteenth Amendment would provoke serious legal challenges.

American South. Indeed, the failure to follow-through on these civil enforcement measures in 1884, not the end of military Reconstruction in 1877, represents the true transition from the Reconstruction era to the beginning of the nadir of race relations.

Even more significantly, this thesis finds that the businessmen and professionals at the helm of the post-Civil War New South were not the forward-looking entrepreneurial visionaries they were made out to be in much of the historical literature. They were far more invested in the antebellum racial order and the institution of slavery than previously recognized. In Danville, they also had deep ties to the Confederacy which further strengthened their regressive racial impulses. The Danville Massacre and the attack on the city's biracial government cannot be explained by economic reasons. By all accounts, the economy was thriving under the new model of free labor that defined the post-Civil War world. Instead, the businessmen who perpetrated these attacks were principally motivated by exaggerated fears of inversions to the social and racial orders. In this way, they closely resembled the attitudes and behaviors of the plantation owners and slaveholders of the Old South.

Of course, these findings are all based on the relatively narrow case study of Danville. Parallel examinations are warranted for other instances of racial violence and political turnover in the South during this period. Do the attitudes and actions of Danville's business community match those in other hotspots throughout the South? How can insights into the coordination of racial violence, civil rights enforcement, and the attitudes of the New South gleaned from the Danville case study revise or refine our understandings of other incidents? Far more research is needed in order to fully and accurately understand the dramatic and regressive transition from Reconstruction era reforms to Jim Crow era discrimination and oppression. This thesis offers a modest start to such an endeavor.

EPILOGUE

Fresh Trouble in Danville

George Adams had managed to carve out a modest but dignified life for himself and his family despite a lifetime of disadvantages and repressions. For the first four-and-a-half decades of his life, he suffered unknowable cruelty and oppression under the yoke of slavery.¹ When Adams was at last freed from bondage, he confronted a bleak horizon. The world had little use and no sympathy for an ex-slave in his mid-forties, worn and weary from decades of enslavement. Nevertheless, he found his way. By 1883, in a local economy where almost all black men – and many black women – worked as laborers for white employers, Adams had the unique distinction of working for himself. He operated a small sawmill and farm at his home a few miles outside of Danville city limits and owned a team of mules. His income, combined with that of his sons, who worked in a local factory, would have allowed him to live comfortably.² As business dictated – usually a few times a week – he would head into Danville to settle accounts and conduct transactions on his own terms, as a free man.³ Having achieved such autonomy and respectability despite living through such adverse circumstances was no easy feat, and George

¹ 1880 U.S. Federal Census, “Schedule 1—Inhabitants in Tunstall Magisterial district, in the County of Pittsylvania, State of Virginia,” 42.

² Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 224.

³ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 230.

Adams rightfully held his head high.

Of course, not everyone in Danville took kindly to the success and confidence of a black man like Adams. His self-assuredness and pride challenged the racial hierarchy that the city's most virulent white reactionaries sought to restore. When Adams tried to intervene in the vicious beating of Hense Lawson on the afternoon of the Danville Massacre, it so enraged Lawson's assailants that one, George A. Lea, pointed a cocked pistol in Adams' face.⁴ Adams would not give in. He wrestled with Lea for the offending firearm, prompting the intervention of another armed white man. Adams broke free and fled the scene. As he ran, Lea took aim and fired, missing Adams but mortally wounding another black man, Jerry Smith. With that, the Danville Massacre began.

George Adams once again enraged white reactionaries in Danville when he was subpoenaed by the Senate committee investigating the massacre. His version of events conflicted with their attempts to paint him as the instigator of the violence and was central to proving that what had happened on November 3, 1883 was a massacre, and not a riot. Fearful of what his honest testimony might reveal to the Senate investigators, white reactionaries tried to stop him. As he sat at the depot waiting for the train to Washington in early 1884, he was approached by a group of white reactionaries, including George Lea, who threatened him not to testify. "You better know but damn little when you get down there," they warned.⁵ The shakedown intimidated Adams enough that he missed his train, but a week later he was in Washington providing his account of events. As hard as they might try, Danville's white reactionaries could not suppress George Adams.

The white reactionary movement in Danville was as persistent and stubborn as George

⁴ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 227.

⁵ Committee, Inquiry into Massacre, 230.

Adams, however. In May, they tried a third time to break his iron will. On another lazy Saturday in Danville, George Lea and three accomplices confronted their nemesis, George Adams, in a downtown Danville tobacco warehouse and proceeded to beat him viciously. At one point, the attackers used a large block to strike Adams over the head and crush his skull. His injuries were so severe that they were initially thought to be fatal.⁶

The attack on Adams bore a chilling resemblance to the attack on Hense Lawson that had sparked the Danville Massacre just six months prior. As with the massacre, Democratic newspapers readily blamed the victim for the violence. Adams was portrayed as the “ringleader in bringing about the riot” in November, and was caused by an attempt to disarm “the negro desperado who precipitated the riot last fall.”⁷ More important, the attack also took place on the Saturday before an important election. This time, municipal, rather than statewide offices were on the ballot. At the top of the ballot, incumbent mayor John Henry Johnston, a Readjuster, squared off against William P. Graves, a leader in the white reactionary movement in Danville who was among the most prolific shooters on the day of the massacre. The race seemed to involve more than just the mayoralty. Johnston appealed to voters in dire terms. “My candidacy...represents a principle dearer than life to every *free* man in this community white or colored,” he wrote, “it is the principle that every man may exercise his right to vote as he pleases in all elections.” His opponents, he argued, believed that “the property-holders shall rule this town,” and the attacks on black suffrage during and after the Danville Massacre would inevitably soon extend to poor white voters, too.⁸ While Johnston and his supporters viewed the race as a referendum on democracy, Graves and his allies painted it as the culmination of a great racial

⁶ “More Danville Riots – To Carry Another Election,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 24, 1884.

⁷ “Fresh Trouble in Danville – A Colored Man Beaten,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, Md.), May 20, 1884; “Bent on Having a Row – Mayor Johnston of Danville Calls for a Regiment of Troops,” *The Washington Post*, May 20, 1884.

⁸ Address to voters 2

struggle. In recapping the election, the *Atlanta Constitution* noted simply, “one party was for the white man’s government, while the other, led by J.H. Johnston, was in opposition.”⁹ Though just a municipal election, the stakes were high on election day.

Also like the Danville Massacre, the beating of George Adams stoked racial tensions in Danville. Fearing another widespread outbreak of violence, Mayor Johnston sent a telegram to Governor William Cameron in Richmond to request troops to help keep the peace.¹⁰ City sergeant James Wood, an ally of white reactionaries, contradicted the mayor’s request and argued that local authorities “will be fully able to suppress any disturbance that may occur.”¹¹ Governor Cameron opted not to send troops to Danville as he had done in November, but instead came to Danville to witness the conduct of the election for himself.¹² Like in November, the election resulted in a landslide victory for the white reactionaries. Graves defeated Johnston by 402 votes.¹³ Voters also installed an all-white city council which featured several prominent white reactionaries. With that, a new power structure was firmly and fully installed in Danville, and the era of biracial government was officially over.

Less than a week after the Thursday elections, the success of the white reactionary movement crystallized even further. The Senate quietly published its report into the Danville Massacre on Tuesday, May 27. Distracted by new priorities, the lead proponents of the investigation did nothing to promote its findings, and the report quickly gathered dust. Threats of federal intervention in Virginia quickly faded, giving white reactionaries full license to continue

⁹ “The Election – The Day Passes off Quietly in Danville,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 23, 1884.

¹⁰ “Bent on Having a Row – Mayor Johnston of Danville Calls for a Regiment of Troops,” *The Washington Post*, May 20, 1884.

¹¹ “More Trouble in Danville – Two Stories About the Beating of a Negro,” *New York Times*, May 20, 1884.

¹² “No Need of Troops in Danville,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, Md.), May 22, 1884; “Danville – The Bulldozing May Go On,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 22, 1884; “The Election – The Day Passes off Quietly in Danville,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 23, 1884.

¹³ “Virginia – Result of Yesterday’s Municipal Elections,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 23, 1884.

their disenfranchisement of black voters.

Evidently, Danville's white reactionaries recognized the significance of the moment. They celebrated Graves' election – and the broader political struggle it represented – as best they knew how. The freshly defeated Mayor John Henry Johnston was hanged in effigy, and a torchlight procession capped of the evening's festivities.¹⁴ The spectacle proved to be a chilling harbinger of things to come under white reactionary rule.

¹⁴ "Virginia – Result of Yesterday's Municipal Elections," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 23, 1884.

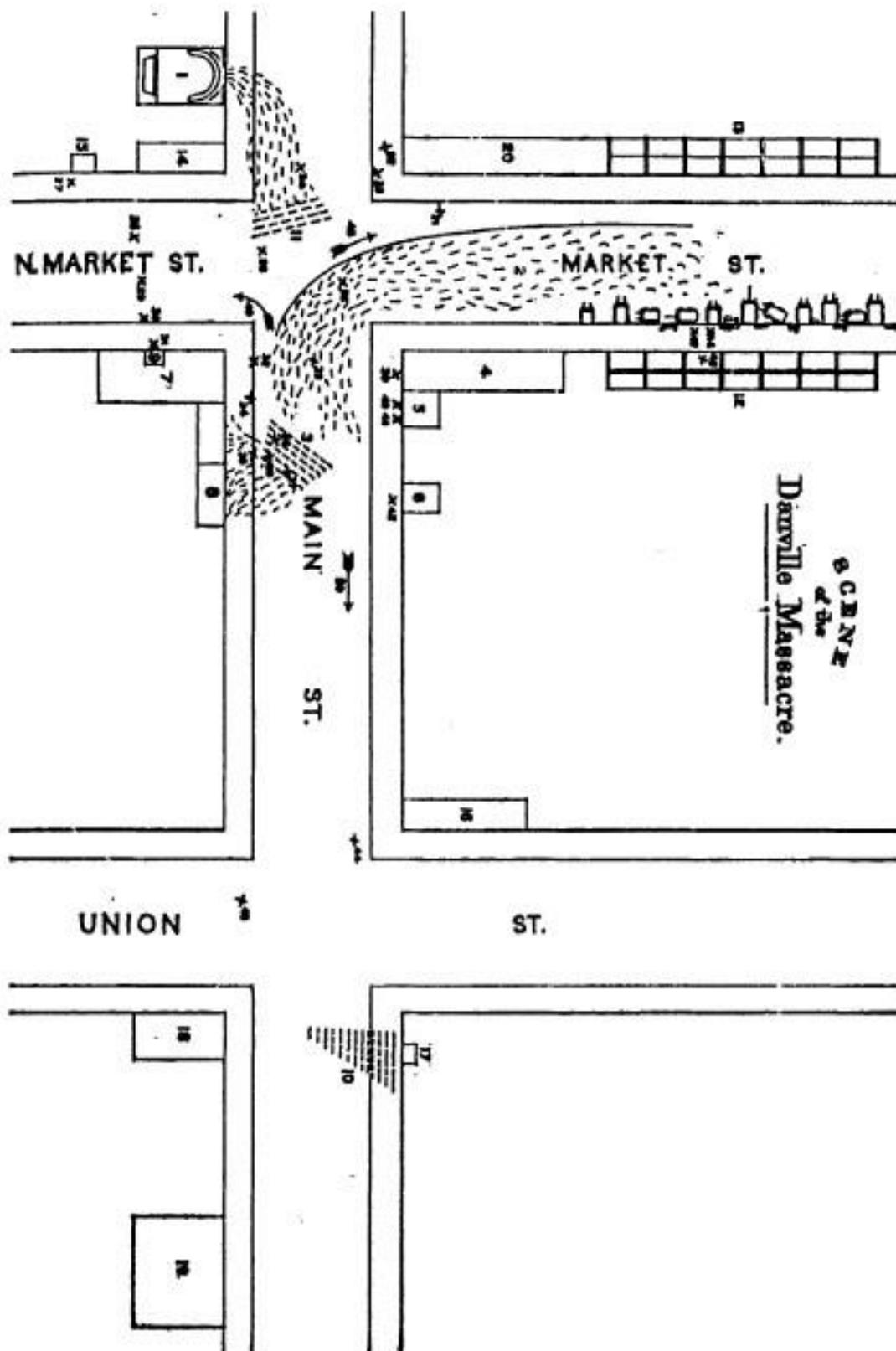
APPENDIX A

Diagram of the Danville Massacre

Adapted from: Committee on Privileges and Elections, Report on the Inquiry into massacre of colored men at Danville, Virginia, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., 1884, S. Rep. 579, XLVII-XLVIII.

Index to diagram of Danville massacre.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Opera house. | 26. A. H. Blount's position. |
| 2. Market square. | 27. J. J. Verser's room and window. |
| 3. Where whites formed first. | 28. George Adams's position. |
| 4. P. R. Jones's drug store. | 29. Wagon of Charles Adams. |
| 5. Judge Blackwell's office. | 30. Charles Adams's position when shot
by Graves. |
| 6. Hamlin's grocery store. | 31. W. P. Graves's position when he shot
Charles Adams. |
| 7. Nicholas & Hessberg's restaurant. | 32. Peter Smith's first position. |
| 8. People coming out of opera house. | 33. Walters Holland shot. |
| 9. Nicholas & Hessberg's side door. | 34. G. W. West's position. |
| 10. Gathering of whites where they were
addressed by Colonel Cabell. | 35. Miller's position. |
| 11. Whites firing on negroes. | 36. Hatcher's position. |
| 12. Public market stalls. | 37. Booth's position. |
| 13. Private market. | 38. Friend's position. |
| 14. Averett & White's store. | 39. W. H. Barksdale's position. |
| 15. J. J. Verser's room and window. | 40. Blackwell's position. |
| 16. Wiseman's drug store. | 41. Dugger's position. |
| 17. Old post-office. | 42. Terry's position. |
| 18. Arlington Hotel. | 43. Where a negro fell dead. |
| 19. United States Government building. | 44. Where a negro fell dead. |
| 20. Joplin's hardware store. | 45. L. L. Ivey's second position. |
| 21. Where a negro fell dead. | 46. Jack Redd's position. |
| 22. Where Violet Keeling and Sophie
Powell stood. | 47. Reagan's position. |
| 23. W. P. Brown's. | 48. } |
| 24. Whites rushing out from opera house
to scene of firing. | 49. } Lines of fleeing negroes. |
| 25. L. L. Ivey's position. | 50. } |



APPENDIX B

The Danville Circular

Adapted from: “Coalition Rule in Danville,” Box 216, Folder 31, William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.

COALITION RULE IN DANVILLE.

To the Citizens of the Southwest and Valley of Virginia:

We, the undersigned, of the merchants and manufacturers and mechanics of the town of Danville, Va., earnestly request that you will permit us to lay before you a few facts from which you can form some idea of the injustice and humiliation to which our white people have been subjected and are daily undergoing by the domination and misrule of the radical or negro party, now in absolute power in our town, and under the leadership of William Mahone, seeking to extend and perpetuate its power all over the Commonwealth.

By the census of 1880, Danville contained 7,526 persons, of which 4,397 were colored, and 3,129 were white. The population of the town has increased greatly since that time, and the proportion between the numbers of whites and blacks has also increased, there being a much larger proportion of blacks now than in the year 1880.

The taxes paid by the inhabitants of the town for the year 1882, upon property exclusive of license taxes for its corporate uses, exclusive of taxes paid by the State, amounted to over \$40,000 in round numbers, of which only 1,206.63 were paid by the blacks, making 38,894.00 more of the money paid for the support of the town by the white people than was paid by the negroes. Out of the total sum derived from taxation upon property, \$2,000 were appropriated to the education of the negro children of the town—a sum, it will be seen, \$794 more than the entire amount of tax paid by the whole negro population. So it appears that the negroes of town do not contribute one single dollar to the use of the town, towards paying the interest upon its corporate debt, the improvements of its streets, the maintenance of its public works, the pay of the officers, and its incidental expenses of government. But on the contrary, every dollar and much more besides, paid by the members of the race in the nature of taxes, is returned to them and applied to the education of their children.

Up to the session of the last legislature the town was not divided into wards, but voted in a single precinct, and in that way the council was generally kept in the hands of the white people. But the negro party, desiring to get complete possession of the town government that they might share in the offices as well as levy upon the treasury of the whites whatever they thought proper, applied to the Legislature and obtained an amendment to the town charter requiring that the town should be divided into three wards and that four councilmen and one justice of the peace should be elected from each ward. From the localities in which the negroes had hearsed themselves, it was totally impracticable to so run the ward lines without creating two wards in which the

negroes had a large majority, and this they and their white leaders knew. The result was that they elected seven out of twelve of their candidates for the council and their candidates for the justice of the peace from each ward.

Then began the deeds which have so humiliated us in our own estimation, and made our town, once so noted for wealth and enterprise, a by word for shame and reproach from one end of this land to the other. Wherever it is possible for anything to be done by the council or its magistrates that would irritate and wound the pride of the whites, it was executed with the keenest relish. Out of nine policemen four negroes were chosen—something before that time unknown to the history of the town—two of them acting not only as policemen, but one as health officer, and the other as weighmaster at the public scales and clerk of the market. Out of the 24 stalls and stands at the market, 20 are rented out by the council to the negroes. The scenes about this important and attractive institution (attractive in all cities) will give any person visiting the town a fair idea of the general state of the government under the negro rule. The market once occupied in all its stalls by polite white gentlemen, with their clean white aprons, and the most enticing meats and vegetables upon their boards, is now the scene of filth, stench, crowds of loitering and idle negroes, drunkenness, obscene language, and petty thieves. The white men have been driven out and forced to take up private places for vending their meats and vegetables, and the public market, erected by the money of the white people and intended to be occupied by men at least courteous and cleanly, has been converted to the use of squalid negro hucksters, and presents a spectacle of loathsomeness positively repulsive to any person who has the least idea of how a market should be kept.

The whites of the town are powerless to prevent this outrage upon their rights. In fact, it is believed that their well-known objection to such an indignity is the principal cause of its infliction. The council, which has the power of regulating the conduct of the market, is presided over by a carpet-bagger—J. B. Raulston—Mahone's collector for internal revenue for the Danville District, and the patronage of his Federal office enables him to control the council with the same undisputed power that the General does his party. Raulston is exceedingly offensive to the white people, and it is well known he takes no pains to carry out their wishes. Two of the negro members of the council hold positions under him at the custom house, and they are as obedient to his will in the council as they are in the revenue office.

It is seen, therefore, that our town is practically in the hands of and actually controlled by the officers and slaves of the Federal government, not one of whom has a dollar's worth of visible property within its limits, and this too by the most shameless usurpation; for the Constitution and laws of the State and the Presidential order by which the Norfolk postmaster was removed, all declare that such officials shall hold no office under the government of this commonwealth. The Federal government, through its internal revenue collector, and the negro councilmen hired by him to scrub the floor of the custom-house and make incendiary speeches against the white people of the town, make our town laws, levy and collect our taxes, distribute our money, and elect negro policemen to watch our town while its inhabitants are asleep. The revenue collector declared, when he was elected president of the town council, that it was his intention to use the patronage of the council to build up the radical negro party.

The police court of the town is another scene of perpetual mockery and disgrace. There the most active justice is a young negro named Jones, who first became famous by seducing a girl under the promise of marriage, and was only saved from conviction upon indictment by the evidence of his partner in a junk-shop, who swore that he had had criminal intercourse with her before Jones. This court, which before the negro regime came into power, was only open a few

hours every morning, is now open from morning till night, and nothing but actual observation can convey the least idea of the travesty of its transactions. Malice and partiality, whenever there is a motive, and ignorance, in its absence, are rules of the decision. The officials of the court, justices and policemen, cooperate in the work to make fees, and every act of word or deed of the citizen, whether atrocious in its character or too frivolous for the law to take notice of is brought before a justice, and the party, if not fined, is required to pay the costs ; and if there is more than one party, the costs are doubled, and both parties made to pay costs. White men are arrested for the most frivolous acts by negro policemen and borne along to the Mayor's office followed by swarms of jeering and hooting and mocking negroes, and tried, fined and lectured and imprisoned by a *negro* justice, and then followed to the jail by the same insulting rabble.

At the October Court of this year two of the party magistrates were removed from office by the Judge of the Hustings Court, one for embezzling the money of the Commonwealth, the other for "causes sufficient to the court," and one of them has fled the town to avoid indictment.

The notoriety which this state of things has produced, has attracted to the town large numbers of idle and filthy negroes, from the border counties of North Carolina, and from Halifax, Mecklenburg, and Charlotte, Va.—Although there is a law against vagrants, they are never disturbed. They infest the streets and sidewalks in squads, hover about public houses, and sleep on the doorsteps of storehouses and the benches of the market place. They impede the travel of ladies and gentlemen, very frequently forcing them from the sidewalk into the street. *Negro women* have been known to *force ladies* from the pavement, and remind them that they will "*learn to step aside next time.*" In several cases where the lie has been given to a white lady to her face by a negro. It is a very common practice for the negroes who are employed about out houses to allude to white ladies and gentlemen as *men* and *women* and to negroes as *ladies* and *gentlemen*. This is a practice almost without exception with the negro women. They do it to irritate and throw contempt upon the white race. A short time since, when the town was in great excitement over the murder of a respectable gentleman and farmer of Pittsylvania county, in his wagon, while on his way home from Danville, by *three negro highwaymen*, a negro man in this town stood in the centre of a crowd of his friends, with a pistol exhibited on his person, and with threatening gestures and loud oaths, declared that he wanted to "start a row with some d—n son a b—h of a white man that he might kill him."

A few nights ago the negroes were very indignant because they heard of the earnest work that was going on by the whites to register all of their voting strength and called a meeting which addressed by an incendiary negro, named Pleasants, a postal agent; and one of the town councilmen, hired at the custom house, and they passed a resolution requesting the Governor to have Federal troops sent to our town on election day; to intimidate the white people at the polls.

They have also a scheme to amend the town charter, if they elect the Legislature this fall, and take into the town a large negro settlement, outside of the town limits, called Jacksonville, by which they will get several hundred more black voters, *and then it will be impossible for any white man to hold office in the town. We know this to be their plan.*

It is well known that hundreds of the North Carolina tobacco raisers who live within a few miles of Danville, and used to sell their tobacco in our market, now go five times as far to a market in their own State, on account of the negro rule in our town. At the negro meeting, referred to above, one of their speakers said they did not want the people of North Carolina to come here anyway.

Now fellow citizens of the Valley and Southwest, we cry out to you in our affliction to deliver us from this awful state of *humiliation and wretchedness*. We know that as a rule the

cries of the wretched make but little interruption of the general progress of things. The sun rises and sets all the same, and the work of the government, and the work of the feast and the torture goes on with exactness and tranquility. But we appeal to you by that sympathy which constitutes the bond of union between honorable men, struggling in the cause of freedom, to help us throttle this viper of *Negroism* that is stinging us to madness and to death, *by voting against the Coalition-Radical candidates who are yelling and screaming with delight at the prospect of fastening its fangs into us forever.*

We appeal to you to say. do you think it is just that we should contribute *every cent* to the maintenance of our town, pay our *town debt*, and *appropriate not only what the negro pays in the way of tax, but much more besides*, of our own money, to the *education of his children, whom he raises upon our money to be our bitterest enemies*, and then let him have possession of our town government too? Is it right that the negro should have all this given him then be allowed to control our offices and plunder our treasury besides?

It is an injustice at which we now know your humanity will revolt.

It is the injustice of the frozen serpent, which after being warmed into life by its benefactor, stings him to death.

Help us, fellow citizens, by voting for the Conservative-Democratic candidates for the Legislature, for *unless they are elected we are doomed.*

W.T. CLARK, Merchant,

JAMES W. BRUCE, Merchant,
C. M. HENDRICK, Builder,
J.G. COVINGTON, Tobacconist,
REDD & JORDAN, Warehousemen,
DANIEL COLEMAN,
J.E. SCHOOLFIELD, Merchant,
A.G. FULLER, Tobacconist,
HAMLIN & HINTON, Merchants,
C.H. NORTON, Contractor,
GEO. A. LEE, Tobacconist,
GRAVELY & BURTON, Grocers,
J.B. WESTERBROOKS, Foundryman
THOMAS L. POINDEXTER & SON,
Warehousemen,

RUFFIN, WOOLFOLK & BLAIR, Real
estate and Insurance Agt's,
JOHN W. HOLLAND, Tobacconist,
W. P. GRAVES, Warehouseman,
J.M. COVINGTON, Tobacconist,
R.B. GRAHAM, & BRO., Builders,
S.H. HOLLAND,
E.L. & A. GERST, Tanners,
MOROTOCK MANUFACTURING CO.,
BOOTH, WOODING & BOOTH, Merchants,
ESTES & WOODING, Merchants,
W.N. SHELTON, Tobacconist,
LEE & JORDAN, Warehousemen,
HARRY WALKER,
ED. S. RAGLAND, Foundryman.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources Archives, Manuscripts, and Collections

VIRGINIA

Library of Virginia

- Altus H. Jewell letter, 7 May 1865. Accession 52448. Personal papers collection.
- Company B, 18th Virginia Infantry Regiment roster and history, 1859-1864. Accession 25382. Organization records collection.
- County and City Records. City of Danville Microfilm, reels 35-36.
- Land Tax Books, 1881-1885. City of Danville Microfilm, reel 17.
- The Danville Riot, An Address by the Rev. J. Hudson Riddick. Closed stacks. F234.D1 R5.

Virginia Historical Society

- Semi-Annual Report of Mayor J.H. Johnston. Call number JS804.4 A1.
- Address to the voters of Danville. Call number JS804.4 A15 J12.

City of Danville, Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court

- Public Records.

NORTH CAROLINA

- David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University
- William Mahone Papers, 1853-1895. Collection Number RL.00836.

Congressional Publications

U.S. Congress. *Congressional Record*. 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1884. Vol. 15.

----. House of Representatives. *Papers and Testimony in the Contested-Election Case of J. T.*

Stovall vs. George C. Cabell, From the Fifth Congressional District of Virginia. January

21, 1882. 47th Cong., 1st Sess., 1882. Mis. Doc. No. 29.

----. Senate. Committee on Privileges and Elections. *Inquiry into massacre of colored men at*

Danville, Virginia. May 7, 1884. 48th Cong., 1st Sess., 1884. S. Rep. 579.

----. Senate. *Report of the Special Committee to Inquire into the Mississippi Election of 1883 with the Testimony and Documentary Evidence*. 48th Congress, 1st Sess., 1884, S. Rep. 512.

Genealogical Sources

CITY DIRECTORIES

Smith, Ross A. *The Danville City Directory for 1881-'82*. Lynchburg: Southern Directory & Publishing Co., 1881.

Turner, Edward F. *Turner's Third Annual Directory! For the Cities of Danville and North Danville, For the Years of 1888-9*. Danville: E.R. Waddill & Bro, 1888.

FEDERAL CENSUS RECORDS

1860 U.S. Federal Census.

Schedule 1 – Free Inhabitants.

Schedule 2 – Slave Inhabitants.

1880 U.S. Federal Census.

Schedule 1 – Inhabitants

MARRIAGE RECORDS

“Virginia Marriages, 1785-1940.” Database. *FamilySearch.org*. Accessed May 1, 2020.

<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XRWM-71D>.

MILITARY SERVICE RECORDS

Historical Data Systems. *The American Civil War Research Database*. Accessed May 1, 2020.

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com/cwdb>.

Newspapers

Alexandria Gazette

Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

The Sun (Baltimore).

Chicago Daily Tribune.
Daily Dispatch (Richmond).
Danville Daily News.
Harper's Weekly.
Los Angeles Times.
National Republican.
New York Times.
New York Herald.
Richmond Daily Whig.
The Sunday Transcript (Philadelphia).
Washington Post.
The World (New York).

Published Sources

Grady, Henry Woodfin. *The New South*. New York: Robert Bonner's Sons, 1890.

Pollock, Edward. *Sketch Book of Danville Va., Its Manufactures and Commerce. Illustrated.*
 Danville: E. R. Waddill & Bro., 1885.

*Danville Riot November 3, 1883 – Report of the Committee of Forty with Sworn Testimony of
 Thirty-Seven Witnesses, &c.* Richmond: Johns & Goulsby, 1883.

Secondary Sources

Published Sources

Ager, Philipp, Leah Platt Boustan, and Katherine Erikson. "The Intergenerational Effects of a
 Large Wealth Stock: White Southerners After the Civil War." Working paper, National
 Bureau of Economic Research, March 2019.

Ayres, Edward L. *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford
 University Press, 1992.

Brisson, Jim D. "'Civil Government Was Crumbling Around Me': The Kirk-Holden War of
 1870." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 88, no. 1 (April 2011), 123-63.

Dailey, Jane. "Deference and Violence in the Postbellum Urban South: Manners and Massacres

- in Danville, Virginia.” *The Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 3 (August 1997), 553-590.
- Degler, Carl. *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1974.
- Downs, Gregory P. *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Foner, Eric. *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2019.
- . *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877*. New York: Harper & Row, 1990.
- Grimsley, Mark. “Wars for the American South: The First and Second Reconstructions Considered as Insurgencies.” *Civil War History* 58, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 6–36.
- Hahn, Steven. *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003.
- Humphreys, James S. “New South Historiography.” In *Interpreting American History: The New South*. Ed. James S. Humphreys. Kent: Kent State University Press, 2018.
- Martin, Jonathan D. *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Moore, James Tice. *Two Paths to the New South: The Virginia Debt Controversy, 1870-1883*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1974.
- Pearson, C. C. “The Readjuster Movement in Virginia.” *The American Historical Review* 21, no. 4 (July 1916): 734-749.
- Hogue, James K. *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006.

- Rable, George C. *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984.
- Richardson, Heather Cox. *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Robertson, James I. *18th Virginia Infantry*. Virginia Regimental Histories Series. Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1984.
- Wells, Jonathan Daniel. *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Woodward, C. Vann. *A History of the South*. Vol. IX. *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*. Ed. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971.

Online Sources

- “Danville Riot.” The History Engine. Accessed April 17, 2020.
<https://historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/506>.
- “Early Danville History.” DanvilleHistory.org. Accessed May 1, 2020.
<https://www.danvillehistory.org/history.html>.
- “Nov. 3, 1883: Danville Riot.” Zinn Education Project. Accessed April 17, 2020.
<https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/danville-riot/>.
- Wolfe, Brendan. “Danville Riot (1883).” Encyclopedia Virginia. Last modified June 29, 2015.
 Accessed April 17, 2020. https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Danville_Riot_1883.