The American South: Commemoration, Sectionalism and Nationalism in the Post-Civil War Era

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This study analyses post-Civil War reunion and reconciliation, using white Southern engagement with commemorative activity as a lens through which to explore the tensions that lay behind the development of a post-Civil War American identity. It presents Fourth of July celebrations in the Reconstruction-Era South as highly politicized contested spaces and demonstrates that resumption of white Southern celebration of the Fourth was contingent on the political success of the Democratic Party. The Centennial Exhibition of 1876, a world's fair celebrating one hundred years of American independence, provides the thesis' central case study. The thesis demonstrates that discourse around the Exhibition reflected the fractured state of American nationalism in the 1870s. Some Southerners dismissed the Centennial outright, others engaged with it conditionally and pragmatically but this ostensibly unifying and celebratory fair served as an arena for reflecting deep sectional and partisan divisions. Running alongside this is a parallel narrative focused on African Americans. The thesis will examine, in a comparative light, African Americans' engagement with national identity, and their use of commemoration to stake a claim to full citizenship and American identity in the post- Civil War era.

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Introduction

Between May and November of 1876, a grand world's fair, America's first, was held in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park. The International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures and Products of the Soil and Mine-more commonly known as The Centennial Exhibition, or simply The Centennial-attracted more than ten million visitors in the six months it was open, one fifth of the nation's population. It introduced Americans to both popcorn and the ice cream sundae; and Alexander Graham Bell was on hand to provide curious crowds with demonstrations of his new invention, the telephone.[1] One contemporary newspaper declared that the fair was

> Impossible to describe. Nothing but seeing it with your own eyes can give you any conception of its magnitude. Suffice it to say that everything that was grand, beautiful, useful and ludicrous was there, not only from our own beloved land but from every nation I have ever heard of and some I have not heard of![2]

The Centennial was more than mere spectacle, though. Held just eleven years after the end of the Civil War, and commemorating one hundred years of national existence, the exhibition, along with local events held all over the country in that anniversary year, presented an opportunity like no other for whites, blacks, Northerners and Southerners to reflect on and engage with ideas about their identity as Americans. It served as a performative expression of post-Civil War American nationalism, and, this thesis will argue, a rhetorical proxy utilised by the white South to reject any immediate or unconditional re-embrace of that nationalism. This study analyses post-Civil War reunion and reconciliation, using white Southern reaction to and involvement with these celebrations as a lens through which to explore the economic, social and political aspects of reunification and the tensions that lay behind the development of a post-Civil War

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[1] Linda P. Gross and Theresa R. Snyder, *Philadelphia's 1876 Centennial Exhibition* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia, 2005) p. 8.
[2] Lally Weymouth, *America in 1876: The Way We Were* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976) p.12.

American identity. The discussion of white Southerners will, throughout, be countered with a parallel narrative focused on African Americans, another demographic whose world was upended by the Civil War. The thesis will examine, in a comparative light, African Americans' engagement with national identity, and their use of commemoration to stake a claim to full citizenship and American identity in the post- Civil War era.

There has been valuable work in recent years on the post-Civil War South and the nettlesome question of sectional reconciliation. Historians such as Anne Sarah Rubin and Richard Zuckzek have demonstrated that white guerrilla-style terrorism, a defiant and resistant white public mood and the fact of Federal military control of the South make it plausible to argue that a state of quasi-war persisted throughout the period of Reconstruction. David Blight's influential work has argued that sectional reunion was achieved at the expense of African Americans, with the war's emancipatory aspects largely overlooked in favour of a reconciliationist view that accommodated both Northern and Southern whites. Caroline Janney has, meanwhile, stressed the gaps between political 'reunion' and genuine 'reconciliation,' highlighting sectional antagonism and alienation that persisted long into the twentieth century. There has been considerable attention paid to the importance of Civil War memory and commemoration in the process of reconciliation: W. Fitzhugh Brundage, William Blair, and Karen Cox have all contributed useful work on the tensions inherent in commemorating the achievements and the dead of both sides in an ostensibly reconciled nation.[3]

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[3] See Richard Zuczeck*, State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009); Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race & Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); William Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Karen Cox*, Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002).

John Hepp has recently contributed a useful essay on the celebrations of 1876 in which he points out the "numerous opportunities" they offer for scholarship.[4] The little that has been published on the Centennial Exhibition, however, has been largely concerned with the fair itself and its design rather than with how Americans actually experienced the event and inscribed it with meaning.[5] Mitch Kachun and Philip Foner are admirable exceptions to this in their explorations of African American engagement with the Exhibition. Kachun's work is centered around black attempts to create a usable past by using the Centennial as a space in which to articulate an American identity, while Foner's contribution is essentially a dispiriting account of black exclusion and white (Northern) indifference.[6] Hepp's own piece on the Exhibition stresses its importance as a "liminal space" reflecting an America poised between an agricultural past and an industrial future.[7] This thesis pursues that theme of liminality, but in terms of identity and national belonging. In her recent monograph on the Centennial, Susanna Gold uses the myriad works of art displayed at the Centennial to interrogate the fractured state of America identity in the 1870s. Gold touches on white Southern reaction to the Exhibition, a theme that will be explored fully in this thesis, stating that "the fragile veneer of optimism that attempted to conceal any lingering Civil War tensions would prove to be unsustainable, headed for collapse on the Centennial grounds."[8] Lyn Spillman's work, meanwhile, has framed the Centennial as a locus of national memory and shared identity. Spillman addresses the issue of Southern Centennial resistance, pointing out attempts by

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[4]John Hepp, "Centennial Celebrations" in Edward O. Frantz, ed., *A Companion to the Reconstruction Presidents* (Malden, Massachusetts: John Wiley and Sons, 2014) pp. 517-537, p. 534.
[5] See Bruno Gilberti, *Designing the Centennial: A History of the 1876 International Exhibition in Philadelphia* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2002.)
[6] Philip Foner, "Black Participation in the Centennial of 1876" *Phylon* 39, 4 (1978) 283-296, Mitch Kachun, "Before the Eyes of All Nations: African-American Identity and Historical Memory at the Centennial Exposition of 1876" in *Pennsylvania History*, 65, 3 (1998) 300-323.
[7] Hepp, p. 533.
[8] Susanna Gold, *The Unfinished Exhibition: Visualizing Myth, Memory and the Shadow of the Civil War in Centennial America* (London: Routledge, 2017) p. 43.

Centennial promoters to counter it by appealing to shared Revolutionary heritage.[9] Kathleen Ann Clark's definitive study of black Southern commemorative culture contains a brief discussion of the Centennial that reinforces Spillman's emphasis on the reconciliatory aims of its organizers. Clark acknowledges Southern ambivalence towards the Centennial, but her argument that white Southerners were "fully-fledged participants in Philadelphia" does not stand up to critical interrogation.[10] And the late W. Burlie Brown, writing in the midst of 1970s Bicentennial hoopla, showcased some interesting and colorful source material in a localized study of white Louisiana's engagement with the Centennial, but seriously underestimated the reach and importance of the Exhibition when he characterized it as 'miniscule' in comparison with that of the Bicentennial.[11] This thesis will demonstrate the ubiquity of this national anniversary in mid-1870s Southern culture, as well as the ways in which the commemoration amplified ideas of regional distinctiveness and served as a rhetorical proxy for the political and social divisions of the era.

The remainder of this introductory chapter will briefly consider nationalism in a broad and theoretical sense before looking at how theories around it might apply to the American South. It will also tackle the ontological matter of defining the South as well as looking at the concurrent and interlocking development of both sectionalism and nationalism in the antebellum decades of the nineteenth century. This will be followed by a look at Independence Day and other commemorative activity in the antebellum republic, laying some necessary groundwork for the thesis' use of commemorative activity to interrogate Southern engagement with American nationalism and identity.

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[9] Lyn Spillman, *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p. 71.
[10] Kathleen Ann Clark, *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration & Political Culture in the South, 1863- 1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) p. 124.
[11] W. Burlie Brown, "Louisiana and the Nation's One-Hundredth Birthday," *The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 18, 3 (1976) 271.

Theories of Nationalism

One view of nationalism is the modernist viewpoint, proposed most notably by Benedict Anderson. Anderson sees nations and nationalism as modern concepts dating only from approximately the turn of the nineteenth century, creations of the modern mind, lacking objective, inherent qualities of existence. He pinpoints nationalism's beginnings in the Americas, citing what he calls the "pilgrimages" of c*reole* functionaries; in other words, the experiences of colonial-born Europeans in the realms of government and trade.[12] Because they were treated differently from the European born and certain opportunities were closed to them, Anderson refers to these people's career progressions as cramped pilgrimages which fostered a sense of commonality resulting, eventually, in the perception that they were different from the Europeans, with this leading ultimately to independence and nationalism.[13] Anderson titled his seminal work on the subject *Imagined Communities* because his argument is predicated on the idea that nationalism and national identity are constructs of the human imagination: "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[14] In other words, any national identity depends upon people imagining a shared identity with people whose lives they will never intersect with, because of the chance occurrence of residing within the same geopolitical borders, however far apart.

Anthony Smith, a leading proponent of an ethincist view of nationalism, agrees with Anderson that nations are a modern phenomenon, but differs on a key point, arguing that nations are *not* imagined communities but have a solid basis in a shared ethnic identity, being modern creations with ancient, ethnic roots. Smith refers to the groups

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[12] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006) pp. 56-58.
[13] Anderson, pp. 64-65.
[14] Anderson, p. 6.

which comprise a nation's ethnic foundation as *ethnie,* and defines them as "named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity."[15] Smith says that many *ethnie* have survived for very long periods of time and that they have become the core around which modern nations are built. The *ethnie* draw upon shared ancestral myths (often focusing on a past "golden age"), shared language, and an attachment to a particular territory to foster a sense of community.

To what extent, then, do these theories provide an understanding of nationalism in the context of the American South? The work of Anderson and Smith is useful, but cannot be accepted uncritically. Anderson's emphasis on "cramped pilgrimages" is problematic: These experiences would have fostered some sense of commonality but Anderson overlooks "pilgrimages" amongst functionaries in the thirteen American colonies, which achieved independence a full generation before most of the Latin American colonies.

Smith convincingly combines Anderson's modernism with acknowledgement that there could be more to nationalism than theory and imagination. The clichéd, but empirically verified image of the United States as a "melting pot" means that Smith's "*ethnie*" theory, however, does not apply easily to the United States, despite his assertion that America's core *ethnie* is a British Protestant one.[16] Both Anderson and Smith argue convincingly that nationalism is imposed from the top down, with an elite leading the masses. Smith highlights the need for a common history, which need not be authentic: "memories of a golden age…proclaim an imminent status reversal: 'though at present we are oppressed, shortly we shall be restored to our former glory."[17] This is starkly illustrated

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[15] Anthony Smith, *Nationalism: Theory Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001) p. 32.
[16] Smith, p. 45.
[17] Anthony Smith, "The Golden Age and National Renewal" in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schopflin, eds., Myths and Nationhood (New York: Routledge, 1997) pp. 36-59, p. 51.

in the post- Civil War South, where advocates of a "New South" attempted to replicate the capitalism and industrialisation that had proven so successful in the North, while at the same time stressing a continuity with an idealized and romanticized "Old South." This was the imagined version of the South conjured up by a Kentucky newspaper's 1915 reference to "chivalry…hospitality…poetry…an aethereal beauty to be dreamed of rather than grasped."[18] Indeed, C. Vann Woodward once described the Old South as "the New South's most significant invention."[19] This supports Smith's stress on the importance of ancestry myths as well as Anderson's emphases on top-down creation of nationalism and the necessity of imagined kinship. James Cobb has described the Southern upper class as "architects of new or resurrected group identities" and quotes former Confederate Robert Dabney's belief that "history should serve not just as justification, but also as propaganda, designed to stir the emotions of succeeding generations of white Southerners." [20] The invented or imagined Old South did just that, and had an effect and influence that far outlasted the influence of the actual Confederate nation, with the racial *status quo* enforced by the white South throughout the century after the war predicated on it. As C. Vann Woodward wrote: to question the historical orthodoxy created by the new South about the old was to "not only make judgements about history but to pass judgement on the legitimacy of the social order sustained by the assumptions questioned."[21] When a group of Southern academics styling themselves "The Agrarians," published a series of essays on Southernism in 1930 called *I'll Take My Stand,* they intended it as an attack on the New South and a paean to the old, agrarian South. With its stated intent to "defend a Southern way of life against what may be called the American or prevailing way," what it actually

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[18] "The Old South at Richmond" in *The Lexington Herald*, 12 December 1915.
[19] C Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971) pp. 154-155.
[20] James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p. 100.
[21] Cobb, p. 99.

did was demonstrate the power and effectiveness of New South nation and legend-building.[22]

David Potter has examined the question of the "realness" of nationalism, the basic bone of contention between Anderson and Smith, and applied it to the South. Potter cites Hans Kohn's modernist assertion that nationalism is a state of mind: a psychological, descriptive definition, and a relative, rather than an absolute condition: "a tendency, impulse or attribute rather than an objective thing."[23] Potter also points out that nationalism is used in an evaluative sense: to judge the validity of groups exercising autonomous power: "the nature of the relationship between the individuals involved rather than the acts themselves, becomes the standard for judging the rightness of the acts."[24] By these standards, nationalism is an evaluative matter: i.e. was the Confederacy a nation battling for its freedom, or a traitorous rebellion? So there is a gap between the psychological/functional approach and a literal, evaluative one. The latter can inhibit recognition of similarities between nationalism and other forms of group loyalty, something that is central to this study. In the evaluative sense, national loyalty must be singular, and Potter points out that where nationalism and sectionalism are both at work, they are not necessarily in opposition. Potter explains that this divergence between the two approaches to nationalism is borne out in the fact that while nationalism is itself an abstraction, the institutional manifestations of nationalism- borders, and the apparatus of national government- are concrete, and this leads to people attributing the concrete reality of the "state" to the more ephemeral "nation." Potter, a Southerner, believed that historians fell back on the valuative concept of nationality in reference to the Civil War: ascribing nationalism to the North and sectionalism to the South. In this way, support

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[22] Cobb, p. 116.
[23] David M. Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa" in *The American Historical Review,* 67, 4 (1962) 924-950, 925.
[24] Ibid.

for the fight against slavery did not have to be compromised by denial of the right of self-determination to a (slaveholding) national group. The relation of sectionalism and nationalism is crucial in any analysis of the Civil War-the crucible out of which any discussion of Southern nationalism emerges- and its aftermath. Was the war a case of sectionalism on the part of the South versus nationalism on the part of the North? Or one of nationalism (both Northern and Southern) versus sectionalism (both Northern and Southern)? Or sectionalism (Southern) versus sectionalism (Northern)? Eve Kornfield has referred to the "New Englandization" of American culture which resulted in Southern and Western American cultures being seen as "regional" while New England culture "was American culture."[25] Southern claims that the Confederacy was the true embodiment of America's founding ideals might be seen as a less successful version of New Englandization. David Blight has examined the former Confederacy's largely successful attempt to "win the peace" through historiographical vindication of what it considered its war aims, but the North's success in making itself synonymous with "the nation" seems a signally greater achievement.[26]

The Development of American Sectionalism

There was already an identifiable "South" at the birth of the United States; the legacy of what Cynthia Kierner has called a "self-conscious sectionalism" deriving from the region's "defining feature": African slavery.[27] William Cooper quotes a Southern congressman in 1782 as acknowledging the "great struggles between Northern and Southern interests."[28] The South wielded significant influence in the formation and early history of the United States: it can be argued that a Southern, and particularly Virginian,

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[25] Eve Kornfield, *Creating an American Culture: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) p. 79.
[26] Blight, *Race and Reunion.*
[27] Cynthia A. Kierner, "The Colonial South to 1750" in John Boles, ed., *Companion to the American South*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) pp. 38-53, p. 50.
[28] William J. Cooper, *The American South: A History Vol. 1* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002) p. 98.

ascendancy during these decades allowed the region to define what it meant to be American. Virginian George Washington was the leader of the Revolutionary army that won independence, Virginian Thomas Jefferson authored the Declaration of Independence, Virginian James Madison was the central figure in putting together the Constitution, and Virginians occupied the White House for thirty-two of the republic's first thirty-six years. Southerners exercised influence in protecting what was by the last part of the eighteenth-century already *their* peculiar institution of slavery: the three-fifths clause of the Constitution was a concession to the Southern bloc in allowing the slave states to count each slave as 3/5 of a person for purposes of allocating congressional representation. Rather than seeing slave ownership as somehow contradictory to liberty in those Revolutionary times, William Cooper describes Southern colonists as using the institution to define themselves and their own liberty: " without control of slavery, white Southerners agreed, they could not possess their own liberty...slavery and liberty were inextricably intertwined in the Southern mind."[29]

So although Southern identity and interests were discernible from its origins American nationalism remained a fluid and elusive concept in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Cecelia Elizabeth O'Leary describes a nation where "one's notion of country more often than not was affixed to an individual state;" with even Fourth of July celebrations more reflective of localism and local cultures than anything national.[30] The nation had not yet coalesced into an entity that could be said to reflect either North or South, but changes in the North, essentially industrialisation, were changing that.

When civil war did eventually break out in the 1860s, a repeated Southern claim was that the Confederacy was the true embodiment of the ideals of the Founders, that it

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[29] Cooper, p. 106.
[30] Cecilia Elizabeth O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) p. 11.

was the North who had betrayed these ideals and caused the rupture of the Union. James McPherson has endorsed this idea and presents a convincing portrait of two sections driven apart by a fundamental split. He cites David Potter in ascribing to the South a *gemeinschaft* society-one based on tradition, hierarchy, agrarianism, and codes of honour and chivalry. The North, meanwhile, spent the first half of the nineteenth century changing into a *gesellschaft* society: an impersonal, less rooted, industrial, urban, and meritocratic one.[31] McPherson thus argues that it was the North that "deviated from the mainstream of historical development....the breaches that opened between the regions came mainly because of developments in the North....the South's concept of republicanism hadn't changed; the North's had."[32] McPherson's thesis is supported by James Cobb's observation that the United States' print culture was Northern-based, and offered readers " a steady diet of the South as an oppositional 'other' ...embodying everything the United States was not...contrasting Southern stasis with Northern dynamism." [33] Although historians such as Edward Pessen have argued that the antebellum North and South were more alike than different, with their shared language and religion, McPherson convincingly demonstrates that by the 1850s they were largely using that common language to excoriate each other, and that major Protestant denominations had split along regional lines.[34] He goes on to enumerate the myriad ways in which gaps opened up between the sections during the antebellum half century; in education and literacy, in martial proclivity, in ethnic homogeneity.[35] It seems clear the two regions were on a collision course; a template for a national character could not have been forged out of two societies with such starkly differing characters.

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[31] James McPherson, "Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism: A New Look at an Old Question" in *Civil War History*, 50, 4 (2004) 418-433, 425-426.
[32] McPherson, 433.
[33] Cobb, pp. 14, 26
[34] McPherson, 424.
[35] McPherson, 429.

Cecilia O'Leary, juxtaposing the birth of "true" American nationalism with the North's efforts in the Civil War, has written: "Northern men and women who previously had recognized only local, regional, ethnic and religious allegiances hammered out the meaning of patriotism as they fought to preserve the Union."[36] In other words, the Northern vision of America became America, and Southerners were relegated to being Southerners, their sectional interests seen as just that, sectional. This solidification of an American national identity at the time of the Civil War can be linked with the sacralization of the concept of the "union" in American-or at least, Northern thought. Paul Nagel describes the Unionism of the Federalist period as no more than a "stratagem for the occasion."[37] Washington's description of it as being "the main prop of your liberty"[38] reinforces the idea of Union being a tool, or means, as does Jefferson's 1804 statement that the Union was of "little importance" to the happiness of the American people and that he was sanguine about the possible development of "Atlantic and Mississippi Confederacies."[39] A young Daniel Webster adhered to the idea of Union as means when he stated in 1814 that the Union was valid "only when certain principles [are] safe…they alone are friends to the Union who endeavour to maintain the principles of civil liberty." The older Webster, however, embraced the concept of absolute, irrevocable Union, Union as an end in itself: "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!" Webster further stated that "The Union is not a temporary partnership of States…it is the association

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[36] O'Leary, p. 25.
[37] Paul Nagel, *One Nation Indivisible: The Union in American Thought 1776-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) p. 15.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestley, 29 January 1804 at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16784/16784-h/16784-h.htm#2H_4_0009> [accessed 7.11.2011].

of the people…uniting their power, joining their higher interests, and blending into one indivisible mass."[40]

Webster was not the only American whose view of the union evolved. William Seward, later Lincoln's Secretary of State, said in 1848 that "this Union must be a voluntary one and not compulsory. A Union upheld by force would be despotism." But just two years later, Seward had decided that the Union "was not founded in voluntary choice, nor does it exist by voluntary consent."[41] This evolution of the idea of "Union" as voiced by Northern politicians such as Webster, Seward, and most critically, Lincoln, was viewed apprehensively in the South. On the eve of war in 1861, *The New Orleans Bee* summed up the danger perceived in absolute Union:

> the dogma of the perpetuity and imperishability of the Union carries with it the right to coercion for its enforcement…the very term 'union' implies voluntary association...if any of the parties should be forced to maintain a compulsory compact, it would cease to be a Union, and would become despotism.[42]

Similarly, *The Richmond Enquirer* warned of "the immense mischief that may be introduced under the Trojan Horse of the word 'Union."[43] It was this inferred threat and the question of just what Union was, and meant, that divided North and South more than anything, as it was the idea of indivisible Union that most threatened the institution of slavery.

What was the South?

What, then, was the antebellum South? Did it constitute a discrete and concrete entity, and if so, what defined it? Avery Craven, writing in the 1950s, denied the existence of 'a' South prior to the 1850s, arguing that it had been "too much a bundle of contradictory and conflicting interests to see itself as an entity."[44] More recently, William Freehling has convincingly described a land of gradations and regions dissolving into each

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[40] Nagel. p. 39.
[41] Nagel, p. 80.
[42] Nagel, p. 41.
[43] Quoted in *The Macon Weekly Telegraph*, 8 April 1851.
[44] Avery O. Craven, *The Growth of Southern Nationalism: 1848-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953) p. 8.

other, a region containing so much variation that he, like Craven, concludes that it cannot be considered 'a' South.[45]

David Potter theorized that the North-South divide was not unique but only the most acute manifestation of a recurring phenomenon of sectional competition. He reviews three views of the antebellum North/South rivalry: that slavery was the cause; that it was a clash between two profoundly dissimilar cultures; that it was a clash between emerging industrialism in the North and the agrarianism of the South. Potter concludes that the cultural interpretation exaggerates the differences between the regions and that emphasis on the traditionalism of the South "loses sight of the intensely commercial and acquisitive cotton economy of the South."[46] The cultural explanation sees sectionalism as a struggle over values, the economic explanation as a conflict of interest. (Was it a struggle for identity or a struggle for power? Or a struggle for power and national influence *camouflaged* as a fight for identity?) Potter is among those historians who discount a cultural basis for sectionalism, citing the myriad cultural values shared between the regions, including religion. However, the fact that all the major Protestant denominations in the United States split into Northern and Southern factions over the issue of slavery points to the one over-riding issue that divided the Union. Potter described the South's "awareness of its minority status stimulat[ing] its sense of solidarity, apartness, and defensiveness."[47] This, coupled with the North's increasing distaste for slavery (if not for racial inequality) leads inevitably to the conclusion that slavery was the one thing that united a fairly disparate region, and the catalyst for virtually all sectional animus of the era.

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[45] William Freehling, *The Road to Disunion 1776-1854* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) p. 19.
[46] David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) p. 32.
[47] Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, p. 33.

But does Freehling's portrait of a land of gradations and regions dissolving into each other negate the traditional idea of a solid South? Certainly the Mississippi planter who in 1857 contrasted Southern descent from "high-toned gentlemen descended from cavaliers" with Yankee antecedents in the "narrow-minded, sanctimonious bigots who landed at Plymouth Rock" saw a clear cultural distinction between himself and his Northern counterparts.[48] And J. H. Ingraham, a native of Maine who settled in Mississippi, writing twenty years earlier, declared that

> the inhabitants of the South (are) dissimilar to those of the North. The difference is clearly distinguishable, through all its grades and ramifications and so strongly marked as to stamp the Southern character with traits sufficiently distinctive to be dignified with the term 'national.[49]

Later historians, as has been noted, have differed from this view, but the writings of Craven, Abernethy and Freehling would no doubt surprise John Calhoun. Calhoun died in 1850, having spent the previous two decades fighting to preserve the political power and way of life of a region that according to some historians of a century hence, did not exist. Calhoun had written in 1838 that he was: "utterly opposed [to government by an absolute numerical majority] ... [it] would destroy our system and destroy the South."[50]

Avery Craven's denial of John Calhoun's South as an entity was quoted in a collection of essays whose title, *The Southerner as American,* telegraphs its intentions. Published in 1960, the essays were clearly aimed at promoting national unity and rehabilitating the white South in a time of racial and sectional discord. In one essay Charles Sellers writes that the "American Experience knows no greater tragedy than the Old South's twistings and turnings on the rack of slavery," obscuring the somewhat

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[48] William C. Harris, *The Day of the Carpetbagger: Republican Reconstruction in Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979) p. 117.
[49] J H. Ingraham, "The South-West" in Alan Gallay, ed., *Voices of the Old South: Eyewitness Accounts, 1528-1861* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1994) pp. 267-269, p. 267.
[50] Clement Eaton, "Calhoun and States Rights" in *The Civilization of the Old South: Writings of Clement Eaton* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968) pp. 135-155, p. 151.

greater tragedy befalling the enslaved.[51] This obtuse observation is in itself evidence of a Southern mindset that reached into the twentieth century; Sellers goes on to depict an antebellum white South struggling with its own conscience over the slavery issue and recognizing the paradox of upholding, at the same time, both slavery and liberty. William Cooper has offered a more compelling analysis of the slave owner's view of liberty: "without control of their slaves, white Southerners agreed, they could not possess their own liberty. Slavery and liberty were inextricably intertwined in the Southern mind."[52] Sellers backs up his portrait of the antebellum Southerner as ardent American by citing, but not quoting, editorials from *DeBow's Review* (a leading antebellum Southern periodical) that inculcated American patriotism.[53] *DeBow's* also, however, contained passages like this, in an 1850 argument for increased Southern self-sufficiency:

> Who conducts our commerce, builds our ships...who supplies the materials and the engineers for our railroads -where we have any? The North. Who educates for us our children? The North. Various propositions have been brought forward in the view of preserving the South from the...dangers of the times...[54]

The article is not completely lacking in nationalist sentiment ("great indeed is the value of this federal union") but the overall tone is distinctly sectional and propagates the idea of a discrete South; an entity which, despite its lip service to American nationalism, *DeBow's* prioritized over the nation as a whole: "There must be an end, somewhere, of concessions....it becomes the South to determine how far its safety will admit of concession. The stand should be made there."[55] Implicit in this passage is the idea that the South's "safety," indeed its very existence, was threatened by the North.

The United States, from its inception, was composed of sections. They were not always precisely or easily demarcated, as William Freehling has shown; one section

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[51] Charles Griers Sellers, "The Travails of Slavery" in Charles Sellers, ed., *The Southerner as American* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960) pp. 40-77, p. 40.
[52] Cooper, p.106.
[53] Sellers, p. 43.
[54] "The Cause of the South" in *DeBow's Review* (July 1850) pp. 120-128.
[55] Ibid.

dissolved into another almost imperceptibly and east/ west and cultural and societal differences muddied the waters still further. But a strong and definite Southern regional identity, verging on nationalism, was forged over the 1820s and 30s, out of Southern fear and resentment over challenges to their peculiar institution. As David Potter wrote, "the slavery issue gave a false clarity and simplicity to sectional diversities which were diffuse and complex."[56]

Just as the North was successfully setting itself as the template for what America would be, the antebellum crisis sparked by the slavery issue allowed the heavily slavery-dependent Deep South to do the same on a regional scale, leading the more moderate and less slavery-dependent Middle and Upper Souths into the ultimate declaration of Southern identity, the Confederate States of America.

Commemoration and Historical Memory

Before coming to any understanding of the role of the 1876 Centennial in understanding white Southern engagement with Americanism, it will be useful to review the part that commemorative activities, in particular those surrounding Independence Day, played in the development of national feeling and identity in the United States. Commemorative activities have been used throughout American history as a tool to promote particular versions of what America is or should be. John Bodnar has described the contests involved in creating a "past worthy of commemoration" as a struggle for supremacy between advocates of various political ideas and sentiments."[57] Bodnar posits that commemoration of the past has more to do with the present than with anything else; that commemorative activity is intended by leaders to "calm anxiety about change or political events" and to promote feelings of solidarity.[58] Public memory, according to

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[56] Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, p. 33.
[57] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) p. 13.
[58] Bodnar, p. 15.

Bodnar, came to be what it is in the United States because some interests prevailed in the struggle to establish what America was. This can be interpreted in the literal sense in discussing the Civil War, or in more subtle fashion through looking at competing local and political interests throughout the antebellum period. Commemoration and memory was often as much about the present as it is the past, reflecting struggles for control. This can be seen in the partisan use of Independence Day by Federalists and Jeffersonians, by the use of the day for propaganda by interest groups, not necessarily political, by the struggle of black Americans to give themselves a usable past in order to shore up their claim to full citizenship, and by the actions of white Southerners in moulding the memory of the Civil War to their best advantage- casting it in terms of honour and states' rights rather than a war to preserve slavery. Fitzhugh Brundage, in pointing out the fictions involved in commemoration, warns that collective memory- that version of history ratified by commemoration - should not be mistaken for an objective record of the past. When certain factions/groups/interests are involved in depicting their version of events as objectively true, he argues that in order for these depictions to be viable they merely need to be believable to their intended audience.[59] Sometimes, presenting a particular version of events in order to shape collective memory involves suppressing memories as much as celebrating them; for example, Brundage cites Austrian depictions of that country as a victim of rather than participant in the Nazi regime.[60]

The idea of suppression of fact is particularly salient in the formation of white Southern historical memory, with its glorification of the Lost Cause, and its minimization of the horrors of slavery and the white terrorism that accompanied Reconstruction. In 1922, a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy expressed to that group's

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[59] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "No Deed but Memory" in Brundage, ed., *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) pp. 1-28, p.5.
[60] Brundage, "No Deed but Memory," p. 6.

annual convention her fears that "wrong" interpretations of history were entering "textbooks...encyclopedias and books of reference." These supposedly fallacious interpretations included the ideas that "the advocates of secession were traitors to the United States government...that the war was a 'Civil War' for we were not a republic of sovereign states but a nation...that the South fought to hold her slaves...that Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves."[61] Brundage's admonition, as exemplified by the contested history of the Civil War, echoes the ideas of French historian Pierre Nora. Nora postulates a chasm between history and memory, seeing the latter as irretrievable and the former as a problematic and incomplete reconstruction.[62] But history and memory do mingle. In the words of Matthew Dennis, "Popular memory, particularly in the pluralistic United States, is constructed, incomplete, and itself at least partially dependent on formal history, which filters into the popular consciousness."[63] One significant way in which this filtering takes place is through commemorative, usable rituals such as the Fourth of July. Independence Day commemorations in the antebellum period were used to invoke unity and reinforce partisan or regional interpretations of America and the role of commemoration in developing a national identity can be seen in the evolving dynamics of this holiday. A review of the history and evolution of Fourth of July commemorations leads to two broad conclusions: that Independence Day celebrations were vehicles for competing interests - regional and political - to try and impose their ideas of Americanism on the people, and that there was a top-down dynamic, with elites setting the template for the commemorative activities.

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61 "Delegate Flays 'Lincoln Cult'" in *The Birmingham Age-Herald,* 19 November 1922.
62 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History" at <www.history.ucsb.edu.faculty/marcuse/classes/201/articles/89NoraLieuxintrorepresentations.pdf >[accessed 22.11.14]
63 Matthew Dennis, *Red, White and Blue Letter Days: An American Calendar* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2002) p. 6.

Commemoration of the Fourth of July became a virtually immediate civic tradition in the United States, featuring a "combination of orderly celebration and violence as...plebeian crowds broke the windows of suspected Tories."[64] Celebrations were not, as David Waldstreicher has observed, afterthoughts to, or random by-products of, independence. Rather, they were "anticipated, necessary responses to the Declaration of Independence."[65] Waldstreicher posits that the leadership in the early republic acted upon the assumption that the new nation's existence could only be ratified by people "spontaneously" celebrating its existence, and that evidence of this national celebration must appear in print. Waldstreicher's thesis, borrowing from Benedict Anderson's idea that a print culture was necessary to create the "imagined community," implies that commemoration and celebration can define a nation. What, then, did Independence Day celebrations say about the antebellum United States?

William Blair has pointed out that, in the early to mid-nineteenth century Washington's Birthday and the Fourth of July were the only civic traditions with even a "semblance of national coherence." [66] But as white Southerners used the Fourth to celebrate the slaveholding republic that they felt was intended by the founders, abolitionists and black Americans saw the same day as an opportunity to promulgate a philosophy that undermined the bedrock of Southern life, and demand liberation. Indeed, Frederick Douglass' refusal to commemorate the Fourth was as powerful a statement as the affirmative parades, speeches and picnics that were going on around him. In repudiating the Fourth, Douglass still marked it, and used it:

> What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your

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[64] Blair, p. 16.
[65] David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) p. 47.
[66] Blair, p. 12

> national greatness, swelling vanity… There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.[67]

Free black Americans, as indicated by these remarks, tended to shun celebrations of Independence Day in the antebellum decades.[68] Black groups often held alternative meetings on July 5 - as did an 1832 Ohio gathering who were told: "We have met on this 5th of July, not under the mock pretense of celebrating the 4th of July, for that would betray us in a want of sound understanding...this day causes millions of our race to groan under the galling yoke of bondage."[69] Still, in their avoidance of the day, these dissenters testified to the power that commemorative rites exercised over people's sense of identity and belonging, something that would be seen again in white Southern reaction to the Centennial celebrations of 1876.

Mitch Kachun has described black celebration of Freedom Days in the late antebellum period that celebrated British emancipation of West Indian slaves on August 1, 1834:

> These events are striking for the regularity of their observance and for the attendance of thousands of African Americans at celebrations, not only in major cities, but also in small rural villages, some of which contained at most a dozen or so black families.[70]

These African American celebrants, in Kachun's words, "hoped to establish a commemorative tradition, to articulate their historical consciousness to the American public, and to leave a legacy for coming generations."[71] Black abolitionist Absalom Jones prescribed solemnity as a hallmark of Emancipation Day observation, in deliberate contrast to the increasingly boisterous white Fourth of July celebrations, from which blacks were largely excluded: "Let us be sober-minded, humble, peaceable,

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[67] Frederick Douglass, "What, to the Slave, is the Fourth of July?" at www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=162 [accessed 12.6.14]
[68] Mitch Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations 1808-1915* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), p. 54.
[69] Kachun*, Festivals*, p. 55.
[70] Kachun,"Before the Eyes of All Nations," 301
[71] Kachun, *Festivals*, p. 34.

temperate…frugal in our apparel."[72] While August 1 observances initially lacked firecrackers and other frivolities associated with the Fourth, they were political statements in public spaces, involving parades and processions. Kachun stresses the importance of these festivals in laying claim to a particularly black idea of Americanism that celebrated both their belonging and their distinctiveness.[73] While white abolitionists sometimes organized their own August 1 rites and attended black-run celebrations, the celebrations tended to be under black control. Black abolitionists often chafed under white dominance of the movement, and Emancipation Day observances gave them an opportunity to demonstrate their own initiative and make their own statement through commemorative ritual.[74] As the years passed, Emancipation Day began to take on some of the more boisterous characteristics of the Fourth. Frederick Douglass described an 1859 gathering at Geneva, New York:

> The ringing of bells, firing of guns and the sound of music with the gay, fluttering throngs which arrived by every train gave proof of the general joy. The great good nature and boisterous merriment of the colored people, though at times not over regardful of good taste, seemed to awaken in the white people a good deal of mirth, but it was mirth without malice...to many of us the first of August is like the white man's 4th of July, a day of freedom from ordinary restraints...without any marked concern for...decorum. There were a few at Geneva who carried this 4th of July-ism a little too far, but they were the exceptions. [75]

Here, Douglass exhibited the concern with white opinion that marked black social movements all the way into the twentieth century, as well as the pre-war popularity of Emancipation Day. After war and emancipation, however, African American citizens would embrace Independence Day celebrations as a vehicle for confirming that citizenship, a shift that will be examined in Chapter 2.

Celebrations of the Fourth evolved in subtle ways that reflected changes in American politics and society. As the American polity became more polarized, the

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[72] Kachun, *Festivals*, p. 35.
[73] Kachun,"Before the Eyes of All Nations," 302.
[74] Kachun, *Festivals* p. 62.
[75] Kachun, *Festivals*, p. 72.

celebrations became increasingly political and partisan. Reflecting the growing popularity of civic groups and fraternal organizations, Fourth of July parades contained increased representation from such groups. The involvement of local civic organizations, membership of which helped to define an individual's identity, thus helps to establish linkage between commemorative activity and identity, both personal and national. It also points to the role of local elites in managing commemoration. Mary Lou Nemanic has described ways in which post-Revolutionary elites attempted to build and reinforce national unity by substituting formal and solemn nationalistic rites for the rowdiness often displayed by the lower orders on early Fourths. [76] While they were unsuccessful in curtailing all bumptious elements of the celebration (English diarist Frederick Marryat commented in 1837, "The Americans may have great reason to be proud of this day, but why do they get so confoundedly drunk?") they did manage to largely replace the practice of setting bonfires and blowing up home-made firecrackers with civic firework displays under the control of local leadership.[77] Waldstreicher has referred to early Fourths as "attempts to (re)establish an organic link between elite and populace, ratifying both popular sovereignty and the most tasteful displays of patriotic affiliation. They did this by deferring controversial questions of political participation and local control in favour of self-evident displays of national unity."[78] Mitch Kachun, meanwhile, has pointed up the didactic uses of commemoration by positing that July Fourth parades were "designed explicitly to teach the public the lessons of patriotism as well as their own place in the social order."[79] A participant in an 1847 Fourth in North Carolina acknowledged the local "worthies"' part in orchestrating the celebration:

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[76] Mary Lou Nemanic, *One Day for Democracy: Independence Day and the Americanization of Iron Range Immigrants* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007) p. 31.
[77] Jack Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life: 1790-1840* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988) p. 275.
[78] David Waldstreicher, "Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent: Celebrations, Print Culture, and the Origins of American Nationalism" in *Journal of American History,* 82, 1, (1995) 37-61, 52
[79] Kachun, *Festivals*, p. 23.

> Our little town was alive yesterday, in honor of the "4th" …the worthies took an abundance of trouble …and expended themselves in fireworks. There was besides the illuminated Courthouse with its flags and banners, gunpowder and fire enough in general to have satisfied the heart and aspirations of Old Zachary [Taylor?] himself.[80]

A sectional and partisan divide was evident in Independence Day observations throughout the 1850s; William Blair has identified a "cautious re-evaluation of the Union" in Southern distancing from July Fourth activities in the years just prior to war.[81] There was not yet, however, any wholesale abandonment of the holiday. Fletcher Green, in his study of antebellum North Carolina Fourths, demonstrates that observance of the Fourth remained enthusiastic in the state well into the 1850s. Green quotes the *Raleigh Register*: "There are but few places in the Union where...the day is celebrated with more lively enthusiasm."[82] But as Fourth observances were so locally driven and controlled, with orations and toasts having distinctly regional or cause-centred flavour, their popularity in the late antebellum South should not be misinterpreted. The Fourth was seen and used as a vehicle for promotion of particular versions of the United States. Writing five years before secession, a Wilmington editor highlighted its polemical uses:

> Thousands of preachers and orators at the North will avail themselves of the opportunity to instil hatred of the South and her institutions...We cannot, therefore, look forward to the influence of the day with the same hopeful feelings that used to animate us on such occasions...[83]

In 1854, a Charleston newspaper remarked upon the resilience of Independence Day celebrations, asserting that the day was "one of the 'peculiar institutions of our country, about whose extension there is not likely to be any doubt."[84] As use of the phrase "peculiar institution" and reference to a noted abolitionist indicated, however, the

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[80] Unknown to Louisa C. Harrison, 6 July 1847, Faunsdale Plantation Papers 1805-1975, Birmingham Public Library Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham, Alabama.
[81] Blair, p. 12.
[82] *Raleigh Register*, 7 July 1849, quoted in Fletcher Green, "Listen to the Eagle Scream: One Hundred Years of the Fourth of July in North Carolina, 1776-1876 in Isaac Copeland, ed., *Democracy in the Old South and Other Essays by Fletcher Melvin Green* (Kingsport, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969) pp. 111-156, p. 134.
[83] *Wilmington Daily Journal*, 3 July 1856, quoted in Green, p. 135.
[84] "A Fourth of July Manual," *Charleston Courier*, 15 July 1854.

sectional conflicts of the decade were inextricably bound up with this editor's thoughts on the Fourth: "Even the Garrisons of the land are compelled to honor the day and recognize its special prominence in the Calendar by the impotent assertions of fanaticism, spleen and blasphemy which they utter on it."[85]This sort of "blasphemy" was on display two years later in Framingham, Massachusetts, where an Independence Day gathering was held with the stated intention of rescuing the Fourth "from the ordinary popular descecration and consecrate[ing] it to the cause of impartial and universal liberty, by striking a mortal blow at the existence of slavery in our land."[86] In 1857, *The Texas State Gazette* linked the Fourth to the sectional crisis, calling it a day "for serious reflection" upon the obligation of citizens whose democracy was threatened by "false and dangerous doctrines… [and the] attacks of demagogues…"[87]

As the sections drew further apart, there was some attempt to use the Fourth to bridge the division. Adam Criblez, in his study of Midwestern Fourths, has described efforts by community leaders in that region to focus on "shared revolutionary legacy" and revive interest in "old-fashioned," patriotic Fourth celebrations.[88] Similarly, in New Orleans, the *Daily Picayune* condemned the lack of will amongst local officialdom to organize or fund Independence Day celebrations in 1857: "Next Saturday will be the glorious fourth…what is to be done, if anything must be done quickly."[89] In Richmond, Virginia, one newspaper editor pined nostalgically for the "joy and merriment" of the "country" celebrations of his youth.[90] But sectional divisions, rooted in African American slavery, were leading inexorably to the breakup of the nation celebrated on July 4. In 1859, the *Indiana State Sentinel* used the occasion of the Fourth to ponder worriedly: "what shall

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85 Ibid.
86 "Anti-Slavery Celebration of the Fourth of July," *The New York Herald*, 29 June 1856.
87 "The Fourth of July" *Texas State Gazette* (Austin) 4 July 1857.
88 Adam Criblez, *Parading Patriotism: Independence Day Celebrations in the Urban Midwest 1826-1876* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013) p. 72.
89 "The Fourth of July," in *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans) 29 June 1857.
90 "Fourth of July" *Richmond Whig* 5 July 1858.

be our future?"[91] The short-term answer to the *Sentinel*'s query came in 1860-61 when the Union did break apart. As first the Deep South, and then states such as Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina seceded and banded together to form a slaveholding republic, questions of sectionalism were transformed into questions of a new nationalism. These questions will be interrogated in Chapter 1, which focuses on the historiographical debates around the development of a Southern nationalism and identity, arguing that a strong sense of race-based Confederate identity *was* forged; the extent to which this Southern nationalism outlasted the war and how it was manifested in the first decade or so of "peace" will be the key questions explored by subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 looks at the Reconstruction era in the South using Fourth of July celebrations as a means of interrogating the earliest stages of reunion. The chapter will examine white Southern antipathy towards celebrating the Fourth in the immediate post-war years, when it was seen as an exclusively African-American holiday in the South, and assess the degree to which the celebrations were resumed by 1875. The source material used is drawn from correspondence and diaries but primarily from contemporary newspaper accounts. Robert Cook has pointed out the centrality of politics in the process of reconciliation, arguing for the necessity of "an awareness of the partisan framework for sectional reconciliation."[92] His admonition is followed here: the chapter demonstrates that white Southern willingness to engage in Independence Day commemorations was closely linked to the revival of the Democratic Party's political fortunes and prospects.

The importance of these celebrations to African Americans in declaring their citizenship and American identity is another theme. These events, and description of them in black-run newspapers, highlight the importance that African Americans attached

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[91] *Indiana State Sentinel*, 4 July 1859, quoted in Criblez.
[92] Robert Cook, "The Quarrel Forgotten? Toward a Clearer Understanding of Sectional Reconciliation," *The Journal of the Civil War Era,* 6, 3, (2016) 413-436, 424.

to using commemoration to claim American identity. Use of white reportage of these efforts, which tended to be at best dismissive, will illustrate the barriers that black Americans faced in this regard. Discussion of Reconstruction-Era Independence Day celebrations provides a natural thematic bridge to the following chapters on the Centennial Exhibition: both commemorations were charged with symbolism and were spaces in which Americans could express as well as contest questions of identity and politics.

Chapter 3 deals with the planning of the Centennial Exhibition and the debates and rhetoric that surrounded it amongst both white Southerners and African Americans. It will outline the conception and planning of the Centennial Exhibition, and highlight the Exhibition's aim to promote and celebrate post-war reunion and reconciliation as well as debates over the extent to which each of the Southern states should engage with the Exhibition. A central argument here is that Southern proponents of involvement with the Exhibition were largely motivated by economic factors. Primarily based on evidence gleaned from period newspapers, Chapter 3 argues that most rhetoric in support of Centennial participation was based on economic boosterism on behalf of specific states and localities. In contrasting this approach with the numerous and vociferous opponents of any Southern engagement with the Centennial, largely attributable to post-war bitterness and dislike for Northerners, it will be suggested that disagreements among Southern Democrats over the Centennial were, as was seen in discussion of Southern Fourths of July, roughly analogous to splits between the New Departure/New South and the more conservative, Bourbon wings of the party, with little middle ground between these two positions and little genuine appetite for a truly reconciliatory observation of the Centennial. Another central theme of the chapter will be black use of the Centennial to assert and express American identity and citizenship, and the difficulties encountered in attempting to do so. Contemporary news sources demonstrate this determination, as well

as debates within the black press over the usefulness of this approach. The chapter will also look at white women's roles in the run-up to the Centennial, examining the work of these women on state and local Centennial boards, and questioning the role that gender played in how white Southerners approached sectional reunion.

Chapter 4 develops the examination of debates around Centennial engagement among white Southerners. Much of this discussion was concerned with the makeup and activities of the National Centennial Commission, and the chapter demonstrates that discourse around the Commission, as well as around the Exhibition more generally, often served as a proxy for other issues centred on identity, partisan politics, power, and American nationalism. A controversy over Texan representation on the Commission serves as a case study for this chapter, along with examples of politically-based Centennial angst and anger from South Carolina and Mississippi. Both Chapters 3 and 4 draw on the archival records of the United States Centennial Commission and other primary source material as well as on period newspaper accounts. Newspapers of the day tended to be sharply and clearly partisan and the wide sampling utilised for this project provides a good overview of the competing and fragmented views not only of the Centennial Exhibition but of the political landscape of the Reconstruction Era.

Chapter 5 deals with the Centennial as spectacle and as a site of contested memory and identity, focusing on white Southerners' reactions to and engagement with the physical Exhibition in Philadelphia. It draws on correspondence and diary entries from Southerners who travelled to Fairmount Park, as well as first-hand newspaper accounts. A primary theme is the way that the American nationalism that defined the Exhibition intensified these observers' sense of themselves as Southerners, serving as a catalyst for white Southern reflection about sectional distinctiveness. This is contrasted with the less than successful attempts by African Americans to use the fair to demonstrate their American identity. The chapter also illustrates ways in which the Centennial Exhibition

was used to make political points, in the same way that discussions of the proposed Exhibition in the months and years prior to the fair's opening served as a proxy for questions surrounding identity and partisan politics. The chapter reinforces the overarching argument that the Centennial served multiple rhetorical purposes for a South that had forged a sense of nationalism and identity that was at loggerheads with the American nationalism that the Centennial celebrated as well as the American identity African Americans were using the same commemoration to claim. First, though, it is necessary to explore the extent to which a sense of Confederate nationalism developed during the Civil War.

Chapter 1

The Confederate Nation

In early 1861, just as the Union was breaking apart, the words of a Georgia planter's wife pointed up the complicated relationship between Americanism and Southern identity in a region on the cusp of war. In a letter to her adult son, Mary Jones reflected that:

> An indescribable sadness weighs down my soul when I think of our once glorious but now dissolving Union! Our children's children-what will constitute their national pride and glory? We have no alternative, and necessity demands that we now protect ourselves from entire destruction at the hands of those who have…obliterated every national bond of union, of confidence and affection. When your brother and yourself were very little fellows, we took you into old Independence Hall, and at the foot of Washington's statue I pledged you both to support and defend the Union. *That Union* has passed away, and you are free from your mother's vow. [1]

Mrs. Jones was not directly addressing the question of Independence Day celebrations when she disavowed her pledge in Independence Hall, but the same impulse led many Confederates to distance themselves from that most American of holidays. Still, there remained some voices of support for continued celebration of the Fourth of July in the wartime South. Using Southern ambivalence towards the Fourth as a starting point, this chapter will consider the question of nationalism within the Confederacy. Reviewing the extensive existing corpus of work on the question as well as primary source material it will be argued that a distinct national identity did develop within the Confederacy over the course of the war. The related question of the relative importance of national independence and the preservation of slavery as Confederate war aims will also be looked at.

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[1] Mrs. Mary Jones to Hon. Charles C. Jones, Jr., 3 January 1861, in *Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War* Robert Manson Myers, ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) p. 38.

Independence Day in the Confederacy

The impulse to continue celebrating the Fourth of July was largely the result of a widespread Southern belief that the newly-formed Confederate States of America were the true embodiment of American ideals. As *The Southern Nation* put it: "The government of the Confederate States is in conformity to that established by the fathers of the American Revolution, and a continuance of the government they established."[2] *The Raleigh Register* endorsed this view and laid claim to the Fourth at the same time: "[there is] no reason why the birthday of Liberty should be permitted to pass unheeded…the principles asserted on the Fourth of July 1776 were those of man's competence for self-government and the South…has but reasserted those principles."[3]

Indeed, at his Richmond inauguration ceremony, scheduled to coincide with George Washington's birthday on 22 February 1862, Jefferson Davis stood beside a statue of the first president and declared:

> On this birthday of the man most identified with the establishment of American independence, beneath the monument erected to commemorate his heroic virtues and those of his compatriots, we have assembled to usher into existence the Permanent Government of the Confederate States…the day, the purpose and the memory seem fitly associated.[4]

Positioning himself and his compatriots as the true heirs of Washington, Davis denied any revolutionary intent in secession, insisting that the South was only resisting the perceived threats posed by Lincoln's Republican Party, and seeking to protect the ideals of the Founding Fathers. The New Orleans *Daily Picayune,* for one, reinforced this claim with its description of the Confederacy as merely "acting over again the history of the American Revolution of 1776."[5] James McPherson has echoed Davis' view, arguing that

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[2] Rubin, p. 90.
[3] Rubin, p. 93.
[4] Rubin, p. 20
[5] George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994) p. 46.

due to changes in Northern society, such as industrialization, it was the North, not the South, that had departed from the founders' concept of republicanism.[6]

But the North largely managed to conflate its version of Americanism with America itself, a feat summed up by Paul Quigley when he commented that, since it had been the South that left the Union: "the institutional embodiments of American nationalism remained in Northern hands."[7] This resulted, almost inevitably, in Southern detachment from the Fourth once war was underway. The process had, though, begun earlier, as evidenced by a bill placed before the South Carolina legislature in December 1860. The bill, presented in the same month that the state withdrew from the Union, fixed several dates, such as Christmas and Good Friday, as official state holidays but omitted July 4. The *Mobile Advertiser* took exception to this: "Must we give up everything to the North, Fourth of July included? Does the Fourth of July belong particularly to the North? Are its glorious memories the property of the North more than the South? They are vandal hands that would violate the patriotic sanctity of the Fourth of July."[8] In the North, meanwhile, the Worcester, Massachusetts *Spy* remarked simply that the Carolinians' course was the correct one, since they no longer had a "right to celebrate the Fourth of July as a holiday."[9]

Just after the first Independence Day of the Civil War, the *Charleston Courier* described the commemorations in the outlying Georgetown district of South Carolina. The account, attributed to 'Rifleman,' contained no references to the Declaration of Independence, but did point out that the occasion kicked off with a reading, "in a clear and audible voice," of South Carolina's Ordinance of Secession.[10] Numerous orations

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[6] McPherson, "Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism," 433.
[7] Paul Quigley, "Independence Day Dilemmas in the American South 1848-1865," *The Journal of Southern History*, 75, 2 (2009) 235-266, 258.
[8] "Fourth of July" reprinted in *Alexandria Gazette*, 29 December 1860.
[9] "Abolition of the Fourth of July" in *The Massachusetts Spy* (Worcester, Massachusetts) 12 December 1860.
[10] "Fourth of July at the Pee Dee" in the *Charleston Courier*, 13 July 1861.

were summarized, and the common theme running throughout was patriotism, but a very specific Confederate brand of patriotism. "Dr. Sparkman" spoke of the "merits of our cause, also showing the many benefits which the South will derive from separation."[11] "Col. J. H. Read" urged, "in warm and patriotic language, the intuition of patriotic principles into our children." Their appetites having been "sharpened" by listening to the "patriotic and well-timed addresses," the celebrants sat down to a table "well-filled with all the delicacies of the season." The account concluded that the dinner was "highly creditable to the getters-up of it and…it was not at all diminished by the presence of old Abe's sharks on our coast, which is cheering evidence that we can live without the aid of the Yankees and can get up a true Southern dinner, ample enough for a Prince."[12] Here we see the Fourth of July being appropriated by white Southerners to ratify secession and their own independence. That same year, in a similar vein, a Louisiana newspaper insisted that "The Yankees have robbed us of too much already. We have no idea of giving up the national anniversary- not a bit of it. The Fourth of July is ours…Long live the Confederacy, and huzza for the old Fourth of July."[13]

But in Augusta, Georgia, the *Constitutionalist* disagreed. Expressing "strong and abiding confidence in the justice of our cause and the strength of our arms," the newspaper nonetheless argued that it would prudent to avoid public commemoration of the Fourth during wartime; but "then, when our new Republic shall have been firmly established and the glorious principles of the Declaration of Independence fully vindicated we may, in the exuberance of our gratitude to kind Heaven…celebrate the old Independence Day and with it the new Independence Day, with all the noisy demonstrations of the past." [14]In Union-occupied Nashville, local authorities requested

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] "The Fourth of July at Shreveport" in *The Daily True Delta* (New Orleans) 29 June 1861.
[14] "The Fourth of July" in *The Daily Constitutionalist* (Augusta, Georgia) 29 June 1861.

churches to ring their bells to mark the Fourth of July 1862; all but one refused with two clergymen stating that they would "rather have their churches burned down than grant the request." [15]

On the occasion of the war's second Fourth, a Richmond newspaper argued for the South's continued observance, arguing that the Confederacy was fighting for the values represented by the Declaration, while in the North "Sanctimonious Yankee orators will read this declaration to gaping crowds and desecrate the memory of the illustrious statesmen of '76 by attempting to justify this iniquitous war against the people of the South."[16] Independence Day observations a year later in Washington would provide a neat illustration of Quigley's argument about Northern appropriation of the "embodiments" of American nationhood and the resultant alienation of white Southerners from Independence Day rituals. The Federal capital's commemoration of the Fourth involved the installation of the statue representing 'freedom' which still sits atop the dome of the U.S. capitol. Reflecting upon the plans for this celebration, one Southern journal compared Abraham Lincoln's administration to the tyranny of Roman emperors:

> Mr Lincoln is learning his lessons in the art of enslavement very well…it is well known that tyrants seek to amuse or captivate by shows and spectacles the people whom they would enslave. The gladiatorial combats of old Rome kept the populace entertained while the Caesars plundered the treasury and ran riot in their palaces…Old Abe…is beginning to profit from the lessons of history and this Freedom celebration in Washington is intended to delight the Yankees, from whom Freedom has taken her everlasting flight.[17]

Confederate Politics

Concomitant with this Confederate detachment from the symbols of American nationhood there developed a discrete Confederate nationalism. Michael Perman has

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[15] "The Fourth of July at Nashville" in *The Charleston Courier*, 19 July 1862.
[16] "American; Yankees; Declaration" in *Richmond Whig,* 17 June 1862.
[17] "Freedom and the Fourth of July" in *Southern Illustrated News* (Richmond, Virginia) 20 June 1863.

described how the Confederacy's leaders, jaded by their experiences with party politics on the national scene during the 1850s, developed an aversion to political parties.[18] *The Charleston Mercury* claimed in 1861 that the old Union had been undermined by politics, describing "the vulgar and irresponsible tyranny …of voters trampling the minority under their feet as opportunity and inclination urge."[19]Some white Southerners felt that this was exactly what the political process had done to them, and in their quest to restore what they saw as the founders' intent for America sought to, in the words of George Rable, "Elimin[ate] old abuses of political power and pre-empt the formation of political parties."[20]

Howell Cobb, President of the first Confederate Congress, addressed the chamber at the close of its first session in February 1862: "In our common danger there should be no division…the spirit of party had never shown itself for an instant in your deliberations and I would that it should be the good fortune of each successive presiding officer in the closing scene of every Congress to be able to bear the testimony I publicly give to the honor of this body."[21] Perman identifies Cobb's intent here as to "proclaim, as a basic feature of the Confederacy, its repudiation of political parties."[22] Jefferson Davis, instead of balancing his cabinet between points on the political spectrum, simply allocated one cabinet seat to each state.[23]

The lack of parties meant that Davis' administration faced no organized opposition. A study of the Confederate Congress by Alexander and Beringer could identify no bloc of legislators who consistently voted against the President, and Perman

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[18] Michael Perman, *Pursuit of Unity: A Political History of the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) p. 102.
[19] "The Southern Congress" in *The Charleston Mercury,* 4 February 1861.
[20] Rable, p. 51.
[21] Perman, *Pursuit of Unity*, p. 104.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

has described Davis' opposition as "peripatetic, incoherent and unorganized."[24] George Rable, in describing the Confederate elections of 1861 as practically a non-event, with low turnouts and none of the "frenzied celebration" that had come to characterize Northern elections, pinpoints the "appearance of harmony" as the most important aspect, for Southerners, of the election.[25] "Appearance" is the key word here, for despite the lack of organized opposition, clear political factions developed. Rable has identified them as a libertarian, anti-centralisation faction and a nationalist group, who perceived that a measure of central authority was necessary in order for a Southern nation to coalesce. The main points of contention were the imposition of a draft, and Davis' suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*. The basic question was one of central authority, and whether Confederates could reconcile their exaltation of personal and local autonomy with the necessities of war and nationhood. Davis' libertarian critics may have been unorganized politically, but were vociferous in their opposition to executive exercises of power; Richmond newspaper editor C. C. Clay pronounced that "History points to no instance where such enormous power has not been enormously abused."[26] *The Richmond Examiner,* invoking an archaic partisanship, warned that Davis' government had been infected by the "Federalism of the elder Adams...escaping one despotism we rush headlong into another."[27] So while there were no political parties, there was a clear tension between the instinct for libertarianism, local autonomy and resistance to centralized power and the need to centralize in order for the Confederacy to survive.

The relationship between the Confederacy's two top officials, Jefferson Davis and his Vice-President Alexander Stephens highlighted the contradiction at the heart of the Confederacy: a constitution that repudiated both nullification and the right of secession.

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[24] Perman, *Pursuit of Unity*, p. 110.
[25] Rable, p. 91.
[26] Rable, p. 252.
[27] Rable, p. 158.

Alexander Stephens had not been a secessionist; as late as November 1860 he had argued that the federal constitution's checks and balances would protect the South from Lincoln, leaving him "powerless to do any great mischief" and warning that secession would "endanger this Eden of the world."[28] James Rabun points out that Stephens was selected as Vice-President precisely for that reason: to demonstrate that all Southerners were now united in their cause.[29] Stephens was uncooperative from the start: Davis asked him to head the Confederate commission that was to negotiate the transfer of federal ports in the South; the vice-president refused. After Virginia seceded, Davis requested that Stephens head a delegation to arrange a military alliance between that state and the Confederacy until Virginia's admission to the Confederacy could be ratified. Stephens refused on the grounds that "night travel might give me cold and make me sick."[30] Over the course of the war, the vice-president's relationship with the administration moved from uncooperativeness to open hostility. Stephens' opposition was centred around the two issues that caused the most consternation to Davis' domestic opponents: conscription and the suspension of *habeas corpus*. In September 1862, Stephens published a letter in the Augusta *Constitutionalist* in which he argued that there was no need for conscription; that once freed from fears of a Davis dictatorship, Southern men would volunteer in such numbers "that the army could not equip them all." In other words, the only reason conscription was necessary was because conscription had made it so. (Stephens, in presiding over the Confederate Senate, had not spoken against the act at the time of its passage.)[31] In that same letter to the *Constitutionalist*, Stephens summed up his philosophy with the declaration that "The citizen of the State owes no allegiance to the

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[28] David Goldfield, *America Aflame: How the Civil War Created a Nation* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011) p. 184.
[29] James Z. Rabun, "Alexander Stephens and Jefferson Davis," *The American Historical Review*, 58, 2, (1953) 290-321, 291.
[30] Rabun, 294.
[31] Rabun, 298.

Confederate States Government…His allegiance is due to his state."[32] Stephens was equally hostile to Davis' suspension of *habeas corpus:* "Who is safe under such a law? Could the whole country be more completely under the power and control of one man?"[33] Described by a biographer as a "man who lived by abstractions," Stephens' inability to see the forest for the trees; to see the greater danger posed by clinging stubbornly to abstract principle in the face of disaster is a prime example of the major political handicap that the Confederacy laboured under.[34] Emory Thomas elucidates this by pointing out that when the necessities of war prompted other Southerners to re-examine and redefine their ideologies, Stephens clung to his, becoming an enemy of the administration he was a part of.[35] There was dissent and factionalism, some of it personal, and much of it the result of natural tensions between the Confederacy's founding ideals of individual liberty and states' rights (exacerbated by what J William Harris has called "the touchy individualism of Southern white men") and the national unity and central power that would be necessary if the cause were to succeed.[36] Idealizing the party-less politics of the late eighteenth century, Southern nationalism found itself faced with the same factional, proto-parties that so worried George Washington who had warned that political partisanship:

> Serves to distract the Public Councils, and enfeeble the Public Administration...agitates the Community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms; kindles the animosity of one...against another...it opens the door to foreign influence and corruption. [37]

Like the Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian factions in the early Republic, these proto-parties would likely have developed into parties, and the dissent that these two viewpoints

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[32] Rabun, p. 301.
[33] Rabun, p. 309.
[34] Rabun, p. 318.
[35] Thomas, p. 61.
[36] J. William Harris, "Strains of War" in Michael Perman, ed., *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988) pp. 234-245, p. 236.
[37] George Washington, *Farewell Address,* 1796 at http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/milestones/farewell/ [accessed 25.7.11]

engendered during the war do not argue against the maturation of Southern nationalism but rather show how far the CSA actually travelled along that road. As the war proceeded, badly, for the Confederates, public opinion seems to have moved towards the nationalist viewpoint. Mississippi governor Charles Clark said that "This is no time to cavil about nice questions of constitutional construction when we are waging a terrible war in defense of individual and civil liberty."[38] The ubiquitous Southern clergy rallied round the cause, with, to cite one example, Baptist preacher Thomas Dunaway stating that the opprobrium heaped on Davis was "as injurious as…ludicrous."[39] The Washington, Arkansas *Telegraph* reflected as early as June 1862 that "thinking men [had decided that the Confederacy badly needed] a strong and stable government, free from the fluctuations of popular caprice and the arts of the demagogue."[40]

The 1864 North Carolina gubernatorial election was another indication of a nationalist consensus that seemed able to withstand bickering, animus and fear as well as an increasingly gloomy military situation. Incumbent Zebulon Vance had clashed with Davis repeatedly, on just such issues as conscription and *habeas corpus*, but took a nationalist stance in this election, with calls for national (meaning Southern) unity.[41] His opponent was anti-war candidate William T. Holden, who advocated the state's seeking a separate peace accord with the Union. When, in 1864, the *Raleigh Standard* came out against Vance, and for a negotiated peace, it couched its argument not in pro-Union terms but rather a peace versus war issue:

> Gov. Vance is the Destructive candidate for Governor...if elected it will be understood that the war will go on until the South subjugates the North or the North subjugates the South and if defeated a great moral influence will at once go out in favor of negotiations and an honorable peace. [42]

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[38] Rable, p. 253.
[39] Thomas Dunaway, *A Sermon Delivered by Elder Thomas S Dunaway of Lancaster County, Virginia before Coan Baptist Church* (Richmond, 1864) p 18.
[40] *Washington* (Arkansas) *Telegraph,* 18 June 1862.
[41] Rable, p. 268.
[42] "The Raleigh North Carolina Standard Urges Voters to Endorse a Negotiated Peace, July 1864" in M. Perman, ed., *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Boston, 1998) p. 222.

Vance won the election by appeals to Southern loyalty and successfully casting his opponent, Holden, as a dangerous extremist and disloyal to the Confederacy. Vance's lopsided majority, 77 per cent of the vote, indicated that in spite of well-documented war fatigue and increasing military reverses, a sense of Confederate unity did exist.[43] Southern Unionism, by contrast, isolated and diffused even at the start of the war, is perhaps better described by 1863 as an anti-war movement. Clement Eaton wrote in the 1950s that Confederate enforcement of the Impressment Act (allowing the government to seize food and other supplies for army use) "contributed much towards turning loyal sections into Unionist ones."[44] But it would likely be more accurate to say that they turned anti-Confederate or anti-war rather than Unionist.[45]

The ideal of a nation without politics failed, and the South had not, in George Rable's words, "been able to resolve the chronic tensions and contradictions between unity and liberty."[46] The nation itself failed, too, but that was due to military defeat. As Robert Cook puts it: "[Although] their efforts were hampered by numerous strategic and tactical errors...rampant factionalism, interstate rivalry, divisions within the ruling elite over the wisdom of central government, social tensions …ultimately, it was only the power and persistence of the enemy[that] brought them to their knees."[47]

Central to understanding the supposedly non-political politics of the Confederacy is the importance that many white Southerners gave to internal harmony and white liberty. They apparently felt that race-based slavery, the great divider in society, made political distinctions between white men unnecessary. The Confederate government was thus an attempt to govern without party politics. Despite the fact that there were obvious

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[43] Rable, p. 270.
[44] Eaton, p. 278.
[45] Rable, pp. 267-270.
[46] Rable, p. 297.
[47] Robert Cook, *Civil War America: Making a Nation 1848-1877* (London: Longman, 2003) p. 188

factions, and had the Confederate government endured parties would likely have developed, the fact is that defeat froze the Southern political scene as it was. Military defeat necessarily transformed the object of Southerners' nationalist sentiment into a ghost. As people tend to idealize their dead, so did Southerners their Confederacy. This had ramifications for the post-bellum South, with Southerners clinging to a one-party paradigm, refusing to accord legitimacy to any but the Democratic party and leading to the Solid South of the first half of the twentieth century.

Confederate Nationalism?

What effect, then, did the war that broke out in 1861 have on Southern identity and regional cohesion? An influential bloc of academics working during the mid to late twentieth century, termed "consensus historians," tended to celebrate America and Americanism and saw commonalities amongst Americans as being more important, and more prevalent, than conflict.[48] Not surprisingly, these historians tended to dismiss or minimalise Southern nationalism and attributed Union victory to a Southern lack of will. Kenneth Stampp, for example, referred to the "speciousness of Southern nationalism" and dismissed Southern distinctiveness as a "figment of romantic imaginations."[49] Affected by the atrocities of Nazi Germany, as well as the activism of the Civil Rights Movement, consensus historians were more racially aware than their predecessors, and may, as David Potter pointed out, have been unwilling to recognize nationalism in the Confederate movement for fear that doing so would "validate the right of a pro-slavery movement to autonomy and self-determination."[50] Bell Irvin Wiley, perhaps transposing twentieth century mores onto the nineteenth, wrote that "uneasiness over slavery gnawed

[48] "Schools of American Historiography" at <www.mvla.net/.../Schools%20of%20American%20Historiography.doc> [accessed 31.5.11]
[49] Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Imperiled Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 258.
[50] Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," 925.

at numerous Southern consciences."[51] Stampp further declared that "A large number of white Southerners, however hard they tried, could not persuade themselves that slavery was a positive good."[52] These historians were explicating a "guilt thesis," a strain of consensus historiography which argued that white Southern guilt arose from an inability to reconcile slavery either with the democratic ideals of the nation or evangelical Christianity.[53] For example, Stampp and Wiley made use of primary sources to suggest this unease, both quoting a Confederate official who wrote that slavery was hampering the establishment of relations with European nations; "Are we not fighting against the moral sense of the world? Can we hope to succeed in such a struggle?" They both interpret this passage as an admission of the wrongness of human bondage, but as Gary Gallagher has pointed out, it could just as easily be read simply as a pragmatic acknowledgement that slavery was not popular in Europe. [54] There is scant evidence in the Confederate press of any qualms about the rightness of American bondage, although a letter to the *Daily Constitutionalist,* of Augusta, Georgia did, in the course of insisting that the South had "done all that sound reason could demand in justice to the slave," acknowledge that "there are many good men in the South who have had their scruples."gilmer

[55] In 1863, the same newspaper clearly highlighted the interlinked goals of Confederate independence *and* preservation of slavery when it editorialized that "all enlightened Christendom" was opposed to the institution but dismissed this sentiment as a "maudlin" one that could be altered "by the example and history of the Confederate

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[51] Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 25.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Gaines M. Foster, "Guilt Over Slavery: A Historiographical Analysis" *The Journal of Southern History*, 56. 4, (1990) 665-694, 665.
[54] Gallagher, p. 46.
[55] "Slavery as Connected with our Present and Probable Future Exigencies" in *Daily Constitutionalist* (Augusta, Georgia) 8 March 1865.

states, after they have secured their independence."[56] A few months earlier, a Richmond newspaper had expressed a similar hope, editorializing that the Confederacy's struggle was revealing to the world the "moral value of slavery" as well as its "virtues [and] humanity."[57] It is neither wise nor possible to make blanket generalizations on the inner workings of the minds of people long dead but the evidence seems to weigh against any widespread Southern guilt over the peculiar institution. Certainly, white Southerners had little difficulty mustering enough biblical justification for slavery to mitigate any sense of Christian guilt.[58]

Gaines Foster points out the correlation between the guilt thesis and the consensual interpretation of the period, stating that "Most academic historians who wrote of guilt over slavery assumed the essential sameness of the antebellum North and South. Those who found the Old South distinctive, on the other hand, tended to be suspicious of the guilt thesis."[59] The consensus view of failed Confederate nationalism is perhaps best expressed by Paul Escott. Stating that a sense of Confederate nationalism "had to grow and inspire Southerners if they were to emerge from their ordeal as an independent nation," Escott concludes that Southerners' actions between 1861 and 1865 "showed that their basic commitment was to slavery rather than independence and Confederate nationalism."[60] Escott examines class divisions within the Confederacy, highlighting working class resentment at what might be considered a struggle to preserve the way of life enjoyed by wealthy slave-owners: "During the war tensions and bitterness of the

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[56] "The Way to Perpetuate Slavery" in *The Daily Constitutionalist* (Augusta, Georgia) 12 March 1863.
[57] "Commented, Exhibited, Prejudiced" in *The Richmond Examiner*, 1 August 1862.
[58] See Eugene D. Genovese & Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "The Divine Sanction of Social Order: Religious Foundations of the Southern Slaveholders' World View" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 55, 2 (1987) 211-233.
[59] Foster, "Guilt Over Slavery," 680.
[60] Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), p. 255. ; "The Failure of Confederate Nationalism" in *Major Problems in the History of the American South, Vol. 1: The Old South* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999) p. 386.

Southern class system surfaced strongly, as southerners of slight or modest means looked up from their daily struggle to stay alive and saw that many wealthy individuals seemed to enjoy the position of a privileged class."[61] There were inequalities in conscription law, with the wealthy able, until the practice was rescinded in 1864, to buy substitutes to fight in their stead. Jefferson Davis, however, refused to exempt from conscription non-slaveholding men whose labour was their families' only means of sustenance. [62] Desertion was also a problem; with privation and want rampant throughout the South, many troops felt that duty to feed their families trumped any obligation to the Confederacy. The ramifications of this were serious: at the end of 1862 the Confederacy had 224,000 men present and on duty out of a total force of 327,000. At the end of the war in 1865, there were just 165,000 present out of 359,000.[63] Evidence of class-based divisions and low morale in the Confederate South is easy to come by and it is unquestionable that the war exposed, or caused, deep divisions in Southern society. There were, however, comparable divisions in the North; as demonstrated by the political strength of the anti-war "Copperhead" Democrats and the 1863 anti-draft riots in New York City.

Carl Degler, Charles Sellers, Kenneth Stampp and Bell Irvin Wiley all contributed to an historical portrait of an antebellum and wartime South that was more or less American, but Drew Gilpin Faust has raised an obvious and pertinent question: if Southern nationalism is to be dismissed, how to explain the Confederacy and the war, which did not end when things began to go badly for the Confederacy but dragged on for four long and draining years?[64]

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[61] Escott, p. 113.
[62] Escott, p. 152.
[63] Escott, p. 127.
[64] Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988) p. 4.

Discussion of Southern class divisions also raises the question of whether the tragedy of secession and war was just an attempt by the slave-owning oligarchy to conflate their own interests with those of the region; exploiting non-slaveowners' local loyalties as well as their racism, so successfully that this regional spirit took on the appearance of nationalism? To simply blame the oligarchy for hijacking the South and driving it to war is not tenable as virtually all nations come from groups of people who attach themselves to a core of leaders whose interests define that group; this concept of nationality is known as *traditionskern,* in which a kernel of tradition, in this case slavery and the concept of a Southern way of life, is shared by a powerful few who then attract followers, and the group subsequently develops into a *gens* or people.[65] Furthermore, as William Blair has made clear, "Planters dominated yet they understood that their authority depended upon representing subordinate groups of cantankerous, independent-minded people."[66] And as Benjamin Carp writes, "Whether or not slavery and secession served the interests of all white Southerners in 1860-1861, a significant portion of Southerners believed that they did. They were nationalists because their community of interests was embodied in the Confederate nation." [67] There was more then than the appearance of Southern nationalism; the Confederacy did inculcate a discrete and distinct white Southern identity. Drew Gilpin Faust has drawn attention to the Southern oligarchy's "attempt to make class interest synonymous with national interest" but acknowledgement of that does not negate the fact of Southern nationalism, any more than acknowledgement that the North was largely successful in conflating its own values with Americanism negates American nationalism.[68]

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[65] Ian Wood, "Misremembering the Burgundians" in *Die Suche nach den Ursprungen,* Walter Pohl, ed, (Vienna: Wien, 2004) pp. 139-148, p. 139.
[66] Cited in Benjamin L. Carp, "Nations of American Rebels: Understanding Nationalism in Revolutionary North America and the Civil War South," *Civil War History,* 23, 1 (2002) 5-33, 20.
[67] Carp, p. 11.
[68] Faust, p. 16.

Gary Gallagher has provided a convincing description of a people who clung to national spirit in the face of military setbacks and increasing privation and offers a convincing rebuttal to the notion that Southerners lacked national spirit or the will to win independence, making the case that military defeat alone cost the South its independence. Among the examples he cites-with telling use of the word 'nation'- is a letter written by a Virginian in early 1865, when Southerners might realistically be expected have resigned themselves to defeat, that states: "Happy it is for us that our commander possesses the love and confidence of the whole nation."[69]

There are myriad further examples of a Southern nationalism that endured in the face of plummeting Confederate fortunes: in 1864 Confederate officer Alexander MacArthur wrote, "…the country could not be in more secure hands than the soldiers…such love of country and devotion to cause history furnish[es] no parallel…"[70] And in December 1864, twenty-eight women in North Carolina petitioned the Confederate Secretary of War to form their own armed regiment, ready to face actual military duty in order to protect their homes from what they saw as the enemy, and "willing to endure any privation for the ultimate success of our Holy Cause."[71] The words of one Georgian in 1865 also belie the consensus view, indicating a failed nation but resilient nationalism:

> It is with sad and heavy hearts we mark the dark crowding events of this most disastrous year. We have seen hope after hope fall blighted and withering about us, until our country is no more- merely a heap of ruins and ashes….it is with no resigned spirit that I yield to the iron yoke our conqueror forges for his fallen and powerless foe. The degradation of a whole country and a proud people is indeed a mighty, an all-enveloping sorrow. [72]

This nationalist sentiment is indicated by the lengths to which Confederates were willing to go in order to preserve their independence: in November 1864, Jefferson Davis

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[69] Gallagher, p. 88.
[70] Gallagher, p. 75.
[71] Gallagher, pp. 75, 77.
[72] Mrs. Eva Jones to Mrs. Mary Jones, 13 June 1865, in *Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War,* Robert Manson Myers, ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 549.

proposed that the Confederate government purchase, train, and arm 40,000 slaves, the survivors of whom would be rewarded with emancipation and

"future residence within their state as a reward for faithful service".[73] Robert E. Lee backed this proposal, and though the bill was passed in March 1865, the measure came too late to make any difference. Paul Escott stresses planter resistance to the idea, quoting a Confederate congressman on the planter class: "They give up their sons, husbands, brothers and friends, and often without murmuring, to the army; but let one of their Negroes be taken, and what a houl [sic] you will hear."[74] Escott does acknowledge that "some planters…expressed their readiness to arm and free their slaves in order to swell the ranks of the army. Other citizens informed the War Department that they were willing to serve as commanders of Negro regiments." He sums up however by stating that planters' actions throughout the war "showed that their basic commitment was to slavery rather than independence and Confederate nationalism."[75] This conclusion needs to be weighed against Gary Gallagher's assertion that the Confederate Congress "almost certainly" would not have passed Davis' act without at least the tacit support of the slave-owning class.[76] Indeed, the evidence does suggest that over the course of the war, Confederate priorities shifted somewhat from protection of the "Peculiar Institution" to independence. A letter to an Augusta newspaper in March 1865 provides further evidence for this. The writer argued that Confederate emancipation would deprive the Union of its moral imperative for continuing the war, enabling a peaceful resolution that preserved Confederate independence, and, critically, the racial hierarchy: "it may be abolished without violating the great principle of subordination, which we have all regarded as the

[73] Escott, p. 244.
[74] Escott, p 247.
[75] Escott, p. 255.
[76] Gallagher, p. 82.

essential feature of Southern civilization."[77] If in 1861 Southern emphasis was on redeeming an America ruined by the Yankees, a few years of war had replaced that with a focus on surviving as a separate nation. Jefferson Davis, by 1864, was no longer talking about George Washington but about self-determination: "We are fighting for independence, and that-or extermination- we WILL have."[78]

Another indication of a nationalism that persisted in the face of military disaster and the virtual unravelling of the new nation was Southern reaction to the Hampton Roads conference of February 1865. Orchestrated by Maryland politician Francis Blair, this was a peace conference that took place aboard the steamboat *River Queen* at Hampton Roads, Virginia. Lincoln himself attended, accompanied by Secretary of State William Seward, but Davis dispatched Vice-President Stephens along with Assistant Secretary of State John Campbell. Davis' only unconditional demand was retention of Southern independence, while Lincoln's only non-negotiable condition was reunion; thus the summit achieved nothing. Union refusal to even consider Southern independence, however, sparked an upsurge in Confederate nationalistic fervour. The *Richmond Sentinel* declared, in the aftermath of Hampton Roads:

> There are no peace men among us now! Every man to his post…and we will put forth an effort that will confound our enemies and astonish the world! We are full able to defend our liberties and vanquish our foes, and by the blessing of God, *we will certainly do it!* All that is needed is that firm concord, that united resolve, which if they had been wanting before, Lincoln has now supplied…we are certain to win independence, liberty and undying fame! [79]

What was in fact needed was a miracle, which was not forthcoming, but this and similar passages demonstrate the depth of Southern national feeling in 1865, a feeling that transcended the question of slavery. While that intensity can be read more as desperation

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[77]"Slavery as Connected with our Present and Probable Future Exigencies" in *Daily Constitutionalist* (Augusta, Georgia) 8 March 1865.
[78] William C Davis, *Jefferson Davis: The Man and His Hour* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press: 1992) p. 600.
[79] Robert F Durden, *The Gray and the Black: The Confederate Debate on Emancipation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972) p.187.

and fear of impending defeat than attachment to the Confederacy, the very desperation and alienation from the Union is significant in terms of assessing the white Southern mindset *vis a vis* the American Union. Another Richmond paper, the *Examiner*, commented that the failed Hampton Roads peace sortie had had a unifying effect on a fractured and embattled Confederacy:

> One of the salutatory results…has been to unify more firmly the poor and the rich, the plundered refugee and the successful speculator, the beggared planter, who has lost his stock, his crops, his negroes, his sons and the thrifty trader…all in one common bond of self-interest and self-preservation, to resist the invasion of our enemies.[80]

The accuracy of the *Examiner's* statement is unverifiable but the sentiment is a striking counterbalance to arguments that the Confederate cause was undone by class divisions and social strife. In the conference's aftermath, mass public meetings were held in Mobile, Richmond, Lynchburg and other towns. Jefferson Davis appeared and spoke before ten thousand spectators at the Richmond meeting. The *Richmond Enquirer* reported:

> President Davis was greeted with thunders of applause…he said...he felt a proud and ecstatic joy to see his countrymen looking...disasters…in the face and plucking from adversity new courage and resolution…All must be laid on the altar of country...let us unite our hands and hearts, lock our shields together…before the next summer solstice falls, it will be the enemy who will be asking us for conferences and occasion in which to make known our demands.[81]

This in February 1865, when Confederate military defeat was a foregone conclusion.

Historian Emory Thomas has commented that Southerners, in the course of their struggle for independence, "reversed or severely undermined virtually every tenet of the way of life they were supposedly defending."[82] The South evolved over the course of the war, and a nationalism built on more than preservation of slavery began to take hold. Despite the libertarian strain so prevalent in the South, the CSA developed a governmental bureaucracy of over 70,000 employees, larger than the Union's Federal

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[80] "Hampton" in *The Richmond Examiner*, 9 February 1865.
[81] Durden, pp 188-189.
[82] Emory Thomas, "The Revolution Brings Revolutionary Change" in Paul D. Escott, David R. Goldfield, Sally G. McMillen *et al*, eds., *Major Problems in the History of the American South, Vol. 1: The Old South* (Boston, 1999) pp. 383-386, p. 383.

payroll.[83] Thomas notes that by 1863, two years of war had "transformed Southern political and economic institutions and the Southern people...the end product of these Confederate alterations of antebellum norms was a distinctive national life...conditioned by war and revolution." [84]

The Confederacy had gone to war in 1861 in order to defend slavery; four years later there was a willingness to sacrifice that same institution in order to preserve their independence and nationhood; with the government not only entertaining the notion of arming and freeing black men, but taking steps to do so. Even with the necessary caveat that this flexibility was being applied to the legal practice of slavery and not to the region's racial hierarchy or white hegemony, this is a remarkable testament to the effect that the Civil War had on the South and its perception of itself.

The importance of the war in solidifying American national consciousness is difficult to overestimate and has been much rehashed. Melinda Lawson has delineated the way that the United States cultivated a national loyalty which for the first time, overrode state and local allegiances, that it redefined the relationship between the national government and the individual, with the state seen as a benefactor rather than a threat, and finally gave the state, partly through Lincoln's martyrdom, a mystical sanctity. The Civil War, in effect, "gave rise to the modern American nation-state."[85] Southerners were necessarily to some extent excluded from this, having been through their own unifying crucible. Anne Sarah Rubin posits that Southern nationalism had its roots not in the Nullification Crisis or sectional antebellum disputes, but in the Confederate war experience itself, reinforcing David Potter's assertion that the war did more to produce the Southern nationalism that flourished within the cult of the Lost Cause than Southern

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[83] Goldfield, p. 210.
[84] Thomas, p. 221.
[85] Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002) p. 3

nationalism had done to cause the war.[86] When the Augusta *Constitutionalist* remarked on the Fourth of July, 1864, it made no mention of local observations or oratories but utilized the occasion to claim that "Southern statesmanship and Southern heroism combined achieved the independence of the States." It also, crucially, stressed the nationalist goal of the war:

> Already the history of our young Republic is written in blood…the patriotism of our people will soon be rewarded with peace and independence. The 4th of July 1865 will, we firmly believe, dawn upon the Confederate States as one of the acknowledged powers of the earth, for we see through the smoke of battle the eagle perched on our victorious standards.[87]

This vision of victorious standards was, of course, faulty. When the war ended in 1865, ex-Confederates were left with a nation lost and a world they perceived as turned upside down. These feelings were summed up piquantly in one Southern woman's bitter diary entry:

> Oh God we are a subjugated people…this is too bitter. I would bear bravely as long as there was hope but now….the town is garrisoned…a Yankee wretch at every corner and we are under Yankee rule. Negroes free![88]

The following chapters will explore the myriad tensions between this lost nationhood and the erstwhile Confederacy's renewed, and imposed, American identity through the lens of Reconstruction-Era Independence Day celebrations and the massive, ostensibly national, commemoration known as the 1876 Centennial.

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[86] Rubin, p. 4., Potter, *The Impending Crisis,* p. 449

[87] "The Fourth of July" in *The Daily Constitutionalist* (Augusta, Georgia) 3 July 1864.

[88] Grace Brown Elmore, *A Heritage of Woe: The Civil War Diary of Grace Brown Elmore* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1997) pp. 118, 123.

Chapter 2

"Popping of the Friendly Cracker and the Banging of the Lively Revolver": The Revival of the Southern Fourth of July

In 1860 an Alabamian penned this description of the Independence Day holiday, the last before secession and war:

> We had a splendid picknick and barbecue at the Steam Mill on the Glorious Fourth; at least we had some rareties there in the shape of iced water and lemonade, it looks rather strange to see ice in such warm weather…there was musick of the drums and calaranets.[*sic*]Then the Declaration of Independence was read by Mr McAlily. The people were then told that dinner was ready and to march after the drum, the gentlemen escorting the ladies. But every lady rushed helter skelter for the tables as if they had nothing for breakfast. [1]

Just a few years later, however, the Fourth of July no longer meant lemonade and 'calaranets' to white Southerners; four years of civil war had rendered Independence Day anathema to them. The source of this antipathy was, broadly, twofold: bitter feelings towards the victorious Federal government and a deep resentment at what was seen as a reversal of the natural order with the elevation of African Americans to citizenship. This chapter will offer an overview of Independence Day commemorations in the Reconstruction-Era South, looking at ways that observations of the Fourth reflected the concerns of the nineteenth century as much as commemoration of the eighteenth. In particular, it will cast debates around Independence Day celebrations as part of a wider political struggle over Reconstruction, with the revival of white Southern commemoration tracking the decline of Republican political control while African Americans were making use of the Fourth to articulate and defend their claims to full American citizenship.

[1] Mat Boyd to Alexander Boyd, 7 July 1860, in Alexander Boyd Papers, Birmingham Public Library Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham, Alabama.

African American Celebration of Independence Day

White South Carolinian Emma Le Conte encapsulated white Southern sentiments concerning Independence Day when she vented to her diary on that 1865 Fourth that: "The white people shut themselves within doors and the darkies had the day to themselves- they, and the Yankees."[2] Le Conte continued, disconsolately, "I could have listened to the roar of cannon at our very doors all day and thought it music were it celebrating our independence but well, well, what is the use of talking about it?"[3]

In Austin, Texas a local (white) newspaper, in describing the first post-War Fourth in 1865, reported that "The negroes made a regular holiday affair of it, gadding about, and seemed to be hugely satisfied with the proceedings."[4] In the same year, *The New Orleans Tribune*, an African-American paper provided a description of the Fourth in Mobile, Alabama: "The ever memorable fourth was celebrated here by the colored population in fine style."[5] The *Tribune*, however, made it clear that the Fourth was about more than "gadding about" to Mobile blacks. After a recitation of various groups marching in the Mobile parade, the paper's correspondent noted that "a large number of enfranchised citizens turned out to witness the demonstration. Many (whites) looked 'daggers' but could not prevent it [the parade.]"[6] After recording that the procession "passed off quietly and with satisfaction," the *Tribune*'s correspondent devoted the rest of the report to an assessment of the political situation in Mobile. Complaining that the Federal troops stationed in the city were "negro-hating…Western troops from Illinois and Indiana…the meanest and lowest men I ever met with in my life," the report concluded: "A (political) meeting was to come off in the evening but the Rebs and

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[2] Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, p. 243.
[3] Quigley, "Independence Day Dilemmas," 263.
[4] *Weekly Southern Intelligencer* (Austin, Texas) 7 July 1865.
[5] "Letter From Mobile" in *The New Orleans Tribune*, 8 July 1865.
[6] Ibid.

Copperhead Union soldiers threatened to kill all they met, which frightened our timid leaders, who concluded not to meet."[7]

In Washington, D.C. which, bordered by slaveholding states both to its north and south had remained culturally Southern, the first Post-War Fourth "passed off without any celebration save by the colored people, who gathered in the number of several thousand. The tone of the speeches all favored negro suffrage." [8] Also in 1865, a Freedman's Bureau report from South Carolina evidenced both a contestation of black rights and civil presence as well as the sort of reaction this triggered in white Southerners:

> On the Fourth of July the colored firemen represented that Mr. Casey, the Chief of the Fire Department (heretofore an active secessionist) had forbidden them to parade their engines, although white firemen had permission. I saw Mr. Casey, warned him against making any such distinction, had the guards removed from engine houses, and in the afternoon the Freedmen prevailed. But after proceeding a short distance they were attacked by a brutal crowd, their engine was wrested from them, and they themselves were compelled to take flight. Such was the opposition which secessionists manifested to the only class of Southerners whose loyalty has been unswerving, and who, as a class, were the only citizens who desired to celebrate the Day.[9]

In 1867, the *New Orleans Tribune*'s account of the Fourth in its own city reinforced the intersection of commemoration and politics in black Independence Day observations. The *Tribune,* reporting that, "a large number of loyal citizens yesterday assembled at the Mechanics' Institute to celebrate the great national anniversary of the independence of the United States," described a racially-mixed platform, which included black legislator Robert H Shannon, white, Republican attorney Henry Dibble, a 'Carpetbagger 'from Indiana, who read the Declaration of Independence, and Louisiana native and white

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[7] Ibid.
[8] "The Fourth of July at Washington" in *The Daily Constitutionalist* (Augusta, Georgia) 12 July 1865.
[9] Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of South Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870, National Archives Microfilm Publication M869 Roll 34. "Reports of Conditions and Operations" at <http://www.freedmensbureau.com/southcarolina/scoperations4.htm> [accessed 14.8.15.]

Republican 'Scalawag,' John R. G. Pitkin.[10] Pitkin, who congratulated his audience on being "no longer 'freedmen' but 'free men,' went on to remind them that the "Republican party stands the representative of the cause of equality" and, paradoxically, warned against the use of the ballot for "partisan favour."[11]

The Fourth's importance as a vehicle for affirming citizenship in the immediate post-war years can also be seen in an account of an 1868 observation in Columbia, South Carolina, a commemoration with military overtones that would have been impossible for an enslaved people:

> The negroes celebrated the day by parading their various political societies, with banners and commanding officers wearing swords; and these assembling in a grove upon the edge of town resolved themselves into a Republican mass meeting. The Declaration was read…after which…the discussion was of course political and severely Republican. [12]

This account, from the *New York Times*, went on to comment on the festivities that came after the speechmaking and politicking: "There were a good many drunken negroes to be seen and heard, but the breaches of the peace were few and unimportant."[13] The *Times*' correspondent described a procession involving "a motley array of grotesque, fancy and comic characters…some dress as women, some as priests, military officers, monkeys, birds and monsters of nameless kinds" that paraded through the streets for a number of hours, offering the "rabble a great deal of boisterous amusement." [14] Though the *Times'* description of Columbia's Fourth is reminiscent more of an anthropologist detailing the bizarre rituals of some remote tribe than of a description of fellow citizens celebrating a shared holiday, the account does credit the black celebrants with some serious political intent. Two years later, in contrast, Georgia's *Columbus Enquirer,* after commenting that

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[10] "The Fourth of July: The Meeting at the Mechanics' Institute" in *The New Orleans Tribune*, 6 July 1867.
[11] Ibid.
[12] "SOUTH CAROLINA.: Celebration of the Fourth--Speeches--Masquerade Procession--The Legislature—Sunstroke" in *The New York Times,* 10 July 1868.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

for white Georgians, the Fourth of July's "spell was broken," dismissed African American commemoration of the day as "barbecues and fandangos (with)… a tolerably free indulgence in whisky and sundry abortive attempts to get up a dance…"[15]

White Southerners and Independence Day

Southern White dismissal of the Fourth remained widespread throughout the first years of Reconstruction, leading the *New York Times*, in 1869, to wonder why the day was celebrated "almost exclusively by negroes" in the region.[16] This provoked a sharp response from the *Louisville Courier Journal*, highlighting a widespread Southern attitude:

> Can't the thought peck its way through the radical skull, that a people disfranchised, subjected to military tyranny, governed… by negroes, denied the right of trial by jury, liable to be seized at any hour of the day or night without process of law…may naturally feel little disposed to celebrate the Fourth of July?…the memory of which can force upon their minds a horrid consciousness of the contrast between what they were and what they are. [17]

The Kentucky newspaper here registered its dismay at the upending of a white supremacist social order, the disfranchisement of a segment of the Southern white population and resentment of those it deemed responsible but interestingly, does not repudiate the Fourth itself, or what it stood for, in resisting *commemoration* of the day. In 1866, the *Houston Telegraph,* in what a competing Republican paper called a "bilious effusion," did not disown the Declaration, but claimed that the Fourth had been "turned against" white Southerners:

> The fourth of July remains a holiday for the United States as a nation, and will, we suppose, continue to be celebrated north of Mason and Dixon's line, but it will be passed over with indifference in the South. We have no pleasant recollections connected with it; the platitudes of the Declaration of Independence have been turned against us. In garrison towns, cannon may be fired; their sound will fall heavy on the dull air, military bands may march through the streets escorted by crowds of negroes, the people will remain at home pursuing the dull routine of their daily enjoyments. [18]

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[15] "THE FOURTH IN THE SOUTH: Comments of the Southern Press on the Day and its Observance" in *The New York Times*, 11 July 1870.
[16] "Fourth of July in the South" in *The Macon Telegraph*, 23 July 1869.
[17] Ibid.
[18] "No Fourth of July" in *Flake's Bulletin* (Galveston, Texas) 30 June 1866.

The newspaper made clear that the post-war Fourth was a day for "negroes" and occupying Federal troops; two groups which, as far as the *Telegraph* was concerned, did not comprise "the people." Another Texas journal, the *Honey-Grove Enterprise*, made explicit the link between Southern distaste for the Fourth and a political landscape in which white Southerners felt themselves deprived of 'liberty.' In describing July 4, 1870, the Democratic organ noted: "No music, no banners, no feast, no sounding of drums, no jubilee in a land whose liberties are dead and among a people to whom such things would be but a mock and an empty, foolish parade."[19] The sentiment was echoed by, interestingly, a Northern Democratic journal, the *Cincinnati Enquirer,* when it commented

> One of the results that have followed the accession of the Republican Party to power is the practical destruction of the 4th of July…the universal text of all our Independence celebrations was once the personal liberty that was birthright of every American citizen…that declaration of Independence that we used to read with so much gusto and eloquence…will sound queerly to those of our fellow citizens who are in the South.[20]

In 1870, the *Richmond Whig* commented on the dearth of Fourth observances in the white South ("our people pretty much got out of the habit of celebrating it during the war") and observed that there was no "heart" for celebrations at that time. The *Whig* then made what would come to be an oft-repeated truism for white Southerners in the coming years:

> (Our people) can never forget that the wisdom, courage and devotion of many Southern sages and heroes bore a conspicuous part in the winning of American independence. The day belongs as much to the people of the South as to the people of the North…[21]

The idea that the South had played a key role in the Revolution and could claim a distinct role as heirs of the founders, an idea that had never been entirely abandoned during secession and war, was frequently cited by white Southerners seeking to bring about a change in attitudes towards the Fourth as the Centennial of independence neared.

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[19] "Fourth of July" in *The Honey-Grove Enterprise* (Honey-Grove, Texas) 9 July 1870.
[20] "The Fourth of July: Its Practical Destruction" reprinted in *The Memphis Daily Avalanche*, 3 July 1866.
[21] "The Fourth of July" in *The Richmond Whig*, 5 July 1870.

Emphasis on the Southern involvement in the Revolution cleared a path to an embrace of Independence Day, and eventually, Americanism, that enabled white Southerners to claim their Revolutionary legacy and status as Americans while making no concessions concerning the rightness of the Confederate cause or the supposed cruel unfairness of their present status. Closely tied to this evocation of eighteenth-century history was the reassertion of Democratic political control that was taking place in stages across the South throughout the early and middle 1870s. After Democrats took control of the Texas State House in 1872, and then recaptured the governorship the following year, the *Dallas Weekly Herald's* description of Independence Day, 1874 showed how closely linked resumption of the Fourth was with Democratic political success:

> Various parties and social gatherings took place in the city and suburbs, of which we have no special report, but general good feelings prevailed through our community and one feeling was manifest very generally: that since Texas is restored to her rights, Arkansas is on the high road to the same felicity, and faint ray of light has appeared even over poor Louisiana, southern men assert their inherited right to a full share of the glories which encircle the Fourth of July. [22]

The cumulative effects of these incremental Democratic gains led to a turning point of sorts for white Southern engagement with the Fourth in 1875; one that can arguably be linked to a particular wing of the Democratic Party. After the election of Ulysses Grant as a Republican president in 1868, some Democrats, referred to as "New Departure Democrats," had begun to take a pragmatic view of the political landscape, and decided that they could only regain power by acceptance of the new political realities. According to Eric Foner, New Departurism only "underscored the chasm between the parties on fundamental issues and the limits of Democratic willingness to embrace change."[23] New Departure Democrats did make some appeal to the black vote, but were more interested in convincing the wider body politic that they were ready to put the war

[22] "The Great Day" in *The Dallas Weekly Herald*, 11 July 1874.
[23] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988) p. 412.

behind them. Foner calls their embrace of black civil and political rights "grudging" and contrasts their public utterances about a new era with private mutterings about undoing "the evil of black suffrage as early as possible."[24] As will be suggested in later chapters, this wing of the Democratic Party was arguably more open to Southern embrace of American identity and values represented by commemorations such as those for Independence Day and the American Centennial of 1876 than other factions within the party.

One of the figureheads of this movement was Atlanta's Henry Woodfin Grady. Grady would gain nationwide fame as the editor and part owner of The *Atlanta Constitution* in the 1880s, but first promulgated the idea of a "New South" in the pages of *The Atlanta Herald* in 1874. The "New South" ideal of the mid 1870s and 1880s had strong links to the "New Departure" movement within the Democratic Party of the late 1860s and early 1870s; in the words of historian Michael Perman, "advocates of the New Departure and proponents of the New South, were, if not interchangeable, certainly operating in parallel."[25] This faction of the party favoured a pragmatic approach accepting the reality of black suffrage and the advisability of economic reform and not coincidentally, it was the New Departure-leaning *Herald*, under Grady, that finally achieved some success in promoting white Southern celebration of the Fourth. While stressing that it was "a Democratic paper always," in the summer of 1875 the *Herald* laid out the Southern right to commemorate the Fourth:

> as far as the South is concerned, the war is ended…why should not our Fourth be a soulful and sincere occasion of joy? Is it not the birthday of our country, the country that our forefathers died to establish…Did not we of the South bear honourable part in that revolution…Did we not furnish to that cause the Patrick Henry who gave it birth and volume? the Jefferson that gave it shape, and the Washington that gave it victory?[26]

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[24] Eric Foner, p. 417.
[25] Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) p. 67.
[26] *A Pamphlet Containing the Full History of the Celebration of the Ninety-ninth Anniversary of American independence in Atlanta, Ga., July 4th, 1875*. Compiled from the *Atlanta Daily Herald.* At <

With the Southern claim on Independence Day established, *The Herald* went on to outline the kind of commemoration it wished to promote:

> We want to see the old Fourth revived. Not revived as mere form, but as an enthusiasm…and when it comes we want to see our people meet it-not timidly and with lack-lustre countenances, but bravely, joyfully, with heads erect and cheeks aflame, as men rejoicing in their own right, honouring their own memories, and proclaiming the glory that is their own birthright and inheritance.[27]

The newspaper sent out invitations to a select group of prominent Georgians, and their responses provide a useful sampling of attitudes to the Fourth and sectional reunion in the year before the Centennial. Congressman William Felton remarked in his reply that the observation of the Fourth should never have been abandoned in the first place, since "all that was implied by the '4th of July' was the design of Southern brains and the achievement of Southern arms."[28] Felton acknowledged the reconciliatory potential of the day: "let this day be…a witness between the North and South that we will not 'pass over to each other for harm'- a memorial of perfect amnesty."[29] The Congressman, however, made clear just who was granting amnesty to whom by pointing out that "the South has never been untrue to the principles of self-government enunciated in that Declaration. As a section it has never sought to interfere with the constitutional rights and privileges of other sections…" [30] This response was typical. Judge James Jackson, who could find "no sensible reason for Southern men to decline to participate" in Atlanta's Fourth, reiterated the importance of the South's contribution to the Revolution and interpreted the Civil War as a Southern attempt to maintain Revolutionary ideals.

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https://archive.org/details/pamphletcontaini00step>[Accessed 18.8.17] Cited hereafter as "*Pamphlet.*"

[27] Ibid.

[28] Wm H. Felton, "The Coming Fourth" in *Pamphlet.*

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

Jackson reminded the *Herald* that: "We again proclaimed [the principles of 1776] …in 1861 and fought for their maintenance for four bloody years."[31]

The *Herald* collated these responses along with some of its own editorials into a pamphlet, which it intended as an answer to "the slanders which Radical politicians are heaping upon the South," highlighting yet again how closely tied these debates were to the struggle over the region's political future.[32] The newspaper believed that this pamphlet, which was both conciliatory and unapologetic, highlighted the white South's readiness to accept a place in the Union once more, while holding fast to its own distinct Revolutionary heritage and accepting no blame for the war. As Democratic senator Thomas M. Norwood wrote in accepting the *Herald*'s invitation to Atlanta, "If our liberties have been lost, we, as Georgians, have the proud consciousness that the sin lies not at our door, or the door of the South."[33] The implication here, as in Felton's letter, is the magnanimity of the South in accepting reunion. Similarly, Thomas Hardeman, chairman of Georgia's State Democratic Executive Committee, expressed the hope that the North had, perhaps, learned from its supposed wrongdoing: "The struggle through which we have just passed, though disastrous to us, may yet be an instructive lesson to our conquerors, teaching them that the encroachments of liberty and power inevitably result in revolt and revolution."[34] The pro-Fourth argument was succinctly summed up by Georgia Superior Court Judge G. J. Wright: "Although our country is not in the condition we would prefer to have it, yet it is our country, and the only one we have. Then each citizen should strive to correct its evils and add to its blessings."[35]

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[31] "From Judge James Jackson" in *Pamphlet*.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Thomas Norwood, in *Pamphlet*.
[34] "The Blessed Fourth: What Thomas Hardman, Jr. Has to Say on the Subject" in *Pamphlet*.
[35] "Our Brevet Fourth" in *Pamphlet*.

The *Herald* did receive some negative replies from die-hard Confederates who wanted nothing to do with the Fourth. Robert Toombs, formerly Secretary of State for both the United States and the Confederacy, insisted that only when "the principles proclaimed by our ancestors in 1776" were re-established would he join in any commemoration of the nation's birth.[36] Toombs, placing the blame for secession and war exactly where he believed it to lie, went on that he refused to shake hands "over the bloody chasm" with "those who dug it." Toombs followed the standard template in laying claim to the principles of 1776, and in apportioning blame to the "chasm-digging" North, but was unable to bring himself to put the benefits of reconciliation ahead of bitterness.[37] Another recalcitrant Confederate, former Congressman Absalom Harris Chappell, illustrated in his response to the *Herald* how intertwined the debate was with the political and racial upheavals surrounding Reconstruction. Citing "the harrowing spectacle of Negro and carpet-bag lawlessness, misrule and ruin," Chappell compared Republican control of the South unfavourably with eighteenth-century British rule:

> I take it for granted that you do not propose…to glorify our deliverance during the last century from the mild, maternal British yoke, just as if we were unconscious …that we had come under another yoke infinitely worse than the one we threw off ninety-nine years ago- a yoke the most galling and ignominious the world ever knew.[38]

As Chappell elaborated on this theme, he made clear how central the idea of racial role reversal was to white Southern repugnance for the Reconstruction-Era regimes:

> So long as that vile yoke is upon our necks, so long as we have enjoined upon us… a government…the aim of which is to make us slaves of our former negro slaves and the Northern miscreants who use them…as the easy means…of debasing us. Let the Fourth of July, if commemorated at all in the South, be kept as a season of patriotic mourning and indignation.[39]

Chappell's observation that the Fourth was suggestive of sadness and humiliation did not necessarily imply repudiation of the Fourth itself, nor that of the nation that was born

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[36] "From the Hon. Robert Toombs" in *Pamphlet*.
[37] Ibid.
[38] "Hon. A. H. Chappell: His Letter on the Fourth" in *Pamphlet*.
[39] Ibid.

out of the Revolution. He was simply unable to divorce commemoration of the Fourth from what he saw as the "infinitely worse" yoke that he saw the South as then being under, a stance that reinforces historian John Bodnar's claim that commemoration is as much concerned with the present as with the past.[40] Chappell's comments also highlighted a white Southern reluctance to credit African Americans with any sort of agency, preferring to depict their former bondsmen as pawns of unscrupulous 'Northern miscreants.' This, of course, was a central tenet of white Southern resistance to Republican control. Historian Anne Sarah Rubin has quoted a post-war white Southerner as complaining that "George Washington, if he now lives, would be less than a Negro."[41] Rubin has expounded on the Southern view that Northerners had no real interest in black rights or equality and that the racial policies being implemented during Congressional Reconstruction were only tools to humiliate (dishonour) the white South. South Carolina general and future governor Wade Hampton, for instance, complained to President Andrew Johnson in 1866 that the deployment of black Federal troops in his state was a "direct and premeditated insult to the whole Southern people."[42] The idea that black enfranchisement and political engagement was only desired as a means to humiliate and dishonour former Confederates served to delegitimize Reconstruction governments, and debates around the resumption of Independence Day celebrations proved a handy way of making that point.

The *Herald*'s hopes for commemoration that year were realized and, in his oration on Atlanta's big day, Georgia Governor James M. Smith reiterated much that the Georgia notables had emphasized in their letters to the *Herald*. Noting that white observations of

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[40] Bodnar, p. 15.
[41] Rubin, p. 161.
[42] Zuczeck, p. 15

the Fourth had not been common in the South for many years, the (Democratic) Governor insisted that this was:

> not for want of appreciation of the principles of '76 on the part of the people of the South. We have an especial property in them and an especial right to be proud and to celebrate them, The Declaration was drafted by a Southern man. The proposition was first made by Southern men. The army of the Revolution was led to victory by a Southern man. I shall not allow anyone to deprive me of the privilege of rejoicing on this anniversary. [43]

Smith then went a step further than most of the *Herald*'s correspondents in not only establishing Southern claim to the ideals of 1776, but allowing a place in his ideal of America for both South and North:

> The principles of the Declaration are the principles upon which I stand and upon which the Southern people stand and I am willing for everybody to get on it...I am glad to have the Northern and the Southern people commingle together on this platform. The people, the real people, of the North are not opposed to it and they lack only the opportunity to manifest their devotion to it unmistakably. I tell you, when the…honest masses of both sections meet and strike hands the tricksters and soulless demagogues had better get out of the way, for their doom will be sealed. [44]

Crucially, however, Smith distinguished between "real people" in the North and the reviled Radicals held responsible for current conditions in the South, or what Absalom Chappell had referred to as the "vile yoke." Of course, although their support was slipping by 1875, the Radical Republicans still had the support of many "real people" in the North, but this kind of distinction allowed Southerners a path to reconciliation without having to concede anything.

Atlanta's celebration was one of the largest of 1875, but far from the only one in the South that year. Descriptions of 1875 observations of the Fourth in Norfolk and Lynchburg, Virginia, and Savannah all noted that the day was more generally observed than it had been since the outbreak of war. [45] A correspondent for the *Charleston News and Courier,* reporting on the commemoration in Augusta, Georgia, declared that the

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[43] "Gov. Smith's Remarks" in *Pamphlet.*
[44] "The Fourth of July: The Great Celebration in Atlanta" in *The Augusta Chronicle*, 6 July 1875.
[45] "The Fourth" in *The Macon Weekly Telegraph*, 11 July 1875.

"harmony of these festivities…(is) significant of the spirit of the times. The silver-winged spirit of Peace…hovers over our late distracted country…"[46] A delegation from a white South Carolina militia group, the Charleston Riflemen, attended the same celebration, however, and a spokesman for this group, a Mr. George R. Walker, delivered remarks that reiterated the fact that while observations of the Fourth were resurgent in the white South, intra-regional bonds remained stronger than national feeling:

> Carolina and Massachusetts have clasped hands. But in the rejoicing I have to assure you that Carolina has not forgotten and never will forget that though she has joined hands with her old enemy, she is yet bound closer than by hands by the Great Ruler of the Universe, as a Siamese twin, to her sister Georgia- in heart, in soul, in geography.[47]

Reporting on the festivities for the Charleston *News Courier*, a correspondent identified only as "Vidette" noted that: "Everyone seemed to think a new era of good feeling had dawned…it is a fact worthy of notice…that a United States flag was borne in a white procession in this city for the first time since the war…along the line of the parade the Stars and Stripes fluttered to the breeze from the housetops and from the windows of private residences and I am happy to state that there were no outrages." Vidette surmised that the absence of outrages may have been attributable to the presence of Federal troops, and concluded the report, "let us have peace." [48] This report led to a small skirmish in the pages of the *Augusta Chronicle* when one reader took issue with the description of American flags fluttering in the Charleston breeze, stating that "they may have been (there)- we hope they were, but we didn't see them. Our people had too much household duties incumbent upon them for this, and withal, they had no 'Stars and Stripes' except in their hearts."[49] This seemed to imply a reluctance to either admit renewed appreciation of the Fourth or disclaim allegiance to the Stars and Stripes. Vidette's

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[46] "Burying the Hatchet" in *The Charleston News and Courier*, 7 July 1875.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] "The Fourth in Augusta: Vidette's Letter to the News and Courier" in *The Augusta Chronicle*, 11 July 1875.

remarks about the lack of any 'outrages' drew a particularly sharp retort. Apparently resenting the implication that an outrage might have been expected, this correspondent insisted that the day's festivities were "as far from outrage as the North Pole is from the South." And the correspondent, identifying him or herself, significantly, as "Georgian," then issued the challenge: "Whence cometh thou, 'Vidette'? Massachussetts, New York, Indiana, or Brooklyn (?)"[50] This was all a storm in a teacup; after several exchanges in the pages of the *Chronicle*, Vidette made it clear that the remarks about 'outrages' were meant facetiously, with the remarks intended in a 'Pickwickian sense.'[51] What the exchange illustrates, however, is how sensitive to slight, real or perceived, white Southerners were and how fragile the reunion that Vidette celebrated was: South Carolina may have "clasped hands" with Massachussetts, but Georgia remained her "Siamese twin" and "Georgian" sought to dismiss Vidette's account as that of a Yankee interloper from "Massachussetts, New York, Indiana, or Brooklyn (?)"[52]

Several hundred miles to the west an Arkansas newspaper published a letter, carrying the evocative by-line of 'Rebel,' demonstrating that sentiment for a renewal of the Fourth could be found in other parts of the South:

> Let us have a demonstrative Fourth of July celebration. There has not been one in the south for many years with any heart in it. We were not sure that anything was left us to be thankful for… [53]

Rebel leavened this plea with some rhetoric that, typically, was as much about Southern self-aggrandizement as it was reconciliation:

> The people of the south are too noble to be churlish and we always mean what we say. We said fight, ay now peace and let it be peace in every sense. We can take equal glory in the time when Cavalier, Puritan and Huguenot all stood together. [54]

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[50] Ibid.
[51] "The Excursion to Augusta-'Vidette' Pleads Guilty and throws Himself on the Mercy of the Court- Sentence Suspended" in *The Augusta Chronicle*, 13 July 1875.
[52] "The Fourth in Augusta: Vidette's Letter to the News and Courier" in *The Augusta Chronicle*, 11 July 1875.
[53] "The Glorious Fourth" in *The Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock) 18 June 1875.
[54] Ibid.

Little Rock proved receptive to 'Rebel's' suggestion: the city observed the Fourth by not only the closing of businesses and offices but by the "popping of the friendly cracker and the banging of the lively revolver." [55]

There were, however, still serious reservations about the Fourth. In New Orleans the *Daily Picayune* commented on 'The Day We Do Not Celebrate' by observing that "people no longer congregate in clammy throngs to superintend the firing of brass-barrelled pistols and watch the appointed idiot work off… accumulated eloquence…" [56] The Louisiana journal made clear, though, that it was not repudiating the day itself, or the nation that had been created in 1776. Like much Southern rhetoric around Independence Day celebrations in 1875, the *Daily Picayune* paid homage to the spirit of '76 with a sense of martyred self-righteousness:

> No doubt we honor the heroism and revere the devotion which ninety-nine years ago laid in blood and martyrdom the cornerstone of the splendid nation it is now our pride to claim… We cherish in grateful hearts the memories of that immortal episode. Perhaps we do these things the more intensely and fervently because of our sense of being denied a full an equal participation in the liberties and privileges for which our common forefathers offered up their lives…the Fourth of July can hardly be called the day we celebrate, however sacredly we may keep its noble memories- however faithfully we may wait the fulfilment of its gracious promise. [57]

Here the newspaper struck a familiar note, with its assumption that the white South had been victimized and unjustly deprived of the rights implied in the Declaration. Moreover, linkage of the Fourth with the political landscape is again made explicit with the claim that Reconstruction entailed white Southerners' exclusion from the "gracious promise" of the Fourth. Also in New Orleans, *The Bulletin*, described by its editors as being opposed to "carpet-baggers, scalawags and usurpers," featured a description that city's Fourth.[58]

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[55] "Fourth of July and its Observance in Little Rock—The Substitute Celebration Day" in *The Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock) 6 July 1875.
[56] "The Day We Do Not Celebrate" in *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans) 4 July 1875.
[57] Ibid.
[58] "New Orleans Bulletin" at <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/collections/digital/dlnp/newspaper-histories/new-orleans-bulletin>[accessed 5.1.16]

The report began with a look back at antebellum Fourths in New Orleans, when "there used to be countless numbers of militia companies filling our streets with gay uniforms…the roar of artillerys and the peal of musketry …thrilled our pulses…"[59] *The Bulletin's* correspondent compared that to 1875, when "twenty-five or thirty people… (watched) a sable pageant…carrying gorgeous ensign of the Republic, hanging limp and rag-like on a yellow pole," ascribing the contrast to the "iron hand of war, the edict of the conqueror."[60] *The Alexandria Gazette*, in reporting on the Fourth in Manassas, Virginia made clear that where white Southerners did celebrate Independence Day, those commemorations were kept clearly distinct from those of African Americans:

> The Fourth was observed here by the colored people only, who had a tournament and picnic…The whites, generally, attended the celebration at Woodbridge [17 miles distant] and came back immensely pleased with their trip, while the superabundance of ticks kept them active and merry and sufficed to relive the monotony of their wearisome ride.[61]

In Montgomery, the original capital of the Confederacy, the *Advertiser* noted a re-kindling in the "Southern bosom…of that old fire which in other days warmed the heart on each recurring anniversary of American independence."[62] The paper invoked the familiar trope of Southern allegiance to the ideals of 1776, and reminded readers that while the Fourth remained a day that marked the South's "transference from one sort of bondage to another-from allegiance to one despot to enforced obedience to a senseless, soulless mob" the region could not be expected to celebrate it. With white Democrats gaining political control in an increasing number of states in the old Confederacy, however, the *Advertiser* conceded that although:

> We have not celebrated a fourth of July since 1861- an exception shall be made in favour of this. No paper shall be issued from this office until next Monday evening- the typo's [sic] must have a chance to celebrate with the rest, the 99th anniversary of American Independence. After this comes the Centennial- the American year of Jubilee. [63]

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[59] "Then and Now" in *The New Orleans Bulletin,* 6 July 1875.
[60] Ibid.
[61] "Letter From Manassas" in *The Alexandria Gazette*, 7 July 1875.
[62] "The Fourth of July" in *The Weekly Advertiser* (Montgomery, Alabama) 3 July 1875.
[63] Ibid.

Independence Day as Contested Space

In the meantime, African Americans continued to use the Fourth not only to commemorate the Revolution but to make political statements about the present and to articulate their claim to the rights of citizenship. In 1875, T.B. Stamps, an African American businessman and legislator, demonstrated this in a Fourth of July oration at Hahnville, a predominately black town in Louisiana. [64] Stamps drew on familiar themes, beginning his talk by paying homage to the patriots of 1776: "The American people, oppressed with grievous burdens, onerous taxation, an odious stamp act, and denied the right of representation in the law-making power of the British government, declared their freedom and independence."[65] The orator went on, however, to remind his audience of black exclusion from the promises of the Declaration:

> But, fellow citizens, memorable as were those great events in our national life, and grandly noble as were the deeds of the Fathers of the Republic, their acts and works were but for naught until within a few years since. For ninety years the American people in their Declaration of Independence… declaring the liberty and equality of all men they yet held four millions of human beings, their fellows, in cruel and abject bondage. [66]

Stamps then got to the heart of the matter as he saw it, the importance of the franchise in protecting black citizenship in the face of a politically resurgent white South:

> The colored people of the south today constitute a large part of the law-making power, the sovereignty of these states…all of us being voters…and all of us both can and must see to it that the great boon of freedom…shall be held as a priceless gem, never, never to be lost, guarded as the Christian does his soul…see to it first of all, that your suffrage is loyal. That this flag…is never tarnished by our vote. That no ballot of ours belie the gratitude we owe the republic in freedom![67]

Implicit within Stamps' message, in his stress on 'loyal' suffrage and gratitude owed the republic, is an endorsement of the importance of the Republican Party to the achievement of black citizenship. African Americans thus celebrated the Fourth, and their citizenship,

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[64] Charles Vincent, *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976) p. 118.
[65] "Fourth of July Oration of Hon. T. B. Stamps at Hahnville" in *The Weekly Louisianian* (New Orleans) 10 July 1875.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

because of Reconstruction while white Southerners' re-embrace of it was predicated on Reconstruction's revocation.

The same day as Stamps' speech, Louisiana's black Lieutenant Governor, Caesar Antoine, delivered the oration of the day at Shreveport, where, making clear the partisan nature of the event, the *New Orleans Republican* described it as an assemblage of "Republicans from all near sections of the country." [68] Antoine also reviewed Revolutionary history but did not dwell on the Union's antebellum failure to live up to the promises of the Declaration. Instead, Antoine itemized and discussed the post-war Constitutional amendments, and concluded that

> These guarantees should cause every man…to rejoice that he is an American citizen…We, the newly enfranchised citizens should bow…to Almighty God that the intentions of the Framers of the Declaration of Independence have been carried out and we have been made citizens of this great Republic. [69]

In stark contrast to this focus on celebrating enfranchisement and citizenship, white discussion of African American Fourths of the period were often centred around violence and disorder. In 1875, a Charleston newspaper commented condescendingly that the Fourth had been celebrated "with becoming eclat by the colored folk" but went on to describe a general row in which "pistols, knives, sticks and rocks were indiscriminately used."[70] An account of trouble at a Fourth celebration in Vicksburg, Mississippi in 1875 was relayed in this rather offhand account in a white New Orleans paper: "The negroes had a Fourth of July celebration at the courthouse today. Some difficulty occurred among the audience during the speaking when firing commenced. Several negroes were wounded and three…were fatally shot...all quiet now." [71]

A similarly blasé tone was adopted by other white papers reporting the story. *The Macon Telegraph*, for instance, reported news of the melee without any investigation into

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[68] "Fourth of July at Shreveport" in *The New Orleans Republican,* 7 July 1875.
[69] "The Fourth at Shreveport" in *The Weekly Louisianian* (New Orleans) 24 July 1875.
[70] "The Fourth at Cheraw" in *The Charleston News*-Courier, 8 July 1875.
[71] "The Fourth" in *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans) 6 July 1875.

the causes of the difficulty, but assured its readers that "no further trouble is anticipated."[72] Other accounts presented a fuller picture: The *New Orleans Republican* made clear that it was a Republican, racially mixed gathering: black Chancery Court clerk G. W. Davenport organised the meeting, and white (Republican) Deputy Sheriff J. W. Gilmer served as "president" of the event, which drew about two thousand attendees.[73] The commemoration opened with a reading of the Declaration of Independence followed by patriotic band music. After (white, Republican) Judge George Brown, of the state Circuit Court, delivered a well-received address on the Revolution, Mississippi's black Secretary of State James Hill addressed the gathering. A correspondent for the African American *Christian Recorder* opined that "(Hill's) remarks though not ultra or acrimonious, were nevertheless not so guarded and discreet, as we thought they ought to have been."[74] The *New Orleans Republican* reported more specifically that Hill's remarks referenced black participation in the Revolution, citing Crispus Attucks, the African American killed in the Boston Massacre and claimed that "the band of white men who threw the tea overboard in Boston harbour a hundred years ago were led by a negro."[75] A white attendee (presumably Republican) objected to these remarks. Another white man, Republican John Hill, encouraged Secretary Hill to continue speaking, whereupon yet another white man, Harvey Andrews, struck Hill.[76] The *Christian Recorder's* account continued:

> When he [James Hill] had been speaking about twenty minutes, a file of white men were noticed coming into the room, and immediately arranged themselves in regular file along one side of the house. Within five minutes a scuffle began at the head of their line - on the left of the crowd, and then a pistol shot followed, whereupon the whole line presented revolvers and ordered the meeting to disperse. The colored people as usual took panic and made one grand rush for the door.[77]

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[72] "A Fourth of July Row" in *The Macon Telegraph*, 13 July 1875.
[73] "The Fourth of July at Vicksburg" in *The New Orleans Republican*, 8 July 1875.
[74] "Another Chapter of Blood at Vicksburg" in *The Christian Recorder*, 22 July 1875.
[75] "The Fourth of July at Vicksburg" in *The New Orleans Republican*, 8 July 1875.
[76] Ibid.
[77] "Another Chapter of Blood at Vicksburg" in *The Christian Recorder*, 22 July 1875.

The correspondent went on to describe the arrival of more armed white men and concluded:

> … those fearful Winchester rifles were turned upon the defenseless mass of colored humanity. I suppose as many as one hundred shots were fired in the space of two minutes. Two men were killed and a number wounded; some of whom have since died…Thus ended the ninety-ninth year of American freedom (?)…[78]

These accounts of the incident at Vicksburg provide a useful counter-narrative to those of the white, Democratic newspapers. The commemorative and political context for the gathering was made clear by the *Recorder* and the *Republican,* as was the violent white response to black rhetoric that was not sufficiently "guarded and discreet." Both factors are absent from the white accounts which read as if violence were a natural by-product of any black gathering. It is clear, too, that white Democrats found it expedient to equate whiteness with the Democratic Party, and blackness with the Republican. So despite the fact that white Republicans were present and involved with the Vicksburg observances, the affair was widely dismissed as a 'negro' celebration. The white, Democratic *Monitor* of Vicksburg, again conflating race and political affiliation, remarked in reference to the violence in the Mississippi town that: "The whites have borne all they will bear. Their passions have been so wrought upon by the outrages and insults they have had to endure that the least thing is sufficient to rend away the frail barriers and precipitate a conflict."[79] The *New Orleans Republican* riposted, making clear the significance of the Fourth in the Reconstruction era political landscape: "A Fourth of July oration is one of those things calculated to rend the barriers around law and order. This riot and negro massacre['s] purpose and effect was to break up a celebration of the anniversary of the declaration of American independence."[80]

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[78] Ibid.
[79] "The Fourth of July at Vicksburg" in *The New Orleans Republican*, 8 July 1875.
[80] Ibid.

The political situation in Vicksburg was one ripe for violence of this sort: the city itself was governed by conservative Democrats while the county remained under the control of Republicans. Sheriff Peter Crosby, a County official, was a black Republican. In December 1874, a posse of about five hundred white citizens, aggrieved by the notion that they were overburdened by taxes that benefitted property-less African Americans, essentially ran Crosby out of town. The state's Republican governor, Adelbert Ames, (who would similarly be forced from office a year later) offered little assistance to Crosby beyond suggesting that the Sheriff organize a black posse to restore his authority in Vicksburg. Crosby did so, and his band was met by a considerably larger white militia as it approached Vicksburg. The black force agreed to retreat, and even as it did so, was fired upon by the white militia, which then proceeded to sweep the county, attacking African Americans. After this paroxysm of violence, which left two white men and approximately three hundred African Americans dead, Governor Ames requested military support from President Grant to enforce Crosby's reinstatement. The Sheriff was soon gone for good, however: he left the state after being shot in a brawl with his deputy J.W. Gilmer, who would be one of the officiants at the town's ill-fated Fourth commemoration. In the words of historian William Harris, the racial and political turmoil exemplified by the Independence Day trouble "inspired the cause of white-line militancy and…set an ominous stage for the campaign and election of 1875."[81]

The 1875 celebrations in Memphis, Tennessee demonstrated a white, Democratic effort to neutralize African Americans' use of the Fourth. The *Memphis Daily Appeal,* noting that "no demonstration was made among the white citizens," devoted many column inches to a description of a local celebration organized by an African American

[81] William C. Harris, p. 649. In the 1875 election Mississippi Democrats staged a campaign of organised violence and intimidation in order to achieve "redemption," a model that would be used as a template by Democrats in other Southern states. See Harris, pp. 650-690.

group, The Independent Order of Pole-Bearers.[82] The Pole- Bearers extended invitations to various white notables to address their Independence Day gathering, among them Confederate generals Nathan Bedford Forrest and Gideon Pillow. The group was motivated, according to an address on the day by their spokesperson, to utilise the "sacred day" in order to banish discord: "We earnestly pray that our future generations may proudly recall this auspicious period as the moment in which fraternal discord has taken its leave forever from…the hearts of united American brotherhood."[83] Forrest, a founder of the Ku Klux Klan in the late 1860s, spoke in generalities and patronizing platitudes, assuring the African American celebrants that "my interests are your interests and your interests are my interests…I want to elevate you to take positions… wherever you are capable of going…I don't propose to say anything about politics."[84] Gideon Pillow's remarks were more substantial. The general echoed Forrest's sentiments that "the interests of the white and colored races in the South are inseparably intermingled" as well as an avowal to "purposely avoid all discussion of political questions-this is a day dedicated to the commemoration of a nation born to freedom."[85] Washington's *National Republican,* in reporting this, noted that Pillow "naturally found it extremely difficult to do so." [86] Pillow proceeded to deliver a thoroughly political diatribe, reiterating that freed people and white Southerners were "natural friends" but that African Americans had been:

> misled by bad men of the Republican Party who were seeking to use your votes to get into power and into lucrative office. These places they wanted for their own selfish purposes. They pandered to your prejudices, they told you that you should have forty acres and a mule and that the rebels would put you back into slavery. By your votes many of them reached positions they were not worthy to fill and they practiced frauds…and robbed the country of vast amounts of money. If you had not thus put yourself in the

[82] "The Fourth" in *The Memphis Daily Appeal*, 6 July 1875.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] "Southern Independence: Fourth of July at Memphis" in *The National Republican* (Washington, DC) 10 July 1875.

> hands of the enemies of Southern white people but [instead] had placed your confidence in them, and co-operated…[it] would have greatly advanced your interests [87]

Here Pillow not only dismissed black political agency by portraying African Americans as dupes of white Republicans, he effectively blamed them for white bitterness and, by extension, the violence that characterized the Reconstruction era South. Pillow concluded, with what would prove a harbinger of things to come, by advising his audience that politics was a white man's game: "My colored friends, give up politics as a pursuit…it does not feed and clothe your wife and children. That man is your best friend who tells you how to return relations with your old friends and neighbors."[88]

The story of the political struggle in the South during Reconstruction is largely also the tale of Southern honour being avenged, due to the Democratic Party's success at conflating their own party with the Confederacy and the Lost Cause, leaving no room for legitimate political opposition. In the words of one journalist in 1866: "Southerners, you have lost that Confederacy, but you still have its honour to sustain…you have to battle against being reduced to vassalage by the Radicals of the North…They have triumphed and conquered over you in the field, but they have not lowered your proud spirit yet."[89] In this context, political rapprochement, or even recognition of Republican political legitimacy, was construed as a twisting of the knife, a further humiliation.

Fourth of July celebrations were contested terrain in the Reconstruction era South, an arena in which identity, citizenship and belonging could be claimed or denied and in which race and political affiliation were inextricably intertwined.[90] These commemorations were symbolic of nationalism and an identity which white Southerners

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[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Adam Fairclough, "Scalawags," Southern Honor, and the Lost Cause: Explaining the Fatal Encounter of James H. Cosgrove and Edward L. Pierson," *Journal of Southern History,* 77, 4 (2011) 799-826, 805.
[90] Bodnar, p. 15.

were slowly reclaiming but were unwilling to share with their erstwhile bondsmen. Emphasis on black "violence" served as a means of de-legitimizing black claims to the Fourth and, by extension, American identity.

John Bodnar has described the contests involved in creating a "past worthy of commemoration" as a struggle for supremacy between advocates of various political ideas and sentiments, arguing that commemoration of the past has more to do with the present than with anything else; that commemorative activity is intended by leaders to "calm anxiety about change or political events" and to promote feelings of solidarity.[91] In the immediate aftermath of defeat, ex-Confederates left the day to "the Yankees and the darkies" but as it became necessary to negotiate a future within the United States, "New South" voices such as those in the *Atlanta Herald* began to drown out the diehards in a conversation inspired in large part by the looming anniversary of independence. The rhetoric highlighted by the *Herald's* 1875 project points up a split within the white South: if absolute rejection of the celebration can be linked to the "Bourbon" planter class, it seems plausible that "New Departure" white Democrats, the relatively liberal wing of the party that favoured a more cooperative relationship with the Federal government would be the element most likely to push for Independence Day celebration. Paul Gaston has delineated the pragmatism behind the more flexible New Departure approach, which, in his words, betrayed

> a less unreserved dedication to it [nationalism] than they were willing to admit. Underlying the professions of nationalism…were calculations of concrete gains for the region…the nationalism that the New South prophets preached had as its basic goal the recouping of the losses the South had incurred because of her long commitment to militant secessionism.[92]

Similar considerations would come into play during discussions around the Centennial Exhibition.

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[91] Bodnar, p. 13.

[92] Paul Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970) p. 96.

Chapter 3

Humbug or Opportunity?: Debating the Centennial

In the summer of 1869, before any firm plans for a commemoration of the centenary of American independence had been made, and as Radical Reconstruction reached its apogee, the *Weekly Telegraph* of Macon, Georgia made clear how closely linked white Southern ideas about the politics of Reconstruction would become to discussions of the Centennial. After facetiously suggesting that Philadelphians could celebrate the occasion by taking half a million people up in a gigantic hot air balloon or constructing waterworks which would spout the entire contents of the Delaware River five miles high, the newspaper concluded:

> Let them close up the performances by paying off the national debt, and making a general bonfire and illumination of the bonds, the greenbacks…then Reconstruction Acts, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, the Civil Rights bill and negro suffrage and start out in 1876, at sun down, upon a respectable and sensible basis for the future administration of national affairs.[1]

Five years later, with a magnificent world's fair in Philadelphia being planned, white Southern sentiment was still less than enthusiastic. In January 1874, an Alabama newspaper proprietor remarked acerbically that, "the spirit of liberty that dwelt in Independence Hall a hundred years ago finds no lodgement in the hearts of these mock patriots who are engineering this great Centennial Humbug."[2]This comment highlighted the extent to which the International Exhibition, more commonly referred to as "The Centennial," with its twin themes of American progress and reunion, proved problematic for the white South. This chapter will focus on white Southern reaction to the build-up, over several years, to the Centennial and the ways in which Southern discourse around

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[1] "Getting Ready in Time" in *The Weekly Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia) 30 July 1869

[2] A. H. Keller, "The Centennial" in *The North Alabamian* (Tuscumbia, Alabama) 28 January 1874, United States Centennial Commission Papers, Philadelphia City Archives, Philadelphia. Cited hereafter as USCCP. Clipping in scrapbook.

America's first world's fair was inextricably linked to the politics of Reconstruction and centred far more on division and conflict than on commemoration or reunion. It will be argued that any pro-Centennial sentiment expressed by white Southerners was predicated almost exclusively on potential benefit, with heavy emphasis placed on the economic and political pragmatism of participating in the Philadelphia festivities. This will be contrasted with the approach within an African American population which saw the commemoration as an opportunity to demonstrate their place as full citizens in the American nation. Further, it will be suggested that disagreements among Southern Democrats over the Centennial were, as was seen in discussion of Southern Fourths of July, roughly analogous to splits between the New Departure/New South and the more conservative, Bourbon wings of the party. Finally, given that the nature of the sources available lend themselves to a history which conflates 'white Southerners' with 'white Southern men,' the chapter will examine the limited material available which sheds light on the attitudes of Southern women to the Centennial.

Centennial Origins

The Centennial had its origins in a plan conceived by a group of men including John Bigelow, former American ambassador to France, General Charles Norton, U.S. commissioner to the Paris exposition of 1867, Professor John Campbell of Wabash College in Indiana and Colonel M.R. Muckles of Philadelphia. The Franklin Institute of Philadelphia became involved, and petitioned Philadelphia's city government to authorize the use of Fairmount Park for a centennial celebration. The municipal authorities created a seven-man commission to investigate the possibility. The movement gained momentum when the Keystone State's legislature appointed a ten-man commission to join Philadelphia's seven and presented a request to Congress to grant Federal imprimatur on the idea. Then in March 1870, Republican Pennsylvania congressman Daniel Morell introduced a bill calling for an official centennial celebration in Philadelphia. A year later,

on 3 March 1871, Congress adopted the proposal, making specific reference to the national, inclusive character of the proposed commemoration:

> Whereas it is deemed fitting that the completion of the first century of our national existence shall be commemorated by an exhibition of the natural resources of the country and their development, and if its progress in those arts which benefit mankind, in comparison with older nations; and whereas, as the exhibition should be a national celebration, in which the people of the whole country should participate, it should have the sanction of the Congress of the United States; therefore, Be it enacted…that an exhibition of American and foreign arts, products and manufactures shall be held under the auspices of the Government of the United States, in the city of Philadelphia, in the year eighteen hundred and seventy-six.[3]

The bill authorized the creation of a National Centennial Commission, answerable to Congress, and responsible for planning, organizing, and operating the Exhibition. The bill also established fiscal protocols: commissioners were not to be paid for their services, and most significantly, "The United States shall not be liable for any expenses attending such exhibition, or by reason of the same."[4] The National Centennial Commission was to be comprised of one Commissioner and one Alternate from each state or territory, who were appointed by the President upon the nomination of the various governors. Each state then formed their own state commissions, or boards (the nomenclature varied) charged with the often-thankless task of raising both enthusiasm and funding for their respective states' presence at Philadelphia. It was envisioned that each state, as well as many foreign countries, would have their own dedicated exhibition spaces at Fairmount Park.

At the Commission's inaugural meeting in the spring of 1872, the members elected officers to oversee its operations. Most prominent among them were former Union general, Connecticut governor and congressman Joseph Hawley as President and fellow Union veteran and Cincinnati businessman Alfred T. Goshorn as Director-

[3] James D. McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition* (National Publishing Company, Philadelphia: 1876) p. 197
[4] McCabe, p. 198.

General, whose position was described as the "chief executive officer of the Exhibition."[5] Both men were Republicans; Hawley, in fact, was President of the Republican National Convention in 1868, and in 1872 and 1876 served on the Convention's Committee on Resolutions. These political affiliations would reinforce white Southern suspicions that the Philadelphia fair was a sectional and political endeavour.

In the absence of Federal subsidy, the first priority for the Commission was to finance the Centennial, with much of the funding expected to come from private investors. In June 1872 Congress created a Centennial Board of Finance, authorized to issue stock in shares of ten dollars each, with the stockholders sharing proportionately in any profit realized by the Exhibition. Each state was assigned a quota in sold shares, based on population. The Commission issued an open letter to the American people, widely reprinted in newspapers across the country in the autumn of 1872, stressing the national character of the Exhibition:

> To this grand gathering every zone will contribute its fruits and cereals. No mineral shall be wanting; for what the East lacks the West will provide. Under one roof the South will display in rich luxuriance her growing cotton and the North, in miniature, the ceaseless machinery of her mills converting that cotton into cloth…[6]

The Commissioners went on to encourage the purchase of shares as a patriotic duty: "The Commission looks to the unfailing patriotism of the people of every section, to see that each contributes its share of the expenses and receives its share of the benefits of an enterprise in which all are so deeply interested."[7]

The response to these pleas was decidedly uneven. By the end of 1875, Pennsylvanians had purchased nearly three times their quota, acquiring almost $3 million in Centennial stock. Things were different, though, in the states of the former Confederacy. Alabama had been assigned a quota of $258,000 in sales of Centennial stock;

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[5] McCabe, p. 733
[6] "The Centennial International Exhibition. An Address by the Centennial Commission" in *Cincinnati Daily Gazette,* 4 December 1872.
[7] Ibid.

after a year only 22 shares (amounting to $220) had been sold. William Byrd, the Cotton State's representative on the national Commission, wrote to Lewis Waln Smith, the Commission's secretary, that he was "chagrined…I was prepared for a failure but not for such a one."[8] He elaborated:

> I have had an uphill road to travel-I could not get the Governor, who is a Republican, to present the matter to the Legislature. But like Congress, they provided for Vienna, [an 1873 exhibition in Austria] but not a cent for the Centennial. What a commentary on American patriotism! But I shall not give up the good cause-it can be made a success in spite of the politicians. We can get the people in it and the demagogues will be in it at the swell-tide, head and ears. [9]

But Byrd, himself a Democrat and former Confederate, faced a real struggle. The Centennial itself came a mere 11 years after Appomattox, and when the preparations, planning, and public relations efforts began, the Civil War had only been over about seven years. As historians such as Richard Zuczek and Anne Sarah Rubin have demonstrated, white guerrilla-style terrorism, a defiant and resistant white public mood and the fact of Federal military control of the South make it plausible to argue that a state of quasi-war persisted throughout this period. An 1873 South Carolina newspaper editorial suggests undimmed loyalty to the Confederacy eight years after Appomattox: "Whatever the politicians seeking place may say, the heart of the people is as true now to that cause for which they gave and suffered so much as it was when the colors of the South were floating most bravely."[10] This gives some indication of the difficulties inherent in staging a celebration of American unity at such a singularly inauspicious point in history, with memory of the war still raw.

Centennial Themes

A central theme of the celebration was patriotism and reunion. In 1872, Centennial Commission President Joseph Hawley released an "address" which depicted

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[8] William M. Byrd to Lewis Waln Smith, 28 April 1873, USCCP.
[9] Ibid.
[10] *Chester Reporter* (Chester, South Carolina) 4 September 1873, in Zuczek, p. 129.

the upcoming Exhibition as an inclusive and uniting experience which would restore the "kindly and fraternal" relations that had existed before "this terrible war."[11] Hawley expressed the hope that Americans:

> From every corner of this broad land [would]…gather by land and by sea to the City of Brotherly Love and with kindly and loving hearts, exchange the warm grasp of common brotherhood under one and the same nationality. And exult that now, at last, the stripes as well as the stars unite in proclaiming liberty to every son of man, and once more float over a reunited, harmonious and happy people.[12]

In the Centennial Commission's first round of meetings in 1872, similar sentiments were expressed. A Wisconsin delegate noted that although his state had done "her full part to quell the rebellion and restore the Union" he was convinced that the Centennial would "do more to reunite all the elements of this nation into one grand whole than any event which has occurred in the century."[13] Florida commissioner J.S. Adams (a Republican transplant from Vermont) voiced the hope that the Exhibition would lead Americans North and South to "shake hands in a common destiny, a common love, and for the glory of our flag and our common country."[14] Alabama's William Byrd, a genuine Southerner and Democrat, voiced agreement with his colleague: "I have been a Southern man all my life, either by misfortune or good fortune…if this is to be a National Exposition, I want it to be one. I do not want it to be sectional."[15] All of these statements were published and therefore intended for public consumption. But, at least in the case of William Byrd, private correspondence already quoted showed the same commitment to a "patriotic" Centennial. Similarly, the *United States Centennial Almanac* (1874) expressed the aim of making the Centennial "a work of pride, of patriotism, and reconciliation."[16] In 1873,

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[11] *The United States Centennial Commission, An Address* (Philadelphia: Baird & King, 1874) p. 22.
[12] Ibid.
[13] *Journal of the Proceedings of the United States Centennial Commission at Philadelphia, 1872* (Philadelphia: Markley & Sons, 1872) p. 153.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid. Byrd did not live to see the opening of the Exhibition he cared so deeply about; he was killed in a train accident in 1874.
[16] *United States Centennial Almanac* (Philadelphia: Baird & King, 1874) p. 31.

Texas' Centennial Commissioner, William Henry Parsons, had addressed a letter to his state's legislature that underscored the desire of the Exhibition's organisers that the celebration be a national one, designed to help heal sectional wounds:

> We assume that the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of American Independence is neither a sectional nor a party question, but one that should enlist the sympathy, excite the patriotism and ensure the cooperation of all sections and all parties of our common country.[17]

Parsons' hope would be largely unfulfilled however, and Southern ambivalence towards the Centennial was reflected in the lack of financial investment in the fair by the states of the former Confederacy. The state of Pennsylvania and city of Philadelphia appropriated $1 million and $1.5 million, respectively, to help fund the Exhibition. Foreign investment was substantial: The United Kingdom spent $250,000 on its exhibit at the Centennial, France, $120,000, Germany $171,000, Sweden $125,000 and Ecuador $10,000. Pennsylvania invested a further $50,000 on its official state building at the fair, with Massachusetts expending the same amount, and the young state of West Virginia raising $20,000 for its building. In the end, of the Southern states only Arkansas and Mississippi would fund exhibition space at Fairmount Park.

The Floridian Vermonter J.S. Adams, in addition to the hopes he expressed regarding the Centennial's healing and reunifying role, also highlighted another key theme of the Exhibition, envisioning it as a "national, profound tribute to the majesty of labor."[18] Adams was framing the Centennial as a celebration, and a statement to the world, of American ingenuity and technological prowess. The *Philadelphia Ledger* remarked that the fair should express "the progress of the United States in all that benefits mankind…How vast that progress has been and how multitudinous the material illustrations of it are- no

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[17] State Correspondence, USCCP. See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of William Parsons' stormy tenure on the Centennial Commission.

[18] *Journal of the Proceedings of the United States Centennial Commission at Philadelphia, 1872* (Philadelphia: Markley & Sons, 1872) p. 150.

one needs to be told."[19] Despite the proto-industrialization espoused by adherents of a "New South," the former Confederacy remained an overwhelmingly agrarian region, and themes of reunion and manufacturing would not have been likely to encourage white Southern engagement with the Exhibition.

Centennial Debates

Some Southerners, motivated apparently by no more than a visceral hatred of the "Yankees," responded to the idea of the Centennial with disdain. A letter from Confederate Admiral Raphael Semmes to the *Mobile Register* typified this response: he attacked the Fourteenth Amendment's provision against erstwhile Confederates (including himself) holding elected office, referring to "this Constitutional proscription" as a "brand of infamy and shame which has been burned, as it were, into the very forehead of the state."[20] Arguing against Alabama's participation in the Philadelphia festivities, Semmes made it clear that he saw the Centennial in a political context, characterizing it as "this radical love-feast." The Admiral went on to link, in florid and emotional prose, Confederate loyalty to Centennial resistance by asking: "will you dare…admit, by the presence of your representatives at Philadelphia on the 4th of July 1876 that those who sleep in their bloody winding sheets were rightly branded by the …United States as insurrectionists and rebels?"[21] A San Francisco paper made reference to Semmes' political leanings when, after remarking that Semmes would never be reconstructed "until he has been unjointed by some skilful demonstrator of anatomy" mused about "what an invaluable stump-speaker Semmes would make for that wing known as 'Bourbon Democracy.'"[22] The *Augusta Chronicle*, meanwhile, adopted a more measured but no less

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[19] Reprinted in *The Morning Republican* (Little Rock, Arkansas) 11 September 1873.
[20] Raphael Semmes, "Alabama at the Centennial: The Pirate of the 'Alabama' Denounces the Idea of His State Being Represented at the 'Radical Love-Feast'- A Typical Letter" in *The Mobile Register*, undated clipping, USCCP scrapbook.
[21] Ibid.
[22] "A Man Who Was Never Reconstructed" in *The San Francisco Bulletin*, 17 June 1875.

dismissive tone than Semmes': "If the citizens of the North, East and West feel like celebrating the hundredth anniversary of a nation's freedom, let them go ahead. We have not had enough liberty in the South during the past eight years to feel like spending much money or exhibiting much enthusiasm on the occasion." [23]

When the Alabama legislature debated appropriating funds to mount an exhibit at Philadelphia, opponents of the measure fulminated against the thought of their state being represented at "this Yankee humbug."[24] Even legislators in favour of the funding agreed that the South had been "oppressed and outraged by fanatics," but argued that participation at the Centennial could "sow the seeds that will eventually rout out the tyranny that now oppresses the entire land."[25] This echoed the New Departure line, discussed in Chapter 2, that the most prudent course for the South was one of engagement rather than intransigence. One proponent of this approach, Senator John Terrell, made explicit the link between Centennial engagement and politics by arguing that he believed "the days of Radical Reconstruction were over" and that Alabama would be "welcomed to the National Exposition as heartily as Massachusetts or New York."[26] This link is also evident in a suggestion by the Augusta *Chronicle and Sentinel* that Southern participation in the Exhibition should be "a *quid pro quo*...Now is the time to say to our Republican friends: no amnesty, no centennial. This will bring them to terms and remove the ban which still rests upon two or three hundred of the old Southern leaders"[27] The newspaper was referring here to the continuing disfranchisement of Confederate leaders and made clear that it saw the Exhibition as a Northern affair, and one that could be used for political leverage.

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[23] "The Centennial" in *The Chronicle and Sentinel* (Augusta, Georgia) 11 November 1873.
[24] "Letter From Montgomery" in *The Mobile Daily Register,* 19 March 1875.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] "A Quid Pro Quo" in *The Chronicle and Sentinel* (Augusta, Georgia) 16 May 1874.

The belief that the South was being wronged and mistreated extended beyond the restrictions placed on former Confederate officials, and demonstrated a consensus in white Southern thinking, one that transcended the question of Centennial participation. When the Virginia-based *Religious Herald* counselled, in endorsing the Centennial, "It is time the animosities of the war were forgotten. Upon the graves of the slain let us plant the olive," it could not help adding that no one could doubt that "… the South has been needlessly injured by the acts of Reconstruction."[28]

In the spring of 1875 a kerfuffle over the oath meant to be sworn by National Centennial Commissioners posed a serious threat to white Southern engagement with the Exhibition. A year earlier Governor James Smith of Georgia had written to U.S. Secretary of State Hamilton Fish remonstrating over the fact that the oath sent to Georgia Commissioner George Hillyer required him to swear that he had never taken up arms against the United States. Smith pointed out that this condition would necessarily preclude most white Southerners from serving on the Commission and warned that,"Candor constrains me to say that of this gratuitous and wanton requirement is insisted upon, the people of Georgia will not, with my consent, take any part whatever in the proposed partisan celebration at Philadelphia."[29] For reasons that remain unclear, Smith's letter was widely reprinted a year later, raising considerable ire throughout the white South. *The Daily Picayune* of New Orleans, for example, commended Governor Smith's "manly" letter to Fish, and remarked that Smith's sentiments "would find an echo in every heart this side of Mason and Dixon's line."[30] Within a few days, however, most newspapers that published Smith's letter followed it up with a "never mind." Hamilton Fish had responded promptly to Smith the previous year, explaining that a clerical error

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[28] "The Centennial Celebration" from *The Religious Herald*, reprinted in the *Richmond Whig* 15 May 1874.
[29] The Centennial Oath" in *The Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock) 28 May 1875.
[30] "The Centennial Oath" in *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans) 26 May 1875.

had resulted in the oath intended for Northern Commissioners being sent inadvertently to Georgia's Hillyer.[31]This explanation, in turn, resulted in more Southern resentment. The *Daily Picayune* complained that having separate oaths for Southern and Northern Commissioners was "ungenerous toward the South and untrue to the ostensible spirit of the Centennial celebration."[32]

Economics and Centennial Support

Much anti-centennial sentiment stressed Northern corruption and unfairness, paying lip service to the idea of reunion, but insisting on the dishonourable intentions of the Northerners. Clearly positioning the question of Centennial engagement as a political matter, Alabama newspaper proprietor A. H. Keller editorialized with reference to the Reconstruction policies of the Grant Administration: "How quietly they [Philadelphians] endorse Grant's late scheme to subvert the fundamental principles of the very government whose one hundredth anniversary they are preparing to celebrate…"[33] Keller cited Centennial Commission President Joseph Hawley's vote, when in Congress, against continuing pensions to Southern veterans of the 1812 and Mexican wars: "Many of these noble old veterans had shed their blood and lost their limbs defending the government he now makes a pretense of glorifying…This fellow is a fit apostle to preach Philadelphia's gospel of hate towards the South."[34] The conflation of the Radical wing of the Republican Party with Centennial Organizers was not entirely accurate, with the latter making some effort to accommodate white Southern sensibilities (as will be seen in Chapters 4 and 5.) But such distinctions were apparently of little interest to Keller, who closed his diatribe with jabs at 'Yankee' duplicity and corruption:

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[31] "The South and the Centennial oath" in *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans) 27 May 1875.
[32] Ibid.
[33] A. H. Keller, "The Centennial" in *The North Alabamian* (Tuscumbia, Alabama) 28 January 1874, clipping in USCCP scrapbook. Keller was the father of the renowned deaf/blind socialist writer and activist Helen Keller (1880-1968.)
[34] Ibid

> Policy may silence his [Hawley's] venomous tongue now, just as self-interest restrains the City of Brotherly Love from her wonted exhibition of malice towards us. She will never forgive the South because its trade is forever lost to her. Our people should do nothing to encourage this latest swindle…Grant urges an appropriation of a million dollars to it, but says nothing of what percentage of it he and Hawley expect to get. [35]

"Hypocrisy" was frequently cited as a Northern characteristic. Equating Republican political control with lack of liberty, the *LaGrange Reporter*, in Georgia, insisted that the pretence of freedom that underlay Centennial plans was "hollow and hypocritical" and that as long as the white South was not "free," any invitation by the North to celebrate the Centennial was a "mocking lie."[36] The *Southern Planter & Farmer* also depicted Northerners, specifically Philadelphians in this case, as hypocrites:

> We have made no mention of the progress of this Philadelphia job, because we cannot conceive that any Virginian, or any Southerner, can have any interest in it one way or the other. It was gotten up…to enrich the citizens of a community which has ever hated us…[37]

The journal underlined its charge of hypocrisy by comparing Philadelphians to an ancient Hebrew sect noted for pretensions to moral superiority: "…[Philadelphia's] broad-brimmed Pharisees brought in and sold Negroes to the South as long as they could and then…rolled up their holy eyes at the exceeding sinfulness of slavery."[38]

An Atlanta newspaper also suggested Centennial-linked corruption when it declared:

> Let the Southern people keep a watchful eye on their Congressmen should this thing come to a vote. There will be at least strong presumptive evidence that every Southern man who votes to donate money to Philadelphia has been bought…The whole thing is a fraud and stinks with corruption…No Southern representative can properly vote to give away the people's money to the mean, miserly and fanatical Philadelphians. [39]

Southern accusations that the Centennial was a money-making scam ("The press of the South has not done its duty in exposing that huge fraud and Yankee Swindle…")

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[35] Ibid

[36] "The Centennial Exposition" quoted in the *Macon Weekly Telegraph*, 20 April 1875.

[37] "The Centennial" in *Southern Planter & Farmer* (Richmond, Virginia) May 1876.

[38] Ibid.

[39] "Southern Votes Wanted" in the *Atlanta Constitution*, reprinted in the *Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Journal & Messenger,* 28 April 1874.

highlight a central aim of the Centennial, albeit one less freely acknowledged by its organizers than that of commemoration, reunion or showcasing technology: profit.[40] The Gilded Age of unbridled capitalism was underway, and Philadelphia's leaders anticipated a lucrative windfall from the millions of visitors. The United States had been hit by a devastating financial panic in 1873, known, until the 1930s, as the "Great Depression."[41] James McCabe's contemporary history of the Centennial described the economic climate: "The panic of 1873 had almost paralyzed the finances of the country and the people had become timid and hesitating in supporting schemes which required an outlay of money…It (became) evident that the various states of the Union could not be depended upon to furnish their respective proportions of the funds, and that the Exhibition must depend on its success mainly upon private subscriptions."[42]

Scribner's Monthly magazine summarized the extent to which the Centennial was seen as a catalyst for economic recovery:

> All good Americans are looking forward to the passage of the year 1876 with great interest…there is a belief we have seen the worst. Of a certain kind of business there will be more done than ever before. The passenger traffic on the railroads will be immense. All the West is coming East…the Southern states will be similarly moved…all lines of travel converging upon New York and Philadelphia will be crowded…There will be a tremendous shaking up of the people, a great going to and fro in the land a lively circulation of money and a stimulation of trade.[43]

The clear financial benefits the Exhibition offered its host city and its merchants and entrepreneurs provided an easy target for Southern critics. As early as May of 1872, The *Richmond Whig* took aim at the money involved in setting up the Exhibition:

> The Centennial Commission today considered the report of the Committee on Plans authorizing the selection of ten architects, to be paid $1,000 each for preliminary plans for the buildings, that ten other prizes of $1,000 each be paid to other architects for sketches or drawings, and that six of the most meritorious be selected from the twenty plans to be awarded. The following are the prizes: $15,000 for the first, $10,000 for the

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40 "The 'Centennial' Humbug" in *Hinds County Gazette* (Raymond, Mississippi) 24 May 1876.
41 Francois Furstenburg, "What History Teaches Us About the Welfare State" in *The Washington Post,* 1 July 2011.
42 McCabe, p. 235.
43 "The Centennial" in *Scribner's Monthly* (January 1876.)

> second, $6,000 for the third, $4,000 for the fourth, and $3,000 and $2,000 for the fifth and sixth.[44]

The *Whig* then made clear that it considered the enterprise a wasteful lark: "The Resolution was debated without a result. The Commission then embarked on a tug for an excursion along the river front." [45]

It seems evident that local interests held the lion's share of stock, and that Philadelphians stood to gain the most from the fair's success. In the words of historian Robert Rydell, "a small number of wealthy individuals, railroads and large mercantile establishments held controlling interest" in the fair.[46] The twin themes of patriotism and profit were underscored by a letter from Connecticut Commissioner William Phipps Blake to Director-General Alfred Goshorn, which explained that: "We must fall back upon patriotism and other such incentives…"[47] Linda Gross and Theresa Snyder, in their 2005 photographic history of the Centennial described Centennial patriotism as a "mechanism" to convey American innovation and technology to the world. [48] Philadelphians certainly hoped to reap financial rewards from the Exhibition but there is no reason to believe that pecuniary and patriotic motivations were mutually exclusive. However, while Lyn Spillman has pointed out that the "most enthusiastic organizers" of the Centennial were "Pennsylvania manufacturers and merchants," it was certainly more than a commercial enterprise, or "Yankee swindle."[49]

One indication of the money at stake in the Centennial comes from the fees charged to concession holders at the fair. A newspaper report contained the following particulars: One individual paid the organizing commission $12,000 for the exclusive privilege of hiring out rolling chairs to visitors at the rate of fifty cents an hour. The right to sell soda

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[44] "The Centennial Commission" in *The Richmond Whig*, 31 May 1872.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Robert Rydell, *All the World's A Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions 1876-1915* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) p. 18.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Gross and Snyder, p. 7.
[49] Spillman, p. 80.

water to thirsty fair-goers realized $30,000. The license to construct an 1,800 room hotel, entirely at the licensee's expense, was sold for $10,500.[50] One restaurateur who paid the commission $24,000 to license his business reported average daily profits of $1,100 at close of the fair's six month life.[51] I. L. Baker paid the commission $7,000 for the rights to sell his "Celebrated Sugar Pop Corn" at the Exhibition.[52]

Northern industrialists, merchants and soda water sellers were not the only ones to see potential for economic gain in the Centennial. Although some white Southerners arguing for Centennial participation framed their arguments in terms of the original Union, claiming that the "anniversary of American independence is a heritage which belongs peculiarly to the Southern people and one she should never ignore," this was but a minor theme within Southern pro-Centennial arguments.[53] With their economies devastated by the War and the financial panic of 1873, economic opportunity was the single most common theme invoked by those Southerners arguing in favour of Centennial participation. The debate in Congress in late 1875-early 1876 which eventually resulted in that body authorizing a loan- not a grant- of $1.5 million for the Philadelphia fair, led the *Alexandria Gazette* to comment that wholehearted, patriotic embrace of the Centennial on the part of the white South as long as it was being denied "equal rights" (i.e. Democratic control) would be "more than any mortal of ordinary intelligence [could]… understand."[54] The *Gazette*, however, counselled what it called a "politic and… Machiavelian course," focused on the political expediency of cooperation with the "Yankees" with the aim of both political and economic gain. A Democratic journal, the *Gazette* was noteworthy for its embrace of New South politics, and proved an effective

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50 "The Centennial Exposition: Sale of Concessions" *in The Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Journal & Messenger* (Macon, Georgia) 29 February 1876.
51 "The Centennial: A Practical View by a Practical Man" in *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Georgia Journal and Messenger* (Macon, Georgia) 7 November 1876.
52 Gross and Snyder, p. 25.
53 "Alabama Legislature, Centennial Exposition" in *The Montgomery Advertiser*, 17 March 1875.
54 "Letter From New York" *in The Alexandria Gazette & Virginia Advertise*r, 17 January 1876.

advocate of Southern industrialization.[55] This seems to provide another link between support for the Centennial and New Departure/New South politics. A Macon, Georgia paper weighed in on the debate, championing the same practical approach:

> We are confident the refusal of the Southern members to vote the appropriation would involve greater loss than the appropriation itself; because such refusal will be used in the interests of sectional discord and repression which have already cost the South and the country hundreds and thousands of millions. [56]

When a delegation from the National Centennial Commission visited Georgia in late 1873 on a public relations and share-selling junket, a Macon newspaper quoted a toast given at a banquet for the delegation:

> To the Centennial Committee, the only bridge which can span the chasm of the dreary past, the sole abyss in which may be buried…the bitter acerbities of former conflicts, the rainbow of hope which guides the future of American progress.[57]

This pretty prose about post-war reunion stood in contrast to a speech delivered at the same event by Robert Patton, a former governor of Alabama. The same account reported that:

> Governor Patton expressed his great interest in the Centennial enterprise, his confidence in its success and his belief that it presented a most capital opportunity for Georgia to represent all of her great resources at one glance to the millions of visitors…It was a most stirring appeal that every citizen of Georgia should be personally interested in its success.[58]

Georgia press reaction to the Centennial sales pitch reflected Southern polarisation about the project. The Macon *Telegraph* concluded that "the visit and its results indicate that the heart of the South beats in sincere response to the celebration of the Centennial of American liberty, and that a splendid representation of that section may be expected [at the Centennial.]"[59] The *Augusta Chronicle* was less enthused, noting that "It was true a small

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[55] "About the *Alexandria Gazette*" at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025007/> [accessed 09.05.16]
[56] "The Centennial Appropriation" in *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Journal & Messenger*, 25 January 1876.
[57] Ibid.
[58] "Georgia and the Centennial" *in Macon Telegraph and Journal & Messenger*, 18 November 1873.
[59] Ibid.

meeting was held and a few gushing speeches delivered, but further than this not much progress was made."[60]

Evidence of the economic opportunities Southerners sensed in the Centennial was not limited to newspaper pieces. When Virginia's Democrat-controlled legislature issued a proclamation endorsing the Centennial (a few years before it voted against any financial support for the state's participation) its phraseology was telling:

> Be it resolved…that the time and place of holding the said Centennial are hereby endorsed. That the said Centennial Exhibition is warmly commended to the people as a means of restoring prosperity to Virginia and sincere good feeling between all the people of the United States.[61]

A Virginia delegate to the National Commission, Frederick Holliday, bemoaned his state assembly's refusal to fund a presence at the Centennial in a letter to the National Commission: "I fear the spirit of economy has prevailed to too great an extent in our legislature and that its members have allowed the finest opportunity that may occur in our generation to advance the material prosperity of my state."[62]

And when Alabama's governor, Democrat George Houston, addressed the topic of funding an exhibit in an annual message to his state's legislature, he framed the case for participation in utilitarian terms. Houston identified the chief motivation for his state's putative involvement as being "to satisfy the peoples of other states and countries that they can do better by their industries in Alabama than elsewhere…to profit the State by developing and adding to its industries, wealth, and power."[63]

The *Richmond Enquirer* was bluntly dismissive of the Centennial's ostensible theme of patriotism and commemoration: "As to the sentimental part of the question- the patriotic portion- we suppose Virginia has very little of that left now." The Democratic

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[60] "The Centennial" in *The Chronicle and Sentinel* (Augusta, Georgia) 11 November 1873.
[61] State Correspondence, USCCP.
[62] Frederick Holliday to Alfred Goshorn, 17 June 1876. USCCP. Holliday demonstrated, in a postscript, that not all white Southerners were clinging to the past at this point by describing Jefferson Davis as an "item of history."
[63] *Journal of the Senate of the State of Alabama 1876,* p. 17.

journal, like most advocating Centennial engagement, was more concerned with what Virginia might lose out on by sitting out the Exhibition, arguing that the state's course should be controlled "purely [by] self-interest. Her people take very little stock in the glory of the nation she [helped] build up…if she goes to Philadelphia at all, it will be merely to advertise herself from a business standpoint."[64] The *Enquirer* here made no pretense of indulging in reunion rhetoric or patriotic patter, with the bitterness and resentment of the white South baldly stated. The editorial reiterated the theme of being left behind by other Southern states who would participate, arguing that not being represented would see the state "completely shut out from the advantages it would give us as a medium for advertising our material and industrial resources while others with far less claims to consideration bear away the prize."[65] The *Enquirer* concluded that "the whole world will be at Philadelphia…and [we] should…make as respectable an appearance as possible." The newspaper argued that this would increase that state's "importance at home and abroad…but if she prefers to remain at home with her finger in her mouth, nursing her wrath, she cannot blame anybody but herself that she is passed by unnoticed." [66]

A Nashville newspaper, reporting on the inaugural meeting of Tennessee's State Centennial Commission, quoted a speaker who addressed the need to "stir the people up," in order to arouse Centennial enthusiasm and the convention resolved to educate Tennesseans as to the "importance" of having the "state, its interests and products etc. represented at Philadelphia." [67] Thomas Coldwell, one of the state's National Commissioners, addressed the group and explained that the scope of the Centennial

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[64] "The Centennial" in *The Richmond Enquirer,* 17 February 1875.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid. See also *The Galveston Daily News*, 14 April 1875: "No Southern state has anything to gain by standing sullenly aloof from the Centennial. Texas is entitled to her share in the political legacy of 1876."
[67] "July 4, 1876: The Centennial Movement Makes a Good Start in Tennessee" in *Nashville Union and American,* 13 May 1875.

embraced "every subject, pursuit and interest…in fact, everything on earth and under the earth." Myriad committees were formed, including ones on "Poultry", "Horticulture," "Fruit", and "Flowers, Embroidery and Needlework", all with the "vitally important" aim of ensuring that Tennessee was "properly represented" at the Centennial.[68] The opportunity for economic advancement offered by the Exhibition were neatly summed up by the *Mobile Register's* utilitarian approach to the situation. The paper huffed that any idea of patriotic motives behind the fair was "a bold humbug and open fraud" but maintained that the Centennial was:

> Certainly a most practical and admirable scheme for collective advertising of American products, natural and industrial. As such, we would have the Southern states use it, in exactly the same spirit and manner as they would advertise State bonds in a radical newspaper or send Southern iron to a Northern foundry.[69]

Political Identity and the Centennial

Politics, or more particularly, political identity was a key theme in Centennial-centred rhetoric. In Texas, *The San Antonio Express,* a Republican newspaper criticized the *Herald*, a Democratic competitor, for its anti-Centennial stance. It quoted the *Herald*, in a passage that made clear the linkage between party politics and Centennial support: "We should not mingle with them [Northerners] in the Centennial but stand aloof until we can demonstrate our strength in the next Presidential election."[70] The *Express* ridiculed this rigid regional and party orthodoxy:

> There will be representatives from every nation and clime- there will be a display of the world's industry in competition with our own,- there will be one of the grandest congregations of men ever held on this continent, and yet the editor of the Herald will not be there, he will fold his arms and stand aloof, he will shake his haughty head when free tickets are poked under his nose.[71]

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[68] Ibid.
[69] "Centennial Morbidity" in *The Mobile Register,*19 January 1876.
[70] "The S.A. Herald and the Centennial" in the *San Antonio Express*, 9 August 1875.
[71] Ibid.

In Arkansas, Centennial commissioner George Dodge equated Democratic political control to 'rightful' ownership of his state when he reported to Philadelphia in August 1875 that:

> Our state will make a collective display of her products and resources but how large a collection and how much space I cannot positively say...the task seems hopeless-you can hardly conceive of the utter prostration and devastation which prevailed here up to last spring when the state was handed over to her rightful owners by...a kind providence... we will probably be compelled to abandon the idea of a state building.[72]

In Louisiana, the state assembly passed a resolution stating:

> The Governor shall appoint three citizens of the state…who shall constitute The State Centennial Board of Managers. They are enjoined to 'take such action as will secure a full and thorough representation of the resources and products [of Louisiana] at the exhibition.[73]

The Pelican State's legislature then undermined its own initiative by stipulating that: "Nothing in this act shall be so construed as to render the state liable for any pay or expenses for said commissioners or any person employed by them."[74] The polarised political atmosphere in the state is suggested by H. Bonzano, one of Louisiana's three Centennial managers, who wrote, presciently, to the National Commission that it was:

> Quite safe to say that Louisiana will not make a "collective exhibition" And I may as well mention that the individual exhibits will be very meagre as the Board is entirely without means... And now, as this letter may become historical, I will add that the political animosity towards the ruling state government and administration is so great… that the failure of the Executive, in anything, no matter how patriotic or beneficial to the state is regarded with favor rather than sorrow or shame. Such being the state of the public mind...I am forced to confess that little or no prospect awaits us that Louisiana's wealth and industry will be creditably represented at the Centennial.[75]

Both Dodge's and Bonzano's letters highlighted a crucial issue for the post-Civil War South, the question of home-rule, or to be more precise, Democratic rule. Dodge

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[72] George E Dodge to A T Goshorn, 20 August 1875, State Correspondence, USCCP. The state did, in fact, appropriate $5,000 for a building in Fairmount Park, one of only two Southern states to do so. Nonetheless, the *Arkansas Gazette,* 8 April 1876, commenting shortly before the fair opened, remarked that despite Dodge's "best exertions," a "dead sea of public apathy" prevailed which would rob Arkansas of the chance to "show to the whole world the capacities of our young state."

[73] Joint Resolution of the Louisiana General Assembly, No. 99, 21 March 1874. USCCP.

[74] Ibid

[75] H. Bonzano to Alfred Goshorn, 7 August 1875. USCCP.

referenced, gratefully, Arkansas' return to Democratic control in 1874, while Bonzano's letter demonstrated the animosity that Louisiana's Republican government, widely seen as an illegitimate rule by usurpers, faced. It also illustrated the overlap of the political with the commemorative in Louisianans' refusal to support anything also supported by the despised Republicans.

In contrast, Democrats in Mississippi won firm control of the Jackson state house in the 1875 elections. The Magnolia State's Centennial Board provided an interesting mix, headed by Alexander Warner, a former Union officer and Republican floor manager in the state Senate along with James Hoskins, a Confederate veteran, M. J. Manning, a Carpetbagger Republican, and John Logan Power, who served as the board's Assistant Secretary and dealt with most of its correspondence. Power wrote to Director-General Goshorn in the autumn of 1875:

> We desire to have an exhibition and in operation the whole process of ginning, pressing and baling cotton and will have stalks in bloom forwarded early next summer. The enclosed circular will indicate that we are not altogether indifferent. Indeed, I think Mississippi will make a creditable display and I am sure that our people will attend in great numbers....[76]

Two months later, Power added: "We will have a pretty good display of field crops and mill fabrics and specimens of our timbers..."[77] Power's enthusiasm shines through this correspondence, the only note of negativity being a remark on the Mississippi legislature's "stinginess," though Power assured the National Commission that they would be able to work around that. Power's efforts, along with those of William Byrd in Alabama, indicate that enthusiasm for the Centennial could not be predicted by party lines alone; he was a Democrat and in 1861 had served as official recorder for his state's Secession Convention and after enlisting as a private, by war's end he was serving as Superintendent of

[76] J. L. Power to Alfred Goshorn, 13 October 1875, USCCP.
[77] J. L. Power to Alfred Goshorn, 18 December 1875, USCCP.

Mississippi's Army Records.[78] This is again indicative of a split Democratic approach to the Exhibition between conservative, "Bourbon" Democrats, and the more flexible New Departure wing of the party, which was willing to accept a measure of black suffrage and admit the legitimacy of Republican opposition. Illustrating the depth of the divisions, one New Departure Democrat described the conservative wing of his own party as "Bourbons who would hold out against destiny itself."[79]

The pragmatic New Departure approach was more likely to see the economic and political benefits to be had from engagement with the Centennial. In Power's home state, for example, *The Hinds County Gazette* was a Bourbon organ that ignored virulent Klan activity in its vicinity, filling its pages instead with railroad matters, and only mentioning the white supremacist group when it attacked Republicans for raising the issue of vigilante terror in Congress.[80] The newspaper consistently excoriated the Centennial and everything connected with it; *The Jackson Clarion*, meanwhile, a more moderate journal was demonstrably more open to Centennial than its more conservative rival. Perhaps not coincidentally, one of its publishers was John Logan Power.

Local Boosterism and Centennial Support

State and immediate locality was at the core of most white Americans' sense of identity up until roughly the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In the words of Cecilia O'Leary: "…one's notion of country more often than not was affixed to an individual state."[81] The Civil War was the major factor in changing this and Melinda Lawson has

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[78] James B. Lloyd, Lives of Mississippi Authors 1817-1967 at http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=RfXGJBB1HvoC&pg=PA376&lpg=PA376&dq=john+logan+power+mississippi&source=bl&ots=pkWdhAFe93&sig=ti_voF-onFuXa5brkWuvnbo11oo&hl=en&sa=X&ei=-KjMT9fTIcGw0AW9_ZSzAQ&ved=0CFMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=john%20logan%20power%20mississippi&f=false [accessed 1.6.12].

[79] Harris, p. 390.

[80] Harris, p. 388.

[81] Cecilia O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 25.

delineated the way that the wartime Federal government cultivated a national loyalty, that for the first time overrode state and local allegiances.[82] But a bitter and defeated South was largely excluded from this new nationalism. A Milwaukee newspaper, in considering the South's reaction to the Centennial, diagnosed the region's "essential deficiency" as a lack of national feeling:

> The Southron's pride attaches first to his state, then to the South, and lastly, if at all, to the Union. This is…a very mischievous fact. The genuine Virginian finds no satisfaction in seeing the United States lead the world in the attributes of an advanced civilization but if the Old Dominion would surpass Massachusetts he would fairly burst with pride.[83]

A sense of local allegiance and pride was another aspect of the pragmatic pro-Centennial argument and can be seen over and over again in the pro- Centennial pieces in the Southern press, which invariably tell of the economic wonders to ensue if only the resources of that particular locality were to be fully represented at the Centennial. The Centennial Commission of West Tennessee, for example, set out to drum up interest in the festivities by appealing to local pride and self-interest:

> We invoke the cooperation of all intelligent citizens…and especially the press of West Tennessee, in spreading…all the information and facts concerning the great exhibition and their interests in it and urging them to prepare objects to be sent to it…should West Tennessee lag or flag in all this she will…be left behind, in the background and in the dark.[84]

Here was a common theme: that of being left behind, of missing out on an opportunity that other Southern states will be taking advantage of, highlighting a competitiveness that bespoke a state and even local identity that transcended regional identification, never mind national feeling. These West Tennesseans argued that the Centennial offered their region "manifold benefits" and that if they were well-represented at Fairmount Park, "men of capital and genius and activity and force will come and dwell among us from all parts of the earth to share our industrial advantages to develop our material wealth and

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[82] Lawson, p. 3.
[83] "The South Snubs the Centennial" in the *Milwaukee Sentinel,* 17 October 1876.
[84] "1776 and 1876" in *The Memphis Daily Appeal*, 7 June 1873.

to make us rich, and powerful and great." [85] These are interesting sentiments in a region where the battle for local political autonomy was so fierce, and resentment of outside Carpetbaggers and Northern control so intense. A Shreveport, Louisiana newspaper likewise trumpeted the qualities of its own region and framed the Centennial as a prime opportunity to tout for outside investment: "There is, perhaps on this continent, no locality which presents to the capitalist and manufacturer a wider and more profitable field for investment than North Louisiana, and more especially in the immediate vicinity of Shreveport." The newspaper went on to describe the Exhibition as a "great opportunity" which would "enable us to compete successfully with any portion of the Union."[86]

There was a veritable chorus of such appeals throughout the South. A Columbus, Georgia editor showed how specific, and how local, these arguments for the Centennial-related benefit could be:

> What manufactory in the United States is superior to the Eagle & Phenix Mills of Columbus, Ga? What city has better manufacturing advantages? If the South abstains from the Centennial Exhibition will not the unjust prejudice in favour of the North be more firmly planted in the minds of all visitors, of whom there will be hundreds of thousands? There will not be such an opportunity to advertise the resources and advantages of Georgia in a century, perhaps. [87]

An Arkansas editor provided another example of interstate rivalry when he predicted that a Centennial exhibit would "place us a way ahead of some of our older brethren."[88] And J. T. Bernard, one of Florida's Commissioners, assured Floridians that Centennial participation, "though it may require a small outlay, yet… will prove in the end a profitable

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[85] Ibid.
[86] "The Centennial" *in South-Western-Telegram* (Shreveport, Louisiana) 1 September 1875. Clipping in USCCP scrapbook.
[87] "The Centennial Exhibition: Should the South Be Represented?" in *The Columbus Daily Times* (Columbus, Georgia) 7 November 1875.
[88] *Hot Springs Daily Telegraph* (5 February 1875) Clipping in USCCP scrapbook.

investment."[89] Finally, an editorial writer in Galveston, Texas, demonstrated the strength of local and state allegiance while at the same time making it abundantly clear that the Centennial was being seen more as an opportunity than a commemoration:

> There is no state in the American Union which has more to gain from the Centennial than Texas. There is no city which has so much to hope for as Galveston. As a young city, with boundless possibilities, it is our interest to advertise these possibilities before the whole world…[90]

Centennial Debates, Railroads, and Tom Scott

Numerous issues of importance to Reconstruction-Era Americans were interlinked with discussion of the Centennial. Among these was the topic of the railroad, perhaps the chief catalyst for the change and development of American society over the nineteenth century. This section will interrogate the intersection of politics, railroads, and the centennial in the state of Texas, where railroads (and politics) were often discussed in terms of one Tom Scott. Colonel Thomas Scott, formerly head of the Pennsylvania Railroad, was chosen to head up the newly formed Texas Pacific Railroad in 1871, a venture that aimed to construct a transcontinental railway from Marshall, in east Texas, all the way to San Diego.[91] Scott had overseen the growth of the Pennsylvania Railroad from a regional concern with about 400 miles of track to the largest railroad system in the world, covering fifteen American states.[92] Scott's firm, which was lobbying for state support for expansion into Texas, drew considerable opprobrium. Scott was damned for being both a Northerner ("[Scott's] interests and those of Texas are as wide as the Poles asunder") and for supporting the "wrong" side in the Constitutional debate.[93] This

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[89] J. T. Bernard, "The Centennial Exhibition" in *The Sentinel* (Tallahassee, Florida) 15 January 1876, clipping in USCCP scrapbook.
[90] "Centennial," in *The Galveston News,* 2 September 1875.
[91] Lewis B. Lesley, "A Southern Transcontinental Railroad into California: Texas Pacific vs. Southern Pacific, 1865-1885" *in Pacific Historical Review*, 5, 1 (March 1936) 52-60, 53.
[92] T. Lloyd Benson and Trina Rossman, "Re-Assessing Tom Scott: The Railroad Prince" a Paper for Mid –American Conference on History (September 1995) at <http://eweb.furman.edu/~benson/col-tom.html> [accessed 18.1.14.]
[93] "The Proposed Constitution, The Railroad Ring, The Radical Party: Why?" in *The Weekly Democratic Statesman* (Austin, Texas) 27 January 1876.

referred to a new state Constitution drafted, debated and voted on during 1875 and 1876. *The Austin Weekly Statesman* noted that a clause in the proposed Constitution forbidding state aid for railroad construction made an exception for existing railroads, and concluded that Scott supported the Constitution in order to suppress competition from new lines; ratification of the document would, it was claimed, secure that railway magnate "an empire that costs [him]…nothing."[94] The Centennial found its way into this discussion too, with Scott being lambasted for not providing bargain fares to Philadelphia for Texans:

> If the railways would entice people away from Austin to the Centennial show at Philadelphia, to which such adroit efforts are made to draw the Southern Pacific Railroad, they will make a greater reduction than 25% from present passenger rates. But isn't it nice that Austin folks must pay full fare to Galveston or Houston when they set out to the world's center - as Tom Scott sees it? [95]

The *Statesman* followed its sarcastic reference to the idea of Philadelphia being the world's centre with a recommendation to seek alternate routes to the Centennial in order to avoid patronizing "trains owned by men reckless enough to demand almost full fare from poverty-stricken patriots on a weary pilgrimage to the shrine of American patriotism."[96]

When Virginia's legislature voted down a Centennial appropriation, the Austin *Weekly Statesman* linked that in to a discussion of Tom Scott and the railroads by commenting, "It isn't Philadelphia we're against, not a bit of it. But we don't like to have Texas robbed and duped by Tom Scott. But it was Blaine's bloody shirt that staggered and shocked the legislators of the Old Dominion."[97] Here the paper seemed to be conflating two unrelated issues: Tom Scott's railroad ambitions in Texas and an incendiary speech in the Senate by Republican James Blaine against amnesty for high-ranking Confederates, and tying them both in with Centennial participation. On the same page of the same issue, after declaring "it isn't Philadelphia we're against," the *Weekly*

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[94] "How Tom Scott Went Through the Constitutional Convention" in *The Weekly Democratic Statesman* (Austin, Texas) 9 December 1875.
[95] *The Weekly Democratic Statesman* (Austin, Texas) 24 February 1876.
[96] Ibid.
[97] *The Weekly Democratic Statesman* (Austin, Texas) 3 February 1876.

Statesman levelled the familiar charge of Yankee corruption and money-grubbing: "if the appropriation of a million and a half of the people's money is made thereof, it will eventually go into the pockets of private individuals…the people of Philadelphia are preparing to skin all who may attend their Centennial show."[98] The use of the word 'their' is telling here, betraying a lack of connection to the ostensibly national celebration in Philadelphia. The paper then related entirely false information about the Exhibition, claiming that there would be separate admission fees charged for each building on the grounds. It went on to describe the fair as a "money-catching device of the City of Brotherly Love" and described the Centennial as "worse than sectional, it is Philadelphia."

In Dallas, the *Herald* was similarly caustic, if not anti-Semitic: "The whole concern is a big speculation…under the management of a joint stock company, the manipulators of which expect to gather many shekels for themselves from the credulity and gushing sentimentality of their fellow citizens."[99]

Tom Scott was often accused of corruption, but the aversion to him in Texas seems misplaced, for a man who placed railroad lines through Charlotte, Atlanta and other Southern cities. The way in which Texan discourse about the railroad centred on Scott demonstrated an inclination on the part of Texans to conflate the political and the personal. It was a tendency that also manifested itself in white Southerners' responses to certain members of the National Centennial Commission, as will be seen in Chapter 4.

White Southern Women and the Centennial

There was one group of Southerners whose arguments for Centennial engagement appear to have deviated from the pragmatic and economics-driven focus of most pro-Centennial rhetoric: white women. Centennial organizers specifically targeted women in their fundraising efforts; as historian Mary Frances Cordato has explained,

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[98] Ibid.

[99] "Texas and the Centennial" in *The Dallas Daily Herald*, 12 September 1875.

"Woman's role as domestic conciliator was enlisted in the task of American reconciliation."[100] The Women's Executive Committee, headed up by Philadelphia society matrons, issued a plea to American women that "we use all our influence in the interest of peace." The women of the Committee described the Centennial as a "golden opportunity for us to blot out the bitter past" and "come together…cementing the…foundations of our common country." [101]

The ladies of Philadelphia delegated much of this work to a network of numerous state and local groups. Elizabeth Gillespie, head of the National Committee, acknowledged to a Florida correspondent in late 1874 that she saw little likelihood of much money being raised in the South. Gillespie stressed, however, that "we do want you all with us, & this collaboration will *not* be National if one state refuses to shine."[102] In Texas, newspapers across the state carried an appeal from Mrs. M. Jennie Young, who announced that she been enlisted by the National Women's Committee in Philadelphia to "hold ... tea parties, international assemblies and other entertainments" in order to raise money for the construction of a Women's Pavilion at Fairmount Park. Mrs. Young reported that she was "authorized to form sub-committees" and listed the names of appointed ladies in various Texas towns. She concluded, in a call for Centennial commemoration that was both reconciliatory and distinctly Texan, that "the children of the Alamo …should do honor to their revolutionary sires and crossing the ugly chasm that yawns between the two place our flag of rejoicing upon the old [Bunker] hill and say 'this is also my heritage.'"[103] When the Democratic *Dallas Herald* published her pitch to

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[100] Mary Frances Cordato, "Toward a New Century: Women and the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, 1876" in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 17, 1 (1983) 113-135, 116.
[101] "An Appeal for the Centennial" in *The Second Annual Report of the Women's Centennial Executive Committee, March 1875*, p. 26. Historic Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Cited hereafter as HSP.
[102] Elizabeth Duane Gillespie to Ellen Call Long, 3 December 1874, Call-Brevard Papers. At https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/180897 [accessed 25.6.16.]
[103] "Centennial" in *The Dallas Weekly Herald*, 29 May 1875.

the women of the Lone Star State it endorsed her to its "fair readers" with a ringing confirmation of her Confederate credentials: "Mrs. Young was as true a rebel as lived south of the Potomac, yet she justly claims our full share in all the glories connected with American independence. We trust the ladies of Dallas will enter into the matter with their accustomed liberality."[104] The use of the word 'yet' in this context made clear the problematic connection between 'rebeldom' and celebration of American independence. In correspondence with the National Women's Committee, Young attributed her "deepest interest" in the success of the Centennial not only to a patriotic interest in the past, but her hopes for a peaceful future. She conceded that Texas might be perceived as a "Mexican step-daughter" by other states and alluded to secession and war by remarking that, like the biblical Naomi, Texas "went down for a time into the land of strangers" but returned "a true and lovely Ruth, fully instructed in the ways of Israel."[105] Lest any readers miss Young's analogy, she inserted the phrase "patriots of 76" in brackets after her reference to the 'ways of Israel."[106]

In Florida, the mantle of Centennial champion was taken up by Ellen Call Long. The daughter of a pre-War Florida governor, Long had strongly opposed secession but supported the Confederate cause once war broke out. Post-bellum, however, she was a strong advocate of reconciliation. In an appeal to the women of her state, Long acknowledged post-war bitterness with biblical invocations; "I know 'the heart is smitten and withered like grass' and that we have 'eaten ashes like bread'" but went on to outline reasons for participation that fall in line with most other pro-Centennial arguments.[107] Long appealed to state pride: "I think Florida too fair a daughter to be absent on this

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[104] "Editorial Notes" in *The Dallas Weekly Herald*, 29 May 1875.
[105] *Final Report of the Women's Centennial Executive Committee: March 22, 1877* p. 81, HSP.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ellen Call Long, "An Appeal to the Women of Florida" in *The Second Annual Report of the Women's Centennial Executive Committee* (Philadelphia: Thomas S. Dando Steam Power Printer, 1875.) p. 18. HSP.

proud day of maternal majority, and that she herself would feel justly mortified if unrepresented on this gala occasion."[108] She refined that familiar message, though, making it gender specific, and stated that the Centennial would benefit women by "bringing their industry and intelligence into notice."[109] She then, interestingly, attempted to make lemonade out of Reconstruction lemons by arguing that the trials of the post-war years had afforded women new opportunities: "Look around and you will find the once jewelled fingers of indolence now nimbly at work, the head that once thought only to please… bowed with the solicitude of responsibility…"[110] Long argued that war and Reconstruction had caused Southern women to "develop new talents, kindle genius, and by chastening the spirit, exalted the aims of life."[111] She concluded by citing the many rebuffs she received to her arguments, and made a clearly gender-specific argument for reconciliation, noting that the women of the North had suffered along with those of the South, that they had "laid their hearts' treasures on the altar of their country." She argued that women of both regions had "displayed that fortitude and self-sacrifice of which woman alone is capable. They have wept apart and yet together over the grave of buried love…let us gather once more with our sisters of the North, east and West under the parental wing…"[112]

Her appeal had mixed results. One Florida matron wrote to Long: "I'm sorry that this attempt of yours on behalf of our oppressed state has proved abortive… Fifteen years bitter struggle has crushed nearly every spark of patriotism from the Southern breast, and who can wonder."[113] Another correspondent, Joseph Browne of Key West, was equally unhelpful if less frank in attributing lack of interest in what he called Long's

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[108] Long, p. 19.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Long, p. 20.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ida Wood to Ellen Call Long, 8 April 1872, Call-Brevard Papers, at www.floridamemory.com/items/show/180888?id=2> [accessed 25.6.16]

"centennial scheme" not to "indiffere[nce]…but the changes in the condition of society…in the last few years."[114] The 'changes' referenced here were, of course, around the place of African Americans in Southern society and politics. Browne's reply also stressed the connection between discussion of the Centennial and the politics of Reconstruction when he mused about "the great party [Democratic] which has so valiantly vindicated our much abused country."[115] In spite of his pessimism, Browne was able to report to Young a little over a year later that his wife had managed to get "all the patriotic ladies" of Key West interested in the Centennial, resulting in a "Grand Calico Ball." Browne explained that had not the costs of the ball been so great, it would have raised more than the $155 that it did.[116] Ellen Call Long's vigorous promotion of the Centennial as a means of sectional reconciliation was likely an extension of her politics: the Floridian was a vocal proponent of the New South, and raised hackles in Tallahassee when, in the 1880s, she supported the nomination of a black man for the position of postmaster in that city.[117]

When the appeal from the National Women's Committee reached the ladies of Alcorn County, Mississippi their response reflected wartime loss and residual bitterness: "Ladies of the North…one of this committee lost a father, and another lost two brothers, all killed in battle in the late war. . . Our politics and yours have not been calculated to allay the prejudices long matured and nourished between the two sections."[118] However, it also recognized the Centennial as a path to reconciliation, and invoked the same sort of sisterhood that Ellen Call Long had called for in her appeal to Florida's women: "We

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[114] Joseph B. Browne to Ellen Call Long, 1 December 1874, Call- Brevard Papers at < https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/180896> [accessed 25.6.16]
[115] Ibid.
[116] Joseph B. Browne to Ellen Call Long, 13 January 1876, Call-Brevard Papers at < https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/180925> [accessed 27.6.16]
[117] Tracy Revels, *Grander in Her Daughters: Florida's Women During the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004) p. 145
[118] *Final Report of the Women's Centennial Executive Committee: March 22,* 1877, pp. 80-81, HSP.

regard [the Centennial] as calculated to unite us all in a national enterprise…lay a foundation for a permanent peace." They also acknowledged a sisterhood of sorts with their Northern counterparts: "though we heartily joined our husbands, fathers and brothers in the late hostilities, we can now…unite with you…lay a foundation for a permanent peace…and show the world what we women of America are capable of." [119] In a similar vein, Kate Minor of Natchez wrote that she was "earnestly at work, praying fervently that God will bless our undertaking…and in witnessing the fruits of toil from the hands of Northern and Southern women side by side, we may feel that they are united in their hearts in 1876." [120] It should be noted, however, that although a former slaveholder, Minor was notorious in Natchez for her Unionist sympathies, and not "accepted among the Confederate elite society of Natchez.[121]

In Memphis, discussion of the "First Centennial Tea Party" in August of 1875 led the *Memphis Daily Appeal* to predict that the city's Centennial efforts would be "both brilliant and successful. How could it be otherwise when our fair and cultured ladies are its guiding genius?" [122] The *Appeal*'s account obliquely stressed the primacy of state identity by emphasising that the outcome of the "patriotic" efforts of Memphis women would result in a "representation" at the Centennial of which Tennesseans could be "proud."[123]

When the Women's Committee issued its final report in 1877, it noted what these women considered a bond that transcended sectional bitterness. Acknowledging the general inability of Southern women to provide material or financial aid to the endeavour,

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[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Timothy B. Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War: The Home Front* (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2010) p. 128.
[122] "The First Centennial Tea Party" in *The Memphis Daily Appeal*, 24 August 1875. Interestingly, this report contained a reminder to the ladies of Memphis that they were invited to a meeting to organize Centennial fund-raising at the home of Mrs. Jefferson Davis
[123] Ibid.

the Philadelphians nonetheless acknowledged that "the hands of the women of the North were strengthened by the sympathy of their Southern sisters and their efforts were redoubled."[124] It would be quite a stretch to argue that white Southern women were less influenced by partisan and sectional prejudices than were men. Indeed, Union General William Sherman observed that "the deep and bitter enmity of the women of the South" was unparalleled in history, and that "no one who sees them and hears them but must feel the intensity of their hate."[125] While Sherman's march to the sea in 1864 had earned him a particularly prominent spot in the pantheon of despised Yankees, his experience of Southern women's enmity was far from unique.[126] Nonetheless, the rhetoric employed by these women in centennial discourse was at once more open about the scars of war and, arguably, more genuinely reconciliatory than the utilitarian and/or recalcitrant positions held by white Southern men. This difference was acknowledged by Republican Florida governor Marcellus Lovejoy Stearns when he admonished his state's legislature for failing to fund Centennial representation. After expressing the standard regret that Florida would miss out on the opportunity to show the world and potential investors its economic potential, Stearns commended Ellen Call Long and her organization, commenting that he "sincerely trust[ed] that the *men* of Florida would not be long behind them in seeking to uphold the dignity and advance the fame of their beautiful state."[127] However, it is perhaps useful to consider the venues in which these Centennial sentiments were aired. The white men arguing against Centennial engagement or advocating it for economic reasons were largely doing so in public spaces- particularly in the pages of newspapers, while the majority of female opinion on the Exhibition discussed here was in private

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124 *Final Report of the Women's Centennial Executive Committee: March 22, 1877* p. 8, HSP.
125 John McKee Barr, *Loathing Lincoln: An American Tradition from the Civil War to the Present* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014) p. 37.
126 See especially Rubin, *Shattered Nation*: Chapter 7, "Gender and Southern Identity."
127 *Journal of the Proceedings of the United States Centennial Commission, Sixth Session* (Philadelphia: Markley & Sons, 1875) pp. 133-134.

correspondence. The lack of a performative political aspect to these female viewpoints may be a factor in the arguably more nuanced approach to Centennial engagement taken by white Southern women.

African Americans and the Centennial

In contrast to the ambivalence with which white Southerners viewed the Centennial celebrations, African Americans saw the commemoration as an opportunity to express their essential Americanism. From the time of the initial planning stages of the Centennial, black Americans planned and debated the form that their participation should take. Unlike white Southerners the advantages that African Americans saw in Centennial participation had as much to do with laying claim to American identity as with economic or political gain; the objectives were not mutually exclusive. A passage from the *Savannah Tribune*, a black Georgia newspaper, exemplifies African American attitudes towards the Centennial on a number of levels. It invokes the nation's birth and lays claim to black presence and participation at the founding. It also utilises the past to serve the present: African Americans were using the commemorations of 1776 to claim their place and help secure their standing in 1876:

> Would it not be as well for us to inform some of our patriotic friends who are so gloriously celebrating the 100th anniversary of American Independence, that the first blood that was shed for American liberty was that of a negro, Crispus Attucks, who fell while nobly defending the city of Boston March 5th, 1770? And yet our Democratic friends say this is a white man's country.[128]

The excerpt also makes explicit the political polarization that characterized the United States in 1876, with its identification of the Democratic Party with the desire to exclude African Americans from the benefits of citizenship.

A contributor to the *Christian Recorder*, the organ of the black African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church asked rhetorically in March 1872 if the "colored people had any share in the work of bringing this country to its present status?...We have…Let us be

[128] Clark, *Defining Moments,* p. 130.

up and doing…Let us claim that our labor of the past has added something to the glory of the country."[129] Here we see black Americans referencing their participation and their presence throughout the history of the United States and insisting that it meant something. There is also recognition that the commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of independence was an opportunity to articulate this claim to citizenship and belonging. In this spirit, the Convention of Colored Newspaper Men proposed the publication of an eighteen-volume "Centennial Tribute to the Negro" intended to "let the coming generations know our true history." Demonstrating the way in which African Americans already saw the importance of commemoration and the usability of history as a statement of identity and belonging, this set was projected to include volumes on "One Hundred Years with the Negro in Battle," "One Hundred Years with the Negro in Business," "One Hundred Years with the Negro in the Pulpit," "One Hundred Years with Negro Lawyers & Doctors" and so on. [130] Lack of funding kept this ambitious project from getting off the ground.

There was one official black contribution to the Philadelphia Exhibition, and its rocky history can perhaps serve as an exemplar for the black experience of the Centennial. *Christian Recorde*r editor Benjamin Tanner was the moving force behind a drive to honour A.M.E. founder Richard Allen (1760-1831) with a statue on the Centennial grounds. The *Recorder* pleaded in an 1874 editorial:

> Why can't we do it? Do what? Why can't we…have a hand in the great Centennial? Indications are that we as a distinct yet integral portion of the American people are not going to do anything. At the inception of the movement, here in Philadelphia, we were invited to take part, in common with others, but the sequel proved that while they invited us in common, they treated us in particular, which, you know, never answers. [131]

This is likely a reference to the imbroglio over the side-lining of the black women's committee in Philadelphia (discussed below), but was also indicative of the general status

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[129] "The Centennial" in *Christian Recorder,* 16 March 1872.
[130] Philip Foner, 286.
[131] "Why Can't We Do It?" in *The Christian Recorder,* 5 March 1874.

of black Americans everywhere. The editorial continues, with some bigoted rhetoric that might be seen as a qualifying attribute of the Americanism that was being claimed:

> As a people we are surely to be credited with as much common sense and as much patriotism as are alien Romanists, who are not and cannot be truly American….What then, can we do? LET THE A.M.E. CHURCH REPORT A MONUMENT IN FAIRMOUNT PARK, DEDICATED TO RELIGIOUS LIBERTY and have it crowned with a statue of Allen. [132]

This was followed with claims about what such a monument would accomplish, evoking comparisons with the opportunistic entreaties of pro-Centennial white Southerners, but coveting recognition and pride rather than economic benefit:

> It would be a grand thing, a thing that would tell mightily in the interests not only of our church but of our whole race. And it can be done…It would pay, one of its first fruits would be recognition…As the thousands who visit the Centennial and look upon the bronzed face of the old Christian hero, they would be led to enquire, who is this? And by whom was it erected? The replies given would be altogether to our advantage.[133]

Five months later, the *Recorder* was still pushing for the monument, citing the prestige it would bring to the church, and claiming it would be the "grandest thing the American Negro ever did."[134] Here was an attempt to use commemoration to bolster the standing of African Americans by memorializing a high-achieving former slave, and it was taken up with some enthusiasm across the A.M.E. denomination, which was growing rapidly in this period. The growth was largely through evangelization of Southern freedmen and women: total church membership would reach 300,000 by 1876, and 400,000 in 1880, concentrated mostly in the South.[135] The Arkansas chapter was especially active, with Bishop John Brown and Secretary Andrew Chambers both writing letters to the *Recorder*.[136] There was some dissent within the church: the denomination's business manager William Hunter dismissed any gains to be had through representation at the

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[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] "That Statue to Allen" in *The Christian Recorder,* 13 August 1874.
[135] "Our History" at <https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/>[accessed 22.10.16]
[136] Kachun, "Before the Eyes of All Nations," 311.

Centennial as "intangible."[137] In responding to Hunter, Chambers linked the proposed statue with African Americans' status as citizens, crediting it with almost mystical powers:

> It shall be a stepping stone to the colored men of America to rise higher in self-esteem and the esteem of all nations. We intend to leave Philadelphia in 1876 as did the heroes in 1776, with a fixed resolve to achieve noble results; and in 1976 we expect our progeny to gather around the Monument in question, shed tears of gratitude…and call us blessed.[138]

As we shall see in Chapter 5, though, these hopes were destined to remain unfulfilled.

Another significant and telling episode in the story of African American Centennial engagement, referenced briefly above, was the attempt by the Philadelphia subcommittee of Elizabeth Gillespie's Women's National Centennial Committee to involve local black women in their efforts. This biracial endeavour proved unsuccessful. As the *Springfield* (Massachussetts) *Republican* stated, in an editorial republished verbatim in the *Christian Recorder* a few weeks later:

> The ladies of the Centennial Commission very properly invited some of the wealthy and cultivated colored ladies of the city to meet them…talk over the work that needed to be done…very unfortunately…the task of explaining the views and wishes of the Commission was entrusted to a doubtless well-meaning but maladroit member who discharged it in such a way as to outrage the susceptibilities of every colored lady present and utterly frustrate the purposes of the consultation. It is certainly a great pity if such an anniversary as this, the hundredth birthday of the common country in which black and white have an equal right, is to be marred by this miserable prejudice of color. [139]

What the maladroit member said that so offended the "wealthy and cultivated ladies of color" was that they were not permitted to solicit for funds among white people, but were restricted to working within their own community. The ladies resigned from the committee. In response to this, *The New York Tribune* counselled black Americans to "make a special separate effort…for the Centennial, rather than be merged and herded with the indiscriminate mass of foreigners and natives" but the *Christian Recorder* rejoined that the

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[137] Mitch Kachun, "The Shaping of a Public Biography: Richard Allen and the AME Church" in James L. Conyers, ed., *Black Lives: Essays in African American Biography* (London: Routledge, 2015) at <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=AaVzCQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

[138] *Christian Recorder*, 2 December 1874.

[139] "Color at the Centennial" in *The Springfield Republican,* 5 May 1873.

nation, of which they emphatically claimed membership, should "come together as one great national family."[140] This expression of national unity is from the same *Recorder* that went to such lengths to promote the Allen Monument as a commemorative touchstone for a particular segment of the population. It is perhaps useful to remember that the *Tribune's* advocacy of a "special, separate" effort was coming from a white source, one not likely to embrace the idea of integrated efforts. The *Recorder* would have seen their monument efforts not so much as a claim to distinction but as staking their distinct claim to membership in that "great national family." Philip Foner has quoted the *Philadelphia Press* as reporting that the Women's Committee retorted that the disgruntled "ladies of color" could "emigrate to Africa "if they were not happy with the racial *status quo* in Philadelphia.[141] The *Camden Democrat*, in New Jersey, reported condescendingly that: "…the duties assigned them brought the colored sisters in too close proximity to the whites. Silk refused to herd with calico - cologne couldn't stand musk- and a teapot tempest was the consequence."[142] This journal linked the Centennial both to radical Republicanism and to mercantile interests, echoing much Southern sentiment concerning the Exhibition. Remarking upon the "fastidious taste [of] the matrons and daughters of the radical merchant princes," the *Democrat* asserted that, "These frequent snubs ought to satisfy colored people that the professions of those who prate of 'equality' between the two races is nothing but the quintescence of hypocricy [sic]. The prejudice against 'race and 'color' is just as strong with their pretended friends as with those who are falsely charged with being their enemies."[143]

The fact that the *Democrat* was a Northern paper demonstrated again the overlapping political and regional fissures that characterized the 1870s. This could also been seen in the West, where the San Francisco *Weekly Alta* criticized California's

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[140] Ibid.
[141] Philip Foner, 287.
[142] "A Tempest in a Teapot" in *The Camden Democrat*, 26 April 1873.
[143] Ibid.

Democratic controlled legislature for failing to fund that state's presence at the Centennial. The paper went on to suggest that the state Republican Party incorporate state support for a Centennial presence into their platform.[144] This schism along party lines was further reflected in the pages of the Democratic *Los Angeles Herald*. It counselled that when "such men [Centennial organizers] begin to babble patriotism, it is a pretty sure sign somebody is about to be robbed…this centennial celebration, if it ever comes off, will pour millions of dollars into the pockets of Quaker City residents. They will squeeze the American people, and fleece the civilized world."[145] Meanwhile, a report in the *Springfield Republican* highlighted another division in American society: class. The *Republican*'s comment that the African American women approached by the Philadelphia committee had been "some of the wealthy and cultivated colored ladies of the city" further serves as a reminder that only the middle and upper classes, in either race, would have had the time and the means to work for, write about, or perhaps even spend much time thinking about, the Centennial Exhibition.

In 1874, as Congress considered an ultimately unsuccessful appropriation of $3 million for the Philadelphia Exhibition, Representative Josiah Walls of Florida, an African American Republican, addressed the House about the proposed bill. Replying to those (largely Southern) critics who dismissed the Centennial as a money-making exercise, he declared that: "The exposition has been sneeringly alluded to as 'The Philadelphia Job' as though it were an evident attempt to…foist upon an indifferent and unwilling people a scheme foreign to their interests and in opposition to their wishes…all for the petty gains…(for) the local benefit of a particular section."[146] Walls fell into line with the rhetoric of those promoting the Centennial by recounting the economic wonders that

144 "For the Centennial" in *The Weekly Alta* (San Francisco) 5 June 1875.
145 "The Centennial Management" in *The Los Angeles Herald*, 17 May 1874.
146 *Congressional Record*, *43rd Congress*, p. 250.

would follow Centennial participation: "The general interests of the nation as a whole, as well as the particular interests of each State and section, will be surely and so largely promoted by the intimate intermingling of citizens from every corner of our own country."[147]

The Congressman went on to put the Exhibition in its commemorative, nation-defining context:

> I allude to the tendency of such a gathering ...to revive invigorate and stir to vigorous life that feeling of national patriotism in our land which recent occurrences have somewhat weakened...I believe that when from every corner of this broad land...thousands and millions of the free citizens of a free government shall assemble in the very cradle and place of birth of that politically they hold dear…there will be aroused in the bosoms of all a higher and purer sense …of the free institutions (of the United States)…and kindle a blaze of patriotic feeling in whose dazzling light all questions of minor differences and … past disagreements will be blotted out.[148]

Walls had a special point to make, though, as a black American commending the Centennial as a commemorative and defining moment. He concluded his remarks by reiterating that the Centennial could serve to heal the wounds of Civil War, and bind the nation together by reminding North and South, black and white, of their common revolutionary heritage : "For myself and at least four millions of the new freemen of this land of liberty, I will hope that…I may on the 4th of July 1876 stand in the very shadow of Independence Hall and with glowing heart read the undying words of Webster: 'Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable.'" [149]

Other African Americans made similar rhetorical recourse to the founding but in a more pessimistic context. A correspondent signing him or herself "Civis" wrote to a black New Orleans paper, laying claim to Americanness: "I regard the battle of Bunker Hill and the signing of the Declaration of Independence as constituting (the birth) of our national life" but qualified that with the statement that "we are not yet a nation in the

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147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.

proper sense of the term." "Civis" went on to fault the founders themselves: "The founders of our government in making the black man an exception to what they deemed a self-evident truth not only falsified the principles upon which their theory of government wholly rests but they poisoned the very fountain of national life."[150] Taking a pessimistic view of the state of American nationhood, the Louisianan concluded that

> Persistent indulgence in the vices which slavery generates has demented the entire white population of the South and rendered it morally irresponsible. Impervious to remonstrance, it is amenable only to restraint. That it will be restrained, I have no doubt, but how it will be restrained is as far beyond the reach of human ken or now as the method of the emancipation of our race was before the Rebellion.[151]

These observations offered a sobering and bleak assessment of the relationship between the races of the American nation as it celebrated its centennial, and a grim portent of race relations in the century to follow.

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[150] "Moral Insensibility," undated clipping from *The Louisianian* in USCCP scrapbook.
[151] Ibid.

Chapter 4

"On the Arm of a Satyr": Struggles over Representation on the Centennial Commission

There are thousands of Democrats up North who are first rate fellows and if they desire to see Texas at the Centennial we would like to gratify them . . . [but] it is not to be expected that a respectable lady like Texas would enter the festivities on the arm of a satyr like Parsons.—*The Brenham Banner* 17 September 1875

This was the acerbic reaction of one Democratic Texas newspaper, *The Brenham Banner*, to the presence of a Republican politician, William Henry Parsons, on the National Centennial Commission. The passage reflects not only the often emotive and angry responses some white Southerners had to the Centennial Exhibition, but also the way in which the Exhibition served as a proxy for the political battles of the Reconstruction era. This chapter provides some case studies of these Centennial-related political struggles, looking in particular at Texas- a state which, uniquely, ended up with two competing sets of National Centennial Commissioners, nominated by consecutive governors who were bitter political rivals. This will be followed by brief discussions of similar situations in South Carolina and Mississippi. The furore over these commissionerships provided the impetus for widespread public discussion of the Centennial and the part, if any, that these Southern states should play in it.

The Republican "satyr," William Parsons, was appointed by Republican Texas governor Edmund Davis, along with Democrat John Chew, to represent the state on the National Centennial Commission. After Davis was defeated by Democrat Richard Coke in December 1873, the new governor attempted to replace Parsons and Chew with two Democrats, Alfred Hobby and J. W. Jennings. Parsons and Chew fought a months-long battle to retain their positions. This struggle provides not only a sharp vignette of the partisan divide around an ostensibly national and reconciliatory commemoration but also

of the ways in which language about "representative men" was used to shore up the political supremacy of white ex-Confederates in Texas and the South.

William Henry Parsons

The central figure in this story, Republican appointee William Henry Parsons, was born in New Jersey and raised in Alabama but settled in Texas in his mid-twenties after seeing service in the war with Mexico. At that time still affiliated with the Democratic Party, he published a secessionist newspaper, *The Southwest*, in Waco and when the Civil War broke out, he led a variety of Texas companies over the course of the conflict, most notably the Twelfth Texas Cavalry, also known as Parsons's Brigade.[1] Parsons was named an acting brigadier general in 1862 and, though the promotion was never made permanent, was known as General Parsons from that point on.[2] Historian Anne Bailey has highlighted the history of atrocities committed by Parsons's Brigade against both black Union combatants and contraband slaves. She quotes a Union general describing several slaves burned alive in a barn by Parsons's men because they were too ill to get out themselves.[3] There are also contemporary references to claims by Parsons that "negroes [were] to be classed with apes and monkeys rather than with human beings."[4] This could indicate either that Parsons's later Republican affiliation was not inspired by sympathy with the interests of the freedmen of Texas or a truly remarkable change in attitude. In 1865, he joined those diehard Confederates who preferred exile to surrender and fled to British Honduras in a futile attempt to set up a Confederate colony there.[5]

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[1] Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) p. 460.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Anne J. Bailey, "A Texas Cavalry Raid" in *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War*, ed. Gregory Unwin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004) p. 26.
[4] "Gov. Davis and the Slave Trade" in *The Galveston News*, 22 September 1873.
[5] Anne J. Bailey, "William Henry Parsons," The *Handbook of Texas Online* <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ fpa43> [accessed June 8, 2016]. Some contemporary sources indicate that Parsons went to Brazil rather than Honduras.

Back in Texas a few years later, January 1868 saw Parsons, in company with other prominent Lone Star Democrats, including future governor Richard Coke, as a delegate to a "Conservative State Convention," which based its platform around opposition to the Republican Party and what it called the "Africanization of the state."[6] In the late 1860s and early 1870s Texas was under the control of a Republican Party whose Radical wing, headed by Edmund J. Davis, gained ascendency. Elected governor in 1869, Davis was a former Southern Unionist, and had commanded the First Texas Calvary in its battles with Confederate forces for the city of Galveston, among other campaign.[7] Davis's particular brand of "Radical" Republicanism promoted publicly funded education, black citizenship rights, and commercial development. White Democrats, as elsewhere in the South, generally opposed these aims, and throughout the early 1870s the Democratic Party in Texas put all its efforts into 'redeeming' the state and reversing Republican policies. Historian Carl Moneyhon has related how, at an Austin political meeting in July 1870, Democrats attacked Davis "in almost hysterical tones . . . for assuming despotic powers." These men, according to Moneyhon, felt that things had been turned upside down: "they saw their world in turmoil and viewed Republicans as radicals who had betrayed their community and the white race."[8] The central unifying feature of Texas Democracy was abhorrence of the Radicals and all they stood for. These Democrats were determined to undo Reconstruction: the centralization, the taxation and most especially the racial upending that characterized it.

In the midst of this bitterly divided political landscape, William Henry Parsons proceeded to do the unthinkable: in a rather startling metamorphosis in 1869 he earned

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[6] Ernest William Winkler, *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas* (1916; reprint: London: Forgotten Books, 2013) p. 106.
[7] Carl H. Moneyhon, "Edmund Jackson Davis," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fda37 [accessed May 12, 2013].
[8] Carl H. Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), pp. xiii, xiv.

the lasting enmity of white Democratic Texas by running successfully for the Texas Senate as a Radical Republican.[9] In the words of one disgruntled Texan, "He was a rampant, unreconstructed rebel . . . but all at once, in a twinkling of an eye, (he) flopped over. Without notice to or conference with any old friend, he suddenly became the radical candidate for the state senate and by the niggers was duly elected."[10] Looking back on Parsons's switch during the Centennial controversy, the *Waco Register* provided a Republican interpretation, claiming that "While in the foreign city of Rio de Janiero, alone, sick and a stranger, he saw a power to befriend and protect in the United States flag borne over the seas . . . the scales fell from his eyes and he resolved to return and labor henceforth for a united rather than a divided country." [11] Carl Moneyhon has characterized Parsons's conversion to Republicanism as being based on the belief that the Republican economic plan was better for Texas than that of the Democrats, writing that Parsons "was convinced that the Democratic Party offered no hope for the successful reconstruction of the state and particularly for its future development."[12] Parsons himself described the switch as being designed to enable him to "act upon convictions of individual duty to self, family and State."[13] Another possible factor in Parsons's "flip" was his much younger brother, Albert. Despite, like Parsons, having served in the Confederate army, in 1867 Albert began publishing a Radical Republican newspaper, *The Spectator*, in Waco.[14] He became involved in socialist, and later anarchist, politics and was hanged for his involvement in the 1886 Haymarket Riot in Chicago. William Parsons remained close to and supportive of his brother over the years and described Albert's wife Lucy Parsons, a mixed-race woman who had likely been born a

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[9] Bailey, "William Henry Parsons."
[10] White River, "Mr. William H. Parsons," in *The Dallas Daily Herald*, 1 September 1875.
[11] "Gen W. H. Parsons," in *The Waco Register*, 7 August 1876.
[12] Carl Moneyhon, *Texas After the Civil War: The Struggle of Reconstruction* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007) p. 127
[13] Ibid.
[14] Avrich, p. 9.

slave and who fought for Albert's radical agenda into the 1940s, as a woman of "youth, beauty and genius."[15] Historian Paul Avrich has posited that Albert was influenced by William Parsons's renunciation of secession and support for the rights of freedmen.[16] Given that Albert launched *The Spectator* more than a year before William's switch, it seems more plausible to suggest that the older brother's views were influenced by the younger's. But whatever the true reasons for Parsons' change of party, reaction to it indicates clearly how deeply questions of political identity resonated with many Reconstruction era white Southerners.

The former Confederate general was a key figure in Reconstruction Texas: one contemporary report stated that a "Parsons clique filled every position of honor under Davis' administration."[17] In June 1870 Parsons reinforced his new political identity and exacerbated Democratic resentment with his involvement in the Texas Senate debate over a militia bill introduced by Governor Davis. The bill was designed to maintain order, on the supposition that some local officials might be reluctant to enforce all laws specifically with respect to the rights of freedmen. It was also intended to help curb the violence that was endemic throughout the South in the late 1860s. This "slow Civil War," in Edmund Davis's words, saw white Texans' "resist[ance] to the political, social, and economic consequences of emancipation and black enfranchisement."[18] Unsurprisingly, Democrats viewed the bill as an oppressive measure, with the *Dallas Herald* warning that the proposed integrated force would "leer upon your wives and daughters, steal your poultry, burn your rails, invade your cornfields . . . and demoralize and debauch your Negro servants."[19] *The Galveston Tri-Weekly News* reported that, in arguing for the Militia Bill, Parsons referred to

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[15] Avrich, p. 46.
[16] Ibid.
[17] "Grand Army of the Republic in Texas," in *Galveston Tri-Weekly News*, 8 March 1872.
[18] Patrick Williams, *Beyond Redemption: Texas Democrats after Reconstruction* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007) Kindle edition, location 255.
[19] "The Militia Bill," in *Dallas Herald,* 2 July 1870.

the white people of Texas as "murderers, assassins and desperadoes."[20] Texas Secretary of State James P. Newcomb drafted a letter, published in the *Tri-Weekly News,* denying that Parsons had made the statement, and the Senate voted (along party lines) to expel the paper's reporter. *The Tri-Weekly News* published the denial but maintained that Parsons did "charge lawlessness, murder, assassination and crime upon the people of Texas."[21] Referring to Parsons's claims of being misquoted, the paper concluded that he "seemed to have learned the Radical trick of crying 'martyrdom' and the inference is that he wants something, even if it is nothing better than notoriety."[22] Parsons resigned his legislative seat in December 1871, when Governor Davis appointed him to serve as an immigration agent, based in New York City, for the State of Texas.[23]

Sharing office space with Parsons in New York was the man who would be Governor Davis's second appointment to the National Centennial Commission: Democrat, Confederate veteran, Mississippi native, and former slave-owner John Calhoun Chew. John Chew was resident in New York City as an agent and correspondent for several Texas newspapers. In April 1873, Chew wrote to James Newcomb, a close associate of Governor Davis, seeking his assistance in obtaining an appointment from Davis to succeed Parsons as the state's immigration agent. Chew stressed his bipartisanship: "I have written to two or three of my Democratic friends and two or three of my Republican friends . . . they speak very encouragingly . . . the press of the whole state is friendly to me and I believe my appointment would give general satisfaction, both to the Democrats and the Republicans."[24] In an interesting foreshadowing of what was to come, Chew related that Parsons was resigning the immigration position "for the

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[20] "Telegraphic From Austin," in *The Galveston Tri-Weekly News,* 25 June1870.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] John Chew to James P. Newcomb, April 28, 1873, James P. Newcomb Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; cited hereafter as DBCAH.

highest and most unselfish motives," in acknowledgement of the fact that the Democratic legislature would not appropriate the funds necessary for the immigration office while it was headed by the unpopular Parsons. Chew frankly admitted the immigration position would 'assist me very materially in increasing my already considerable [advertising business] with Texas journals."[25] Chew was successful in obtaining the immigration post, and at some point in mid-1873, Davis nominated him to join Parsons as alternate commissioner.

Chew, rather disingenuously considering his earlier lobbying for the immigration post, recounted that the appointment, "coming from a political opponent, quite bewildered me."[26] He continued that he had never held public office but accepted the appointment and "with my Commission in my pocket bearing the broad seal . . . of the United States, a device I had good reason to hate, coupled with the straggling signature of the great Captain [President Grant]" who, he explained, had "helped to deprive me of a fine farm on the Brazos and 20 slaves, I walked forth a full-fledged representative of the 'greatest nation on the planet.'"[27] Chew, adept at tailoring his words for a specific readership, here made clear his Confederate credentials and his use of quotation marks around the phrase 'greatest nation on the planet" emphasized to his Texan readers a cautious, even sarcastic, approach to American nationalism.

Political Struggles in Reconstruction Era Texas

Parsons's resignation of his Senate seat had been well-timed: the first stage of Democratic "redemption" of the state came with that party's assumption of legislative control after the 1872 elections.[28] Then in the gubernatorial contest of December 1873,

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[25] Ibid.
[26] J. C. Chew, "Texas and the Centennial," in *The Galveston News*, 24 May 1876.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Nancy Beck Young, "Democratic Party," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/wad01> [Accessed Jan. 22, 2015].

Edmund Davis faced Democrat Richard Coke. Coke, a native Virginian, had been in Texas since 1850, voted for disunion in the state's secession convention, and served in the Confederate Fifteenth Texas Infantry throughout the Civil War.[29] Coke defeated Davis by a margin of two to one in an election that was rife with fraud and intimidation on both sides. *The Dallas Herald*'s response was jubilant, proclaiming that: "The tyrant's chains have fallen from [our] limbs!"[30] But a farcical imbroglio ensued when the state's Supreme Court ruled the election results invalid. Davis refused to vacate his office and barricaded the state capitol and Coke's supporters had to use ladders to access the building's second floor. In defiance of the Court's ruling, Coke was sworn in as governor after President Grant declined to intervene with military support for Davis. When Davis left he took the key to the locked governor's office with him and Coke's supporters used axes to gain admittance.[31] Before leaving, Davis's wife put her "shapely foot" through a portrait of the president who had failed to back up her husband, and after arriving at the governor's residence Coke is said to have trampled the flower beds that the Davises had planted.[32] Historian James Marten has remarked that, with Coke's assumption of the gubernatorial chair, "Reconstruction in Texas finally ended."[33] This is arguable; the state continued to be governed under the Reconstruction constitution of 1869 until a new document was drafted in 1875–76, largely by Democrats with Confederate backgrounds who, in the words of historian Alwyn Barr, "saw their task as basically the prevention of any repetition of what they believed to be administrative and financial excesses by the

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[29] John W. Payne Jr., "Richard Coke," *Handbook of Texas Online* <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fco15> [Accessed Dec. 12, 2013].
[30] James Marten, *Texas Divided: Loyalty and Dissent in the Lone Star State, 1856–1874* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990), p. 145.
[31] Curtis Bishop, "Coke-Davis Controversy," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mqc01> [Accessed May 12, 2013].
[32] Carl H. Moneyhon, *Edmund Davis of Texas: Civil War General, Reconstruction Leader, Republican Governor* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2010) p. 223.
[33] Marten, *Texas Divided*, p. 145.

Republican administration of 1870–1874."[34] It is also evident, through the discourse that would surround William Henry Parsons and his place on the National Centennial Commission, that the divisive politics of Reconstruction did not end with "Redemption."

Centennial Commission Controversy

William Henry Parsons and John Chew served on the National Centennial Commission for a few years without much notice in the press beyond remarks in the *Grand Army Journal,* a Union veteran publication, that referred to Parsons's career in the "late so-called Confederate Army" and declared that a "great wrong" would be committed if "those who served the country in its days of danger . . . [are made] to give way that the fortunes of rebels may be pushed."[35] In 1875, however, as the Centennial drew nearer, Parsons began to attract opposition from the other side of the political and sectional fence. In August, *The Galveston Daily News* declared that, "The appointment of Parsons is neither creditable nor satisfactory to the people of the Commonwealth . . . It is not at all improbable that [Coke] could secure the removal of Gen. Parsons and the appointment of a representative man by a simple request and presentation of the facts in the proper quarter."[36]

The idea that Parsons was somehow not "representative" would crop up repeatedly throughout 1875 and 1876, highlighting the exclusivity with which many white Texans defined themselves, and revealed tensions around the question of who could be a true Texan. At a July 1875 meeting in Houston to discuss plans for the Centennial, one man suggested that the fact that Parsons was, "to all practical intents and purposes not a citizen of Texas," might furnish grounds for the governor to ask President Grant to

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[34] Alwyn Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform: Texas Politics, 1876–1906* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971) p. 9.
[35] "Grand Army of the Republic in Texas," in *Galveston Tri-Weekly News*, 8 March 1872.
[36] "Our Centennial Commissioner," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 5 August 1875.

replace him. [37] Gideon Strother, a Texan who was himself resident, interestingly enough, in New York, wrote to President Grant about the inappropriateness of his state being represented by someone living outside its borders: "The present commissioner, a resident of N.Y., is obnoxious to the people of our State and our legislature will never appropriate one dollar while he remains in that position as he is a non-resident . . . I understand that should your excellency commission another, our legislature will make an appropriation from thirty to forty thousand dollars."[38]

Closer to home, another detractor known only as "White River" wrote to a Dallas newspaper, reminding Texans of Parsons' recent past:

> As a senator in the infamous 12th legislature . . . with its unholy outrages on the people of Texas . . . its villainous registration and election laws, its bribed subsidies to railroads and a multitude of other infamies, the people of Texas honestly believed and yet believe that Mr. Parsons was a master spirit, and these are the reasons that Texans have for refusing to join in the Centennial, while he is a chief commissioner from the state.[39]

At the July meeting in Houston, charges of corruption had also been made, with one speaker insistent that it was Parsons' corruption, and not his political affiliation, that was the real issue. This was also the main theme of 'White River's' letter to the *Dallas Herald*: "Where did this man, poor to penury all his life, get the money to, as he now boasts, pay his own expenses for three years in Philadelphia? As he has been in no business since his somersault in 1869 . . . the question in the mind of every Texan who knows his antecedents, is 'where did the money come from?'[40] But some critics were frank that it was Parsons's Republicanism that was the stumbling block to Texans' acceptance of him as their Centennial commissioner:

> Several prominent gentlemen addressed the meeting and all agreed on one point, viz., that not one dollar could be raised by subscription or appropriation to have the state represented at the Centennial as long as Gen. William H. Parsons

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[37] "Houston Local Items," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 24 July 1875.
[38] John Y. Simon (ed.), *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (32 vols.; Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967) XXVI, p. 44. Cited hereafter as *USG Papers*.
[39] White River, "Mr William H. Parsons," in *The Dallas Daily Herald*, 1 September 1875.
[40] Ibid.

> remained the Centennial Commissioner for Texas, he having been appointed by Gov. Davis to that position and being a block in the way whom it was desirable to remove before Texas would take any stock in the exhibition.[41]

The widespread reluctance to allow Parsons to be seen as representative of the state was symptomatic of the era's sectional and political divisions and was echoed repeatedly in the state's Democratic press. *The Dallas Herald* conceded that while Parsons was not, technically, a carpetbagger, he was so "utterly base and contemptible" that Texans could not muster any enthusiasm for the Centennial under his commissionership and implied a connection between this and the fact that he had been nominated by the "Radical governor" and not Governor Coke.[42] *The Brenham Banner*, appropriating the mantle of patriotism for those who objected to Parsons's representation of Texas, implicitly linked patriotic feeling with state rather than nation. The Democratic newspaper recommended that "the application of a number seventeen boot to the part [of Parsons's anatomy] where it will do the most good . . . the boot should be well-filled with foot and be made to swing rapidly from a patriotic leg."[43]

The reaction to Parsons in Texas triggered some concern with the National Centennial Commission in Philadelphia. On 4 August 1875 John Welsh, chairman of the Centennial board of finance, wrote to prominent Texas Democrat Ashbel Smith expressing fears that, because Parsons was "not agreeable to the people of Texas," the state might boycott the exhibition. Welsh pointed out that while concern over Parsons's character might be "a proper subject for criticism" it should not "retard . . . a great national movement . . . in which the honor of the Country is involved."[44] The letter concluded with a plea that summed up the conciliatory aims of the Centennial: "I am very anxious that the men of the South should show as much interest in our great work as the

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[41] "Houston Local Items," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 24 July 1875.
[42] *The Dallas Weekly Herald*, 17 July 1875.
[43] *The Brenham Banner*, 8 October 1875.
[44] John Welsh to Ashbel Smith, 4 August 1875, Ashbel Smith Papers, DBCAH.

men of the North, the East, and the West and it would be a great misfortune for the Country, if when all the rest of the world is here our whole people are not here to meet them."[45]

Some efforts towards securing representation at Philadelphia were made back home; in May 1875 newspapers across the state carried Mrs. M. Jennie Young's Centennial fundraising appeal to the women of Texas, discussed in Chapter 3. Meanwhile, in September 1875, the *Galveston Daily News* reported on a Centennial planning meeting: "The attendance at the meeting, though not large, comprised some of Galveston's influential and energetic citizens and the determination was freely expressed not to be second in their results to any similar organization in the country."[46]

On May 8, 1875, the *Dallas Weekly Herald* reported that Governor Coke had appointed W. J. Hutchins, W. F. Fort, and S. J. Adams to constitute a state "Board of Centennial Managers." The *Herald* also published a letter from Parsons and Chew to Adams requesting that he arrange a meeting with Hutchins, and informing him that "we have mailed you documents containing information of value and shall continue to do so . . . trusting that your efforts to secure the complete representation of the Industries of Texas in the World's Fair of 1876 may be crowned with success."[47] The Texas Board of Centennial Managers was the body charged with actually arranging for Texan exhibits in Philadelphia, but with no state funding it never really had a chance of accomplishing anything. Chew reported in September 1875 that he and Parsons had not received replies from two of the four members of the state board, and that after a "tedious delay," Hutchins had informed them that as no state funding was likely to be forthcoming, he

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[45] Ibid. Smith's reply is as yet unknown, but he did write to former Tennessee governor John Brown, then a vice president of the Texas & Pacific Railroad, requesting a free ticket to Philadelphia for the exhibition. Ashbel Smith to John C. Brown, 14 August 1876, Smith Papers, DBCAH.

[46] "Centennial Association," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 4 September 1875.

[47] "The Centennial," in *The Dallas Weekly Herald,* 8 May 1875.

had tendered his resignation to Governor Coke.[48] Chew continued that the "road to Texan representation seemed entirely blocked, but as a citizen of the state, proud of her past and hopeful of her future," he had written to Coke urging him to appoint a replacement board: "Did he do it? Not at all. From that day to this he has never favored me with a line."[49] A month later, Chew again made reference to Governor Coke's "sudden suspension of correspondence with this office."[50] In fact, Coke had, more than a full year after becoming governor, decided to remove both Parsons and Chew and replace them with Democrats of his own choosing. On 31 August 1875, Coke wrote to Alfred Goshorn, the director-general of the Centennial exhibition:

> Representative men of the State shall have charge of her interests there. Messrs. Chew and Parsons, heretofore appointed Commissioners on recommendation of my predecessor, Governor Davis, are not such men. If the State must be represented by them or not at all, the latter alternative will be preferred, and no appropriation will be made by the Legislature for the purpose.[51]

He continued that Chew and Parsons had left Texas and moved to New York and thus, as far as he was concerned, were no longer citizens, thereby annulling their appointment and creating vacancies.

Coke's claim that Parsons and Chew were not "representative" of the state was more than an obfuscation of a desire to have his state represented at the Centennial by politically congenial Democrats of his own choosing. It also signals a concern with "representation" that was echoed repeatedly throughout the mid-1870s. The Marshall *Tri-Weekly Herald*, for instance, editorialized against Democratic Congressman John Hancock's election to the Senate on the grounds of his wartime Unionism and lack of Confederate service. The *Herald* argued that "a representative man, as we understand the term, is one who reflects the position, politically and morally, of the people he

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[48] "Texas and the Centennial," in *The San Antonio Daily Express*, 21 September 1875.
[49] Ibid.
[50] John Chew, "The International Exhibition," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 14 October 1875.
[51] Richard Coke to Alfred Goshorn, 31 August 1875, Coke Gubernatorial Papers, Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas; hereafter cited as TSL.

represents."[52] This indicates that one definition of "representative" in this context was Confederate, as well as Democratic, credentials. The *Herald* continued that it wished to see such a "representative" man sent to the Senate, where "the Democratic statesmen of the North . . . can clasp fraternal hands with him as a representative man." The newspaper went on to insist, rather unconvincingly considering their definition of 'representative' and their restriction of fraternal sentiment to Democratic Northerners, that the "prejudices and hates of the past have no existence in Texas since the close of the war."[53] The Austin *Evening News* unpacked what was meant when Parsons was called "unrepresentative:"

> We make an objection . . . not on the ground that he is an appointee of Gov. Davis, or that he is not a true Southerner . . . our objection is that he is a man whose interests are not closely enough allied to Texas so that he can be said to represent this state in every sense. He has spent too much time away . . . He cannot know every foot of the soil, or her capacity as a man should. The . . . commissioner should know Texas thoroughly and we believe sincerely that Gen. Parsons does not possess these qualifications.[54]

Despite the attestation of "sincere" belief that a representative man should be familiar with every square foot of Texan soil, the salient point here appears to be the requirement for "allied interests," or an interest in restoring and maintaining the power of the white, property-owning, and conservative elements served by the Democratic Party.

Coke's vow that Texas would have nothing to do with the Centennial unless the "unrepresentative" Parsons and Chew were replaced was reiterated frequently through the state's Democratic press, and indicates that the Centennial served as much as an arena for political point-scoring as of a national celebration or commemoration.

The Republican *San Antonio Express* found fault with some Democratic papers' resistance to the Centennial, singling out both the San Antonio *Herald* and the Dallas *Herald* with a telling analogy: "The day will come when such conduct will be ranked with

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[52] "The 'Bloody Shirt' in the South," in *Tri-Weekly Herald* (Marshall, Texas) 20 April 18
[53] Ibid.
[54] "Gen. Parsons and the Centennial," in *The Evening News* (Austin) 11 August 1875.

the toryism of the Revolution of Independence . . . and when the descendants of the opponents of national glory will be ashamed of the memory of their fathers. Who next on the roll of aspirants for a place in this list of those who hate their own country while all the world honors it?"[55] This linkage of Centennial opponents with those colonists who remained loyal to the British crown a century earlier, and the assumption of a shame that would linger for generations, highlighted the exposition's importance as an expression of national identity and implicitly underscores its value as a partisan weapon. (The same paper rather half-heartedly defended Parsons: making no claims as to the general's virtue, it merely professed not to understand "why Gen. Parsons should be singled out in this manner."[56]) The Republican *Galveston Argus,* in a similarly lukewarm defense of Parsons, reminded readers that he had been a "last-ditch, black flag and re-open the African slave trade" Confederate." Professing to "not quite under[stand]" Parsons's flip, the *Argus* allowed that it would violate the "spirit and intent" of the Centennial to yield to "Democratic clamor against Commissioner Parsons because he is a Republican." [57] Another Republican paper, *The Waco Register,* was more stalwart in Parsons's defense, declaring that "Gen Parsons is one of the ablest and most popular men ever within the Democratic ranks of Texas. The only objection the party has to him is that . . . he has become reconstructed, and for that offense they would lose no opportunity to punish him."[58] The Democratic *Telegraph* of Houston retorted that it was to be expected that Radical papers would come to the "rescue" of Parsons but that whether because Parsons had "turned his political coat" or "sold his birthright" or rendered himself "odious in

[55] "The Centennial," in *The San Antonio Daily Express*, 16 September 1875.
[56] "Gen. Wm. H. Parsons" in *The San Antonio Daily Express*, 2 September 1875.
[57] "Commissioner Parsons" in *The Galveston Argus*, 8 August 1875.
[58] "Gen. W. H. Parsons" in *The Waco Register*, 7 August 1875.

other ways" he held his commission against the wishes of the majority of Texans and should be removed from office.[59]

Competing Commissioners

Three days after Coke's letter to Goshorn, on 2 September 1875, *The Galveston Daily News* reported that Democrat and "eminent Galvestonian" Colonel Alfred Marmaduke Hobby had been appointed to the National Centennial Commission by Governor Coke. The *News* repeated the by-now familiar mantra that "no state [had] more to gain from presence at the Exhibition than Texas," and no city more than Galveston, and exhorted its readers to attend a meeting at which "we could all unite in requesting Col. Hobby to accept the position."[60] Hobby was a native Georgian who had been in Texas since the 1850s, served in the Confederate army and authored such patriotic Confederate–themed poetry as "The Sentinel's Dream of Home."[61] Coke selected J. W. Jennings, a Missouri Democrat resident in Texas since only 1872, as alternate commissioner.

Although Parsons's absence from the state in the 1870s was attributable to his position as the state's immigration agent in New York City and then to his appointment as Centennial commissioner and Chew's to his work as a newspaper correspondent and immigration agent, Coke stuck to non-residence in Texas as his ostensible reason for replacing them. Judge James Hall Bell, a Republican, though not Radical, Texas jurist wrote to President Grant in defense of Parsons and Chew in August 1875, stating that the law "in reference to the Centennial Exhibition . . . did not intend that Your Excellency should be made the instrument of injustice or political prejudice" on the part of Governor Coke and requested an interview with Grant to provide him with the "full facts" of the

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[59] "Centennial Commissioner," in *The Daily Telegraph* (Houston) 10 August 1875.
[60] "Centennial," in *Galveston Daily News*, 2 September 1875.
[61] Hobart Huson, "Alfred Marmaduke Hobby," *The Handbook of Texas Online* <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fho02> [Accessed Feb. 15, 2014].

case.[62] Whether or not he received an audience with the President, the matter dragged on a further eight months. U.S. Secretary of State Hamilton Fish recorded his own conversation with Grant about the issue in March 1876, noting that he informed the president that:

> Parsons… had been a Confederate who at the close of the war went to Brazil and was subsequently brought home in one of our public vessels; that he was a member of a disloyal and disreputable organization . . . had made a considerable amount of money in some very questionable operations and . . . had not resided [in Texas] for several years.[63]

Despite all the uncertainty and animosity, Davis appointee John Chew nevertheless appears to have made a valiant effort to drum up interest and funding for a Texan presence at Philadelphia, and there were frequent letters from him in the state's press stressing the advantages of Centennial participation. In November 1875, he had reported to *The Galveston Daily News* that it was a "great misfortune" that the Texas legislature had voted down any appropriation for the state's representation, and urged Texans to make a "full and creditable display" even without a building of its own at Philadelphia.[64] Chew had apparently been unaware that the role of commissioner was unpaid and described himself as "green in honor, but empty in stomach," making clear that the post of commissioner was not a lucrative sinecure.[65]

In March 1876, Richard Coke complained to Texas Democratic congressman Roger Q. Mills that he was "in a scrape over this Centennial Commission business."[66] Coke told Mills that the whole scheme had been the idea of J. W. Jennings: "[he] came to my office and put me on track of a method of getting rid of Parsons and Chew and requested one of the appointments."[67] Coke related that Jennings had suggested he "show

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[62] Simon (ed.), *USG Papers,* XXVI, p. 44.
[63] Ibid.
[64] "Texas and the Exposition of 1876," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 6 November 1875.
[65] "Texas and the Centennial: Letter from Commissioner Chew," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 23 September 1875.
[66] Richard Coke to R. Q. Mills, 15 March 1876, Coke Gubernatorial Papers, TSL.
[67] Ibid.

by correspondence" with Director General Goshorn that Parsons and Chew were no longer citizens of Texas. The "scrape" that Coke referred to was not the controversy over attempting to oust the original commissioners, but the fact that while Mills had recently suggested a mutual friend and associate, Sam Upshaw, for the role of commissioner, Coke felt obliged to honor his commitment to Jennings: "You see my situation? . . . I don't well see how I can justly pass [over] Jennings as the matter stands." Coke told Mills that he would prefer their "friend Upshaw" but that he felt honor bound to stick with Jennings and Hobby. The Governor also offered to try to arrange "special privileges" for Upshaw at the exhibition as a consolation. Perhaps the most interesting and pertinent thing about Coke's letter is the fact that it was simply a given between Coke and Mills that the Republican-appointed Parsons and Chew should be replaced. Coke apparently saw no need to offer justification or explanation for the maneuver.[68]

Coke did seem interested in seeing that Texas was in a position to mount an exhibit in Philadelphia, but in a letter to Hobby on April 1 he doubted the power of the Texas legislature to appropriate any funding for the Centennial under the stringent terms of the state's new, rigidly conservative constitution. Coke related that he had "written to several legal friends" on the matter and could "only say that if the power exists in the legislature [I] would be pleased to see it exercised to the extent of a small appropriation to pay the expenses of the Commissioners and the freight on such products as may be sent."[69] The governor also devoted a section of his annual address to the legislature to the Centennial:

> the two sections of the country lately estranged will find revealed there . . . much to heal dissension, remove acrimony . . . it is . . . the suggestion of policy, no less that of sincere honest patriotism that the people of the South . . . being joint heirs by inheritance . . . with their brethren from other sections, having equal

[68] Ibid.
[69] Richard Coke to A. M. Hobby, 1 April 1876, Coke Gubernatorial Papers, TSL.

> right and title with them in the glory and greatness of our whole country . . . and participate to the extent that they are able.[70]

Having adhered to the standard template by affirming and commending the noble conciliatory goal of the Centennial, Coke also followed the standard southern rhetorical route of establishing southern distinctiveness, and laying claim to a distinct revolutionary heritage with his reference to being "joint heirs" of 1776, instead of merely "heirs." Coke's statement went on to incorporate the same caveats about state funding that he had discussed with Hobby, and ended by announcing, "A few weeks since, Hon. A. M. Hobby . . . and J. W. Jennings . . . public spirited and energetic gentlemen, were appointed by his Excellency, the President, to represent the State of Texas on the board of Centennial Commissioners."[71]

Coke's nominated commissioners, Hobby and Jennings, set off for Philadelphia in April 1876, to present their credentials to the National Centennial Commission and see what progress had been made by the "former commissioners," as the *Galveston News* referred to them, though Parsons and Chew were still in place.[72] Hobby courted the press upon his arrival in the Centennial city. *The New York Graphic* ran a glowing piece, reprinted widely throughout Texas, which called him one of the "great men of the state he represents . . . a man of culture with an understanding singularly comprehensive . . . esteemed for virtues of courage, generosity and public spirit . . . conspicuous for social qualities, he is abstemiously temperate, having never tasted or touched tobacco, wine or cards."[73] Ten days later the *Galveston Daily News* published a gushing report that described Hobby's welcome by his new colleagues and his "intelligent answers to questions about the resources of Texas and the sentiments of her people."[74] Hobby told the *News* that he

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[70] Richard Coke, *Message from the Governor of Texas to Fifteenth Legislature, First Session* (Houston: A.C. Gray, 1876) pp. 66–67.
[71] Ibid.
[72] "Texas and the Centennial," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 6 April 1876.
[73] "Alfred M. Hobby," in *The New York Graphic*, 12 April 1876.
[74] "Texas and the Centennial," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 16 April 1876.

was received with "distinguished courtesy" by the rest of the commission, and, appealing to state pride, noted that the word "Texas" was "the open *sesame* to every door" in Philadelphia. He went on to stress the economic advantages of representation at the Centennial. The apparently well-primed reporter then asked, "if Texas is represented, will it not aid us in obtaining appropriations from the national government?" Hobby responded that "the impression is that it will place Texas in a more graceful attitude to ask favors by thus manifesting her appreciation and interest in the exhibition in which the other states have taken so lively an interest."[75] It is perhaps significant that Hobby made no reference to patriotism or the Revolution of 1776 in his interview. Indeed, the only references to reunion were in the context of emphasizing outsiders' high regard for his state. This was likely designed to neutralize any Texan touchiness about the Civil War's outcome that might detract from his argument that the state would benefit economically from a presence at Philadelphia. Stressing the welcome he received in Philadelphia also served to bolster his own credentials in the face of controversy surrounding his appointment.

J. W. Jennings wrote to Centennial Director-General Alfred Goshorn on April 10. In a missive in which he identified himself as "Commissioner, State of Texas," Jennings inquired about the "actions" of the "former commissioners," as he referred to them, and requested information as to "what . . . [had] been done for the state of Texas."[76] Goshorn's reply did not reflect well on Parsons and Chew and, not surprisingly, was released to the press. In it, Goshorn stated that: "the former commissioners have not, so far as I have been advised, taken any steps towards securing a representation at the Exhibition. No application for space has been made . . . indeed, we have had no

[75] "Texas Centennial: State Commissioner A. M. Hobby Interviewed" in *The Galveston Daily News*, 20 April 1876.
[76] J. W. Jennings to Alfred Goshorn, 10 April 1876, USCCP.

information or requests of any kind . . . from the former commissioners. The time is now so limited that I am embarrassed to know what advice to give you."[77] Hobby reported to the press that he hurried to the exhibition grounds where he met Centennial officials and discussed the situation. A dedicated building would cost the state around $15,000, while renting space in an existing building would amount to half that figure. Hobby urged formal support, reiterating the point he had already made to the *Galveston Daily News* about the linkage between Centennial participation and Federal largesse, "The non-appearance of Texas may appear ungenerous and operate prejudicially when appropriations are hereafter asked for her benefit."[78]

John Chew, meanwhile, responded vigorously to criticisms of his performance through the pages of the *Galveston Daily News*. He explained at length that commissioners were not state employees and did not serve at the governor's discretion. He also refuted Goshorn's claim that he and Parsons had not applied for space by pointing out Goshorn's own circular to the commission setting out that applications for space were to be made directly to the director-general by commissions or boards organized on the state level, bypassing the national commissioners. Chew pointed out that he had been diligent in making Texans aware of this protocol through his frequent letters to the press.[79] There was some private correspondence between Chew and Goshorn over this exchange, and upon receiving an apparently satisfactory explanation from Goshorn for the comments, Chew attempted to stop publication of his letter in the *Daily News*. When publication went ahead, Chew apologized to Goshorn.[80]

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[77] "Texas and the Centennial," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 7 May 1876.
[78] "Texas Centennial: State Commissioner A. M. Hobby Interviewed," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 20 April 1876.
[79] John C. Chew, "Texas and the Centennial," in *The Galveston Daily News,* 24 May 1876.
[80] John Chew to Alfred Goshorn, 12 June 1876, USCCP.

William Parsons also spoke out. In the summer of 1875, as Coke schemed to replace him, he had written to the *New York Herald* in a spirit of reunification: "the most august spectacle of . . . the century, will be the complete and voluntary extinguishment of the embers of war during the Centennial celebrations . . . the men of the blue and the gray will renew the olden bonds of amity and re-consecrate the original spirit of liberty and union."[81] Parsons managed to integrate this statement of the key Centennial theme of reconciliation with an apparently calculated appeal to Confederate sensibilities. Writing to the *Herald* to refute their claim that Robert E. Lee had done nothing to encourage sectional reunion in the years after Appomattox, Parsons quoted from a letter in which Lee pointed out the wisdom of "submission to authority" and proceeded to claim that he carried a copy of Lee's letter "in a memorandum book on my person, as I have treasured it in my heart."[82]

In August 1875, the *Waco Register* published a letter from Parsons in which he decried the "cormorants" who were trying to drive him from office and pointed out that he had been working on the National Centennial Commission for three years without pay, had been a proud Texan for thirty years, and plaintively pointed out in response to charges that he was no longer Texan: "my work is here and not in Texas."[83] Two months later, the Republican and pro-Centennial San Antonio *Express* reported on a ten-page letter that Parsons, obviously stung by the abuse he had been receiving, had released to the press. The *Express* described the letter as being "conceived in a temper and couched in a style" that would do Parsons no favors were they to publish it in full.[84] Parsons's main point was an important distinction: that his role was as a national commissioner from Texas,

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[81] "The South at Philadelphia," reprinted in *Nashville Union and American*, 21 May 1875.
[82] W. H. Parsons, "The Councils of Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis" in *The Memphis Appeal*, 23 May 1875.
[83] "Letter from Gen. Parsons," in *The Waco Register*, 21 August 1875.
[84] "Our Centennial Commissioners," in *San Antonio Daily Express*, 5 October 1875.

and not a Texas commissioner, and that, as paraphrased by the *Express*: "ever since his appointment . . . he [had] ignored party politics" and worked to make the Centennial a success. The *Expres*s backed Parsons, arguing for his "legal and moral right" to retain his position.

Statements from J. W. Jennings in the Texas media were scarcer than those of his fellow commissioners but he did contribute to the public dialogue. Addressing the readers of the Waco *Daily Examiner*, this *alternate* alternate commissioner stressed the shortcomings of Parsons and Chew even as he reiterated their message concerning the potential benefits of the Centennial to the state:

> [Parsons and Chew] have done nothing towards securing our state even space enough to show a pair of longhorns . . . The importance of the Centennial Exhibition to the future of our state cannot be estimated in dollars and cents . . . we must be prepared to surprise even the most skeptical of our greatness by exhibiting the fertility of our soil . . . the capitalists of the old world and the Eastern states are looking for some point to invest this surplus wealth.[85]

It is interesting to note that the rhetoric of Chew, Hobby and Jennings on the importance to Texas of Centennial engagement is virtually indistinguishable. All three men urged participation for the same reason: the benefit of Texas. With no discernible differences in their approach to the exhibition, it seems clear that the rancor was all about politics, and that service on the National Centennial Commission in Texas's name was symbolic of much more than the planning of a fair. The only Texas commissioner who had much to say about the importance of the Centennial in furthering sectional reconciliation was the widely detested Republican, Gen. William Henry Parsons. This fact reinforces the argument that debates around the Centennial were much more about power and politics than they were about celebrating a reunited nation.

Six months into the Parsons/Chew controversy, an editorial from an Austin paper neatly exhibited the interconnectedness of partisan politics and the Centennial. The

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[85] "From Our Centennial Commissioner," in *The Waco Daily Examiner*, 23 April 1876.

piece also demonstrates the way these politics were personalized to the extent that the people of Texas—or at least the ones for whom this writer claimed to speak—could not abide participation in the fair because of the involvement of one man. Other recurrent themes were expressed here, including the idea that the fair was a northern scam, but one that held out economic potential for its participants (but only if the fair was untainted by Parsons):

> The appointment of A. M. Hobby and J. W. Jennings . . . gives perfect satisfaction to the people . . . and since we may now have proper agents the people should evince a share of practical interest in having the products and industry of Texas properly presented. The wonders of nature in the vegetable and animal kingdom should be gathered as rapidly as possible. The legislature's . . . first action will have reference to the ways and means for the perfect illustration in Philadelphia of the riches and resources of this commonwealth. The world will be there to see . . . even though selfish spoilsmen make personal profit the aim of the Centennial . . . if *Messrs* Hobby and Jennings accept the position[s] . . . then the aversion of the people to participation in the great Philadelphia Exposition will be remedied.[86]

As the controversy raged, Chew remarked, with some justification, that the "idea that the avenue to Texan representation [at the Centennial] should be permitted to be blocked by [opposition to] General Parsons struck me as . . . supremely ridiculous."[87] Determined to retain his position, he argued that it was not within the governor's power to fire commissioners and vowed that "You may rest assured that having labored over two years on the great work in hand, I shall not abandon it . . . until the flags are furled and the doors closed in Fairmount Park on the 10th day of November AD 1876."[88] To the oft-repeated claim that he was no longer a Texan, Chew stated:

> Of all the compound fluid extracts of villainy that has flowed from a scribbler's pen, that which emanated from some devil who objected to me as a representative Texan on the ground of non-citizenship, certainly deserves a premium. If he will come to Philadelphia next year I will see to it that he is decked with a crimson rosette and labelled the champion slanderer of the Lone Star State![89]

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[86] *The Weekly Democratic Statesman* (Austin) 23 March 1876.
[87] John C. Chew, "The International Exhibition," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 14 October 1875.
[88] "Texas and the Centennial: Letter from Commissioner Chew," in *The Galveston Daily News,* 23 September 1875.
[89] John C. Chew, "Texas and the Centennial," *The Galveston Daily News*, 24 May 1876.

In an ironic echo of the charges against Parsons, the Austin *Weekly Statesman* now questioned *Jennings's* qualifications, with a correspondent claiming that while Hobby was universally admired, former Missourian Jennings was in "no sense a resident of Texas." *The Denison News* retorted that Jennings was a solid citizen of that town, having been resident there since 1872, and being assistant doorkeeper of the U.S. House of Representatives, was naturally required to be frequently out of state. After some back and forth between the two papers, the *Statesman* concluded: "Mr Jennings is welcome to all the honors and profit that he can get, but it is a pity that some *bona fide* citizen, well-identified with our state and its interests, was not appointed to represent us . . . in place of Mr. Jennings, who labors under the disadvantage of being suspected as a carpetbagger."[90] Lone Star residents seem to have placed a rather strict construction on their definition of just who was and who was not a true Texan. It seems plausible to suggest that some would have found fault with anyone chosen to represent their state on the National Centennial Commission. Moreover, it demonstrates that this always had more to do with resentment of Republicans and the Union, thereby illustrating the shaky state of reconciliation and reunion in 1870s Texas, and the South as a whole.

On 27 March 1876, after having vigorously defended their positions in the press, Parsons and Chew wrote to President Grant explaining the practical reasons behind their out-of-state residences. "We state the question fairly when we say that the allegations of our removal from our state was only a pretext made to subserve the purposes of partisans who wished to accomplish our removal because we were the nominees of a Republican governor."[91] The Washington *National Republican* concurred, declaring that "Gov. Coke and the Texas Bourbons were determined to remove [Parsons]."[92]

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[90] "Editorial Notes," in *The Weekly Democratic Statesman* (Austin) 6 April 1876.
[91] Simon (ed.), *USG Pape*rs, XXVI, p. 45.
[92] "Pettiness," in *The National Republican* (Washington, D.C.) 2 May 1876.

At a meeting on April 26, the National Centennial Commission decided not to recognize the credentials of Hobby and Jennings. Secretary of State Fish had concluded that commissioners could be removed only with their own consent and so Parsons and Chew remained in their posts, despite Coke's crowing, prematurely, in a letter to Hobby that "Parsons and Chew have been superseded. I am much gratified that I have succeeded in prying them out."[93]

The political motivation behind Governor Coke's attempted reshuffle of the Centennial Commission seems clear. The *National Republican's* description of it as "the most petty display of Bourbonism that has yet been made by him or any of that set" appears to be suggestive of the Bourbon/New Departure split within the Democratic Party that affected attitudes towards the Centennial.[94] In this case, however, such a reading may be too simplistic. The evidence indicates that the postbellum political landscape in Texas was too fractured and fluid to be able to discern any such overarching pattern in Democratic Centennial discourse during 1875–76. Because some counties were more overwhelmingly white than others, local Democrats had differing priorities at the local level, making it difficult for the party to exercise control at the state level. Because of these differing priorities, as historian Patrick Williams has stated, "the sides Texans took in one debate didn't necessarily carry over to the next." Williams has described a pattern of shifting coalitions rather than enduring alliances which means that it is difficult to differentiate between an agrarian/Bourbon or Whiggish New South faction.[95] This is demonstrated by the way that the Centennial was used as a cudgel against Governor Coke by a Democratic paper, the *Denison Daily News*:

> Gov. Coke claims credit for prying Parsons and Chew out of their positions as Centennial Commissioners for Texas. We happen to know that he had no influence whatever on that transaction. The truth of the matter is that Centennial

[93] Coke to Hobby, 14 March 1876, reprinted in "Texas Centennial Commissioners," *The Galveston Daily News*, 17 March 1876.
[94] "Pettiness," in *The National Republican* (Washington, D.C.) 2 May 1876.
[95] Williams, location 196.

> Commissioners [were] almost unanimous by asking the President to make the change for reasons satisfactory to themselves. It is stated on good authority that Gen. Parsons had become very obnoxious to his brother commissioners.[96]

(This piece of gossip notwithstanding, Parsons was at least popular enough with his fellow commissioners to have been elected to the National Centennial Commission's Executive Committee during its second session in 1873 and then three years later to a three-man committee overseeing the exhibition's closing ceremonies.)[97]

As the fair opened in May 1876, Chew was still utilizing the press to air his side of the story. He disavowed any animosity towards his rivals, saying he had found his counterpart J. W. Jennings an agreeable man. Chew related that Jennings had offered to resign his position if Parsons would do the same, leaving Hobby and Chew as the state's Commissioners, but that Jennings had not been appreciative of Chew's response to this proposal. As Chew described it, "[I] quietly answered that I was not aware that he (Jennings) had anything to resign."[98]

The Centennial turned out to be, in many ways, a huge success, attracting more than ten million visitors in the six months it was open, or nearly one in five Americans. But in the end, Texas had no official presence at the Exhibition. John Chew laid the blame for the state's absence squarely with "Gov. Coke, Mr. R. Q. Mills [Coke's congressional correspondent] and their coadjutors. It was their pleasure to pursue the 'rule or ruin' policy and they did it with a persistence and a venom rarely equalled."[99] Although Coke, as has been shown, did evince some interest in Texas being represented at Philadelphia, it is clear that for him, as for many others, having what he saw as "representative" Texans as the state's commissioners trumped any desire to use the exhibition as either commemoration or platform for economic boosterism.

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[96] *Denison Daily News*, 9 April 1876.
[97] Centennial Commission," in *The Richmond Whig*, May 13, 1872; "Centennial Correspondence," *The Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, 7 November 1876.
[98] "Texas and the Centennial," in *The Galveston Daily News*, 24 May 1876.
[99] Ibid.

Democrat Richard Hubbard, who became governor when Coke was elected to the Senate in 1876, delivered a platitude-laden speech at the fair in September 1876 in which he declared that "the Southern heart is throbbing for peace and yearns for the old and faithful love between the states . . . let us bury the feuds of that stormy hour."[100] But back in Texas, things were still stormy. *The Titus County Patron* reiterated the resistance to Parsons, making clear once again the conditionality of Texan engagement with the "national celebration":

> Parsons and Chew are determined to hang around Philadelphia and dead beat their way as commissioners, notwithstanding the 14th Legislature refused to make an appropriation for Centennial purposes because they were not the choice of the people. These men recently made oath that they were citizens of Texas to show there was no vacancy which . . . annuls the commission of Messrs Hobby and Jennings and extinguishes the last hope of Texas participation in the national celebration.[101]

In February 1876, a North Carolina congressman delivered a speech from the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives on the hoped-for sectional healing to be brought about by the Centennial Exhibition: "I would go to Philadelphia and shake by the hand the brave men I used to meet on the field . . . We hope to see such a greeting of the patriots of the North and the South as will show to the whole Union that the flood tide of sectional hatred has ebbed forever."[102] The speech was reprinted, approvingly, in the Austin *Weekly Democratic Statesman*, the same newspaper which just a few weeks earlier had sneeringly referred to the Centennial as a "money-catching device for the City of Brotherly Love."[103] In Texas, reunion rhetoric, when indulged in at all, appears to have been just that: rhetoric. The Democratic *San Antonio Herald*, reporting on the exhibition's

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[100] Richard Hubbard, *Centennial Oration of Gov. R.B. Hubbard, of Texas, delivered at the National Exposition, Philadelphia, September 11, 1876* (St. Louis: The Texas Land & Immigration Company, 1876) p. 15.
[101] "State Press," in *The Galveston Daily News,* 28 May 1876.
[102] "The Centennial: The Speeches in Congress," in *The Weekly Democratic Statesman* (Austin) 24 February 1876.
[103] "The Philadelphia Centennial Exposition," in *The Weekly Democratic Statesman* (Austin) 3 February 1876.

opening, remarked that "Once more in the Union, we are with them heart and hand and in this Centennial year and its appropriate celebration, we are with them." They were with them to the extent that, in the same article, the *Herald's* editor had commented, "The great Centennial about which there has been so much gas . . . opens today . . . one pretext or another, they [Centennial organizers] have got their hands into the Nation's treasury."[104]

In 1873 William Parsons had addressed his fellow Texans on the importance of Centennial enagagement; that message had been based on the assumption that the Centennial would be "neither a sectional nor a party question."[105] At that early stage, Parsons had still been able to portray his Republican affiliation as a virtue in promoting the Centennial, emblematic of a bipartisan approach to celebrating a reconstructed and reunified United States. Parsons's outlook, however, proved optimistic, if not naïve, given the tumultuous state of Texas politics in the 1870s. By 1876, it was quite clear that Parsons had been wrong.

After avowing their Texas citizenship and retaining their commissionerships, neither Parsons nor Chew ever resided in the Lone Star state again. When, however, William Parsons was buried at Mount Hope Cemetery in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York in 1907, his tombstone was inscribed: "Maj. Gen. W. H. Parsons of Texas."[106]

Representative Men?

The Parsons affair had parallels elsewhere; Republican commissioner William Gurney of South Carolina drew condemnation that was, if anything, even more vociferous than that directed at Parsons. Gurney was a New Yorker who, after being

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[104] "The Centennial Exposition," in *The San Antonio Daily Herald*, 10 May 1876.
[105] State Correspondence, USCCP. Parsons' message read: "We assume that the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of American Independence is neither a sectional nor a party question, but one that should enlist the sympathy, excite the patriotism and ensure the cooperation of all sections and all parties of our common country."
[106] "Gen William Henry Parsons," <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=parsons&GSfn=william&GSmn=henry&GSbyrel=all&GSdy=1907&GSdyrel=in&GSob=n&GRid=9726140&df=all&> [Accessed 7 July 2015.]

stationed in occupied Charleston in the closing days of the Civil War, chose to remain in the South, and established himself in business and in Republican politics in Charleston.[107] Gurney was an appointee of Republican Governor Franklin Moses, reviled in his native state as a scalawag who vigorously championed equal rights for African Americans.[108] Even a Republican paper, the *Hartford* (Connecticut) *Courant*, observed that Gurney was "said to be one of the corrupt leeches which have sucked the blood of [South Carolina.]"[109] A Boston newspaper made the point that Gurney was considered one of the "worst class" of carpetbaggers, and though abstaining from making any judgement on Gurney's conduct or character itself, commented that he would prove himself a "better man than he is represented to be" if he were to step aside as Centennial Commissioner.[110]A South Carolina judge, T. J. Mackey, wrote to the president of that state's Agricultural and Mechanical Society citing the importance of the opportunity the Centennial presented to "advance…the prosperity" of all South Carolinians and recommended simply ignoring Gurney and liaising directly with the National Commission. The Society's president, one Major T. W. Woodward, responded that such dispassion and pragmatism was beyond him. Indeed, Gurney's appointment

> Render[ed] it impossible for me to have any lot or part in the centennial celebration...[Gurney] is the fit representative of South Carolina carpetbaggers and not of the descendants of Revolutionary patriots...could no native born citizen be found to represent South Carolina, one of the original thirteen?[111]

Woodward here raised the familiar question of just who could be representative of a people, disqualifying the outlander Gurney by citing South Carolina's heritage as one of

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[107] "Gen. William Gurney" in *The New York Times,* 3 February 1879.
[108]David Dangerfield, "Dangerfield on Ginsberg, "Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag during Radical Reconstruction" at <https://networks.h-net.org/node/11282/reviews/11352/dangerfield-ginsberg-moses-south-carolina-jewish-scalawag-during>[accessed 21.4.15]
[109] "South Carolina" in *The Hartford Courant,* 8 July1875.
[110] "South Carolina and the Centennial" in *The Boston Daily Advertiser*, 12 July 1875.
[111] "South Carolina at the Centennial" in *The Daily Phoenix* (Columbia, South Carolina) 1 July 1875.

the original thirteen colonies. He went on to strike another common theme, that of the fragility of white Southern honour: "…the insult…must have been designed to degrade…we cannot, without unmanly humiliation meet the true men of the North at Philadelphia and thus remember…that we are all descendants of the heroic rebels of the glorious revolution of 1776."[112] *The Weekly Telegraph*, of Macon, Georgia, provided a bit more nuance to the politics of this episode by characterizing Judge Mackey, who made the proposal that Woodward was rejecting, as a "notorious scalawag" and by suggesting that Woodward's rejection of the possibility of South Carolinian Centennial participation while Gurney was representing the state would have made "even Mackey's brazen cheek burn with shame."[113] A letter published in a Charleston newspaper argued that the Palmetto State could not engage with the Centennial without incurring shame, due to the state's "degradation." In the case of South Carolina, this was defined as "a government not of our own formation or choice, put upon us by force and fastened upon us as with a rivet by peculiar circumstances made available; for the purpose through unnatural laws."[114] The writer made clear here the link between what this Carolinian considered "self-rule": governance by a white, Democratic Party. He went on to warn that engaging in Centennial celebrations could dull the sense of outrage and purpose necessary to return South Carolina to "home rule":

> Now, to rejoice is to signify satisfaction and to become or even appear to be, satisfied under such circumstances is just our danger, for from satisfaction proceeds impassive indifference. It is important to our restoration to our proper degree that our people never lose sight of this fact of degradation…If South Carolina can be wheedled and flattered into playing the part of an equal, many a troubled conscience among those who substituted moral degradation for physical punishment, will rejoice in the excuse for shaking of the reproach of such an act...[115]

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[112] Ibid.
[113] "Well Answered-Bravo! Woodward" in *The Macon Weekly Telegraph*, 6 July 1875.
[114] "The State and the Centennial" in the *News and Courier* (Charleston) 10 November 1875, clipping in USCCP scrapbook.
[115] Ibid.

Another paper, also Democratic, took an opposing view of the *contretemps*: "Major Woodward seems to think…there was a set purpose to degrade the state. Were such the case, we would fully support his actions. But we cannot believe that there exists any want of appreciation for our state abroad, or any desire to exclude us for an equal and fair representation in the proposed Centennial celebration." [116] *The Fairfield Herald* saw the 1876 celebrations as an opportunity to "bury all disappointments, all our bitterness…and…once more appear clad as full brethren at the Centennial feast."[117] On the same page, however, the *Herald* declared that Gurney was a "fine specimen of the genus carpet-bagger" and had acted as Moses' "coadjutor in his many infamous schemes."[118] The account was vague as to what these schemes involved, but it is plausible to infer that they involved black suffrage and civil rights. The newspaper expressed regret that South Carolina would forfeit the economic benefits of Centennial participation and condemned the "blind partisan which render[ed] it impossible" for the state to be represented at the Exhibition.

Franklin Moses' successor in the Governor's chair, Daniel Chamberlain, was also a Republican, but sought to replace Gurney. The Governor wrote to President Grant that Gurney was "personally so obnoxious to the white people of the state that we are unable to do anything towards having our state represented at Phila. under his auspices."[119] Chamberlain's explanation of the need to replace Gurney served, in contradiction to a literal interpretation of his words, to highlight the extent to which the political and the personal were conflated in the Reconstruction Era South. The Governor told President Grant that "It is perhaps not necessary to indicate the grounds of objection to him. They

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[116] "The Centennial: Shall South Carolina be Represented?" in *The Abbeville Press and Banner* 7 July 1875.
[117] "The Fourth of July" in *The Fairfield Herald* (Winnsboro, South Carolina) 7 July 1875.
[118] "No Place in the Picture" in *The Fairfield Herald* (Winnsboro, South Carolina) 7 July 1875.
[119] *USG Papers*, p. 45.

are not political, at least not wholly…whether well founded or not, the objections are so serious as to make it impossible to accomplish anything while he holds this office."[120] As he had in the case of Parsons and Chew, Grant referred the matter to Secretary of State Fish, who could find no grounds for removing the Commissioner. Gurney remained on the Commission and South Carolina had no official presence at the Centennial.

In Mississippi, Ohio-born Republican Governor Ridgely Powers appointed a fellow transplant from the Buckeye State, Obidiah C. French, to the National Commission. French was a Republican legislator and a close political ally of Adelbert Ames, who succeeded Powers in the Governor's chair. French was routinely excoriated in the state's conservative Democratic press, apparently not without justification; historian William C. Harris has referred to French as a "shady Carpetbagger" whose questionable dealings had raised concern even among other Republicans.[121] The Federal government at one point sued French for a $6,000 shortfall in the accounts of a Freedmen's Bureau branch that he had managed in the late 1860s.[122] In 1871, one Democratic legislative colleague, Z. P. Landrum, posted cards around Jackson denouncing French as "a coward, a poltroon…a scoundrel…a low-bred carpet bag cur."[123] In May 1876 the Bourbon-leaning *Hinds County Gazette* cited an item about the Centennial in *The Jackson Clarion* that referred to French. The *Gazette* pointedly put quotation marks around French's name and title: "Col. O. C. French, Centennial Commissioner from Mississippi" and went on to comment,

> This is the same French, if we are not mistaken, who swindled the people of Mississippi out of the swamp lands and the same man who got a bill through the negro legislature granting him 450 able-bodied convicts from the Mississippi Penitentiary, free of charge, 200 of which he instantly transferred to Col. Ed. Richardson for the handsome sum of $15,000, which

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120 Ibid.
121 Harris, p. 468.
122 Harris, p. 619.
123 "A Personal Card" in *The Weekly Clarion* (Jackson, Mississippi) 13 April 1871.

> he pocketed. But "O.C. French" is no doubt worthy of the position he holds - a representative to one of the grandest humbugs and frauds of the age.[124]

The Austin *Weekly Statesman* complained in 1875 that Republican rule left white Texan men in a state of "degradation" and that submission to Radical control was at the cost of loss of self-respect and personal dignity, exacerbated by the negation of white votes by those of "apes."[125] This statement was not made in reference to Parsons or the Centennial but a connection can be inferred. William Parsons personified Radical rule and hence, to many white Texans, it would seem, their own lack of control during the years of Reconstruction. The Republican Centennial commissioner thus served as a convenient proxy for the anger, humiliation, and resentment that still festered after both "Redemption" and a decade of "peace." (The pertinacious John Chew was collateral damage, victim of his pairing with the despised Parsons.) Discourse around the Centennial provided a platform for Texans to express these feelings as well as their determination that Texas was a white, Democratic state and could not be legitimately represented by one such as Parsons. The Centennial exhibition in Philadelphia provided an opportunity for Americans to commemorate the anniversary of their founding, and a space in which to declare and display a new post-war identity. But it was more than a physical space. The Centennial served as a rhetorical arena as well. The obsession with selecting "representative men" to represent their state underscored the determination of many white ex-Confederates to exercise power in what they saw as *their* state. The white Southerners opposed to Parsons, Gurney and French were also concerned with degradation, humiliation, and emasculation. Already dealing with these feelings as a result of military defeat and a loss of political control, the Centennial was seen as an arena in which southern manhood and honor could be further damaged. These men, as

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[124] *Hinds County Gazette* (Raymond, Mississippi) 31 May 1876.
[125] "The Country's Worst Enemies," in *The Weekly Democratic Statesman* (Austin) 13 May 1875.

Republican appointees of Republican governors, were simply not acceptable to many white residents of their respective states as any sort of representative.

The Centennial was not, for many white Southerners, something that transcended politics or sectionalism. For them the Centennial *was* politics: something to be shunned if associated in any way with appointees of a Republican governor, something to be considered alongside ratification of a new constitution. It was a blank slate, a vessel to serve as rhetorical proxy for a wide array of political and social discussions. Issues around Southern engagement with the Centennial would be further contested once the great fair opened to the public on 10 May 1876.

Chapter 5

"Everybody is Centennializing:" White Southerners and African Americans at the 1876 Centennial

"A Yankee never eats anything that he can sell, and a Southern man never sells anything that he can eat." [1] This aphorism, appearing in a small-town Mississippi newspaper, captured the way white Southerners saw themselves in the Centennial year of 1876, and the way in which their self- definition was bound up in their perceived differences from their Northern counterparts. This chapter will explore the ways in which the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia served as a catalyst for white Southern reflection about sectional distinctiveness, show how discussion of the commemoration was used to different ends in political and public discourse, and analyse the importance of the Exhibition as a site of Civil War memory. White Southern ambivalence towards the Centennial will be contrasted with African American experiences of the Centennial which centred around largely frustrated hopes of using the Exhibition as a platform to lay claim to full American citizenship.

Historian Lynn Spillman has addressed what she calls "center-periphery" relations in the context of the Centennial, and her identification of "Eastern manufacturing and commercial elites" as 1876 America's cultural centre would necessarily relegate the white South to the periphery.[2] This will be borne out through a look at press coverage of the Exhibition, where a sense of apartness, of distinct sectional and political identity (the two were, as has been seen, largely conflated) was evident in much white Southern discussion around the Centennial. The fierce debate over the extent of Southern participation in the commemoration described in chapter 3 continued into the Centennial year but began,

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[1] "The Differences" in *The Holly Springs South* (Holly Springs, Mississippi) 30 March 1876.
[2] Spillman, pp. 138-140.

once the Exhibition had opened, to be overshadowed by descriptions of the great fair that were sometimes as politically and sociologically loaded as the debates around participation had been.

The Inescapable Centennial

The Exhibition's significance and power to both confirm and challenge American identities were ratified by its sheer reach: the Centennial hosted a staggering 20% of the American population, and virtually every literate person amongst the remaining 80% would have been exposed to discussion and descriptions of the fair. Put simply, the Centennial was inescapable in 1876.

Newspapers across the South regularly listed the names of local citizens who had "Gone to the Centennial" and ran prominently displayed advertisements from railroad companies offering special excursion fares to and from Philadelphia. In Pulaski, Tennessee, the local newspaper published a letter signed by dozens of local citizens requesting that Captain C. P. Jones, recently returned from Philadelphia, deliver a lecture on "The World's Great Show" for Pulaski residents unable to see it for themselves. Jones' acceptance was also published, along with the caveat that he was incapable of "convey[ing] any adequate conception of the Great Show at Philadelphia."[3] In Columbia, Tennessee, the *Herald and Mail* reported that:

> Reverend Stoddert, who…gives interest to every subject upon which he speaks, is expected to lecture…on the Centennial. Having devoted sometime (sic) to the examination of all subjects of interest at this grand Exposition of the world's curiosities, he will be able with his great powers of delineation to present a panoramic view of the whole scene which will be more perfect and far better than nine tenths of the visitors will ever see amid the hurly-burly and wild rush of the excited crowds.[4]

In the view of this Tennessee editor, then, there was no need for anyone to actually travel to Philadelphia when they could instead rely upon the delineative powers

[3] "Lecture by Capt. Chas. P. Jones" in *The Pulaski Citizen*, 9 November 1876.
[4] "Rev. Stoddert" in *The Herald and Mail* (Columbia, Tennessee) 18 August 1876.

of a local minister to experience what was more an exhibition of curiosities than a commemoration. Elsewhere in the same edition, the paper noted that "several of our handsomest and most prominent young bachelors are making their arrangements to start to the Centennial. While we believe it is money badly laid out, yet it is theirs. They can very conveniently spare it and if they choose to use it in this way, no one has a right to object."[5] The newspaper seemed more sympathetic to "Bob Frierson," who, it observed, was going to "stay at home, smoke Centennial cigars, and wait for the next hundred years to roll around." [6] This was typical of the surfeit of often laboured humour, much of it focused on the ubiquity of Centennial talk; an Arkansas newspaper editor joked that "Centennial fever is worse than measles; it's bigger."[7] The *Richmond Enquirer* noted that "the advocates of phonetic spelling have neglected to avail themselves of every public writer's weariness over the words 'Centennial Exhibition' as a plea with which to get their theories into favour. Every newspaper writer…would look with favour upon a proposition to write 'Cen10yl' or '10c.yl.' or ANY other abbreviation of the word, which must be used so many times in every newspaper." [8] The *Dallas Herald*, meanwhile, defined a 'Declaration of Independence" as "refusing to take your mother-in-law to the Centennial Exhibition."[9] But the extent of centennial fever was perhaps best embodied by George Washington Americus Vespucci Snodgrass, of Ripon, Wisconsin, who provided the *Chicago Tribune* with details of his plan to push a wheelbarrow across the country to the Exhibition in Philadelphia. The newspaper's report on Snodgrass's pilgrimage demonstrated the extremities of patriotic fervour that the anniversary brought

[5] "Ho! For the Centennial" in *The Herald and Mail* (Columbia, Tennessee) 18 August 1876.
[6] "Around Town" in *The Herald and Mail* (Columbia, Tennessee) 18 August 1876.
[7] "From Philadelphia" in *The Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock) 8 April 1876.
[8] "Centennial Notes" in *The Richmond Enquirer*, 13 May 1876.
[9] "Local Brevities" in *The Daily Herald* (Dallas) 18 June 1876.

out in some Americans as well as the fact that cynicism about Centennial overkill was not confined to the South. The *Tribune* remarked that Snodgrass was:

> about to set out for the Centennial with his patriotic contribution to the horrors of that Exhibition. He will, he says, be attired in a Continental suit of clothes, made of the Stars and Stripes pattern, his wheelbarrow is similarly painted and decorated with the star-spangled banner, and its contents are 37 enamaled [sic] bricks, each bearing the name and coat-of-arms of one of the states. Mr Snodgrass will carry the 38th brick in his hat until he hears that Colorado has been admitted to the Union, when it will be added to his load. A hand-organ attached by a crank to the wheel of the barrow will grind out patriotic airs as he progresses on his wheeling way. Mr Snodgrass sends the *Chicago Tribune* an elaborate time-table, giving the day and hour at which he will be due at a variety of given points. This time-table will be of great convenience to the Vigilantes, who will thus be enabled to make their arrangements for lynching or tarring and feathering him, as humanity may dictate, with the smallest possible waste of time.[10]

The Centennial as Spectacle and Symbol

Most Southern visitors to the Exhibition arrived by train rather than wheelbarrow and many sent back breathless accounts of its wonders. A Virginia woman, writing to a relative, explained that "When I first got there I felt bewildered and my eyes hurt me from looking so much. I hardly know where to begin to tell you of what I saw." She continued that she felt that those who avoided the Exhibition would feel 'very blank' in twenty years' time.[11] The *Atlanta Constitution,* meanwhile, informed its readers that the Centennial was an opportunity no man "who can command the necessary time and money should neglect. Two weeks are needed, although one busy week is better than none at all." The paper also advised potential visitors to travel during the summer, "before the hordes of Northern farmers get there."[12] The *Richmond Enquirer*'s report was typical:

> A more magnificent scheme was never gotten up in any city in these modern times…To describe all or even a part of what is to be seen there in even slight detail would take days, weeks, even months. There is such a variety of every conceivable product, from all parts of the world, that the mind becomes confused in attempting to attempt to enumerate them. It is almost futile to attempt even a formal description of what's to be seen… All I have to say is come, see and be satisfied. If you've got the money, alright, come. If not, borrow it, it will pay you to go into debt and pay fifty per cent interest, rather than not see the Arabian Nights of modern times. If worst comes to worst, buy a walking

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[10] "The Centennial Idiot" in *The Chicago Tribune*, 12 June 1876. Snodgrass' story was picked up by several other newspapers around the country, most were derisory in tone.
[11] Eliza Adams Robinson to Alice Marshall, 17 September 1876, Williams Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.
[12] "Centennial" in *The Atlanta Weekly Constitution*, 11 July 1876.

> excursion ticket and start up the railroad track. At any rate, come, for you may live a hundred years and still never see anything like it.[13]

The Arabian Nights theme was reiterated by a young North Carolina lawyer, John Henderson, who wrote to his mother that, "In going through the different buildings one is utterly bewildered by the displays. It reminds me more of the Arabian Nights than anything else...People think of nothing else here except the Centennial. Nobody talks politics. You read about that in the papers."[14]

Henderson's assertion about politics is not supported, though, by the evidence. While the Centennial Exhibition itself bedazzled, and made some forget politics, the Centennial in abstract, the idea of the Exhibition and what it represented, was all politics, and people's reactions to it seemed to exist independently of the actual Exhibition.

A contentious subject throughout the years of planning, the Exhibition continued to serve as a lightning rod for partisan discourse when it opened its gates to the public on 10 May 1876. In contrast to the *Richmond Enquirer*'s awestruck descriptions of Centennial wonder, reporter Harry Moss, writing in the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* was eager to downplay the success of the exhibition: "Never since the world began has any city so overcropped herself as Philadelphia has in her Centennial expectations." Moss painted a picture of empty hotel rooms and desperate vendors, describing "oceans and oceans of lager which has never been tapped, regiment after regiment of white-aproned waiters who have never served a customer, battalions upon battalions of snappish hotel clerks with scarcely anybody to snap at."[15] Ten days after the fair opened, the *Mobile Register* gloated about "over-grasping" Philadelphia's "disastrous financial failure." [16] The

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[13] "Centennial Notes: A Richmond Man's Observations at the Great Exhibition" in The *Richmond Enquirer,* 4 June 1876.
[14] John S Henderson to 'Mother,'15 September 1876, John S Henderson Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Cited hereafter as SHC.
[15] Harry Moss, "Harry Moss at the Centennial" in *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans) 25 June 1876.
[16] "Centennial Failure" in *The Mobile Register*, 21 May 1876.

Register counselled Alabamians to avoid "Centenniadelphia," and played down both the appeal and the success of the Centennial, remarking that "the Centennial rush from the South has dwindled into almost nothingness…our people are too poor to go northward this year…especially when they reflect that it will be one of universal extortion and cheating, with the mighty Yankee Nation 'on the make' as one man." [17] Here the *Register* employed the trope, often encountered in Centennial-related discourse, that the Exhibition was a money-making scam devised by a people more commercial, and more avaricious than were Southerners. As has been demonstrated, this had been a consistent theme of those Southerners arguing against Centennial engagement during 1873-1875 and remained popular after the fair had opened.

These descriptions are at odds with most other accounts, but, taken with the jaundiced views expressed in Bourbon-leaning papers like the *Hinds County Gazette*, they seem to illustrate the ways in which the Centennial served a purpose beyond amusement and beyond commemoration of an anniversary. The Exhibition sparked strong feelings and its relevance and meaning were evident in the efforts of those determined to tear it down and dismiss its importance. Commenting on a report that very few residents of the Magnolia State had visited the Exhibition in its first month, the *Gazette* remarked simply, "Sensible Mississippians."[18] And when discussing Mississippi's Centennial headquarters, the *Gazette* pointed out the state's economic dependence on Northern manufacturing when it sneered that the "close-fisted Yankees no doubt shake with laughter as they pass by the house erected at the expense of the exhausted Treasury of impoverished Mississippi out of 68 varieties of wood gathered from forests that did not supply the handles for the axes that provided the 68 varieties…"[19] In contrast, the relatively pro-

[17] "Summering at Home" in *The Mobile Register,* 14 May 1876.
[18] *The Hinds County Gazette* (Raymond, Mississippi) 14 June 1876.
[19] *The Hinds County Gazette* (Raymond, Mississippi) 24 May 1876.

Centennial *Clarion* of Jackson saw the matter differently, demonstrating how much of the Southern discourse around the Exhibition centred on state pride: "Our rustic cottage at Fairmount Park, displaying the great variety of timber grown in Mississippi is attracting very general attention….several large contractors and builders have been around, looking at and admiring our fine specimens of yellow pine, etc. ..a great many ladies who have visited the building have carried off pieces of the bark as curiosities."[20]

North Carolinian John Henderson had commented to his wife (before they knew they would be attending the Exhibition) about a relative who harboured ill feeling towards the commemoration:

> Yr uncle Tom Ruffin has conceived a violent hatred of the Centennial and all connected with it or who patronize it or who speak of patronizing it. I told him you and I would fail to patronize (it) for no other reason than because we were too poor to do so and that I wished exceedingly that that obstacle could be removed. That statement however did not make him view the subject any more leniently. If anything, he now looks upon us with much less favour than ever, on account of our weakness for the Centennial.[21]

Tom Ruffin's reaction was typical of the strong reactions the Centennial could elicit. While the precise source of Ruffin's animus is unknown, it is likely safe to infer that it was grounded in sectional resentment, like much of the anti-Centennial rhetoric that had echoed through Southern legislative halls and across editorial pages in the months and years of build-up to the Centennial.

A strong sense of sectional identity is evident in much white Southern discussion of, and reaction to, the Centennial; for those white Southerners who did go, the Centennial Exhibition appears to have engendered a good deal of self-conscious Southernism for a commemoration that was intended to promote sectional amity and postbellum healing. One Mississippian described their emotions upon coming across that state's Centennial headquarters as "kindred to the feelings which is [sic] awakened when

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[20] "Centennial Notes" in *The Weekly Clarion* (Jackson, Mississippi) 3 May 1876.
[21] John S. Henderson to Elizabeth Henderson, 2 July 1876, John S. Henderson Papers, SHC.

one catches a sight of the flag of his own country waving among the pennons of other nations in a strange port."[22]

Another Southerner described an incident that occurred as she and a companion travelled to Philadelphia for the Centennial:

> An Irishman was in the seat behind us…[he] was a highly educated man, he got to talking to a gentleman next to him who was quite deaf, in the course of his remarks it came out that the Irishman was a Southern sympathizer and the deaf man was a Republican. He quite horrified the Rep[ublican] by saying if the thing was to be done over again he would come over and help the South, and paid the Southern people compliment-for which Bettie turned around and thanked him.[23]

"Bettie" was typical of the Southern visitor to Philadelphia: they seldom seemed to lose consciousness of their difference and their status as outsiders or "foreigners" at the Centennial. The same correspondent, in describing some objects on display at the Exhibition that she "suppose(d)…came over on the May flower (sic)," declared herself unimpressed: "not that I admire it on that account, for I wish she had sunk in mid ocean."[24] This violent reaction to the seventeenth-century voyage that resulted in the settlement of New England serves to emphasise a white Southern sense of apartness, harking back to the old belief that New Englanders descended from Puritan Roundheads and Southerners from the Cavaliers.

Representation of Slavery and Civil War at the Centennial

Puritan relics were not the only items on view at the Exhibition that aroused strong regional feelings. Particular sensitivity was also shown to any artistic representation of slavery or emancipation. The Republican *Knoxville Chronicle* commenting on disappointing attendance during the Centennial's first few weeks, predicted that while the exhibition would end up losing money, the fair would succeed on an aesthetic and artistic level. The Democratic *News*, of Bristol, Virginia, seized on this assumption of 'failure' to

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[22] *The Weekly Clarion* (Jackson, Mississippi) 16 August 1876. "Pennon" is an archaic form of "pennant."
[23] Unknown to "Dear Aunt," 2 December 1876, Larkin Newby Papers, SHC.
[24] Ibid.

proclaim that "The fact that it is being made a sectional parade for flaunting the bloody plumes of the late war and the laurel wreaths of northern heroes will cause it, not only to lose much patronage it would otherwise have had, but cease to be regarded as a national affair."[25] The *News* concluded with a sentiment that encapsulates the delicacy of white Southern sensibilities in any matter concerning the war and its outcome: "There ought not to be anything there which revives the unpleasant memories of the late bloody struggle inside the nation."[26] The newspaper's reference to 'the nation,' while allowing that there was *a* nation, serves to point up the shaky state of reconciliation. The difference in attitude between these Republican and Democratic Southern newspapers towards the Centennial is just one indicator of how deep the partisan and sectional split was in 1876, and of how discourse around the Centennial reflected these divisions.

The *Petersburg Post* of Virginia described one Southerner's reaction to a painting on display entitled "Emancipation" which depicted Abraham Lincoln using a sledgehammer to break the chains on a "heavily shackled" black man while hovering angels smiled their approval: "The gentleman who saw this disgusting picture at once turned on his heels and left the Centennial grounds and a few hours after was on the train speeding homewards. He now advises every Southerner to keep away from the Centennial, or if they care to be insulted, to go by all means."[27] Another Virginia paper, in recounting this anecdote, dismissed the Centennial as a "bigoted sectarian show for the humiliation of the conquered South." [28]

A reporter for the *Richmond Enquirer* took offense from another work: "One very objectionable thing I did see. It was a bronze in the United States department, wherein a negro is represented struggling with a mammoth bloodhound who has him by the throat.

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[25] "The Insult to the South" in *The Bristol News*, 23 May 1876.
[26] Ibid.
[27] "The Insult to the South" in *The Bristol News,* 23 May 1876.
[28] Ibid.

A brazen slander on the Southern people."[29] Commenting on a different bronze, probably Francesco Pezzicar's *The Abolition of Slavery*, a correspondent for the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* conveyed their disgust at "the malicious insolence of the idiots who are running the Centennial."[30] Describing a piece of "abolitionist scarecrow," 'Cousin Nourma' continued that, "Placed thus conspicuously by some malicious and spiteful persons, with no other design but to flaunt an insult in the eyes of Southern visitors…the thing is a frightful caricature of the subject it represents." Unable or unwilling to recognize any motive beyond a desire to insult Southerners, 'Nourma' concluded that the piece "frightens children, shocks ladies, alarms girls and is sneered on by men. So the artist has found his reward in failure."[31] A correspondent for a Galveston paper concurred, describing for readers "a brassy looking bronze figure, representing the negro set free, which the Yankees think very fine but which looks like a dancing dervish to me."[32] Historian Susanna Gold has recounted other negative reactions to the work, noting that the image of a muscular, seemingly powerful black man, with the implication of entitlement to "social and political authority" was deeply problematic for most white Americans.[33] Notions of black masculinity were especially threatening to the rigidly gendered white South and the widely hostile and dismissive reactions to Pezzicar's work provide an uncomfortable foreshadowing of the rape scares that would characterize the early Jim Crow South a generation later.

Unsurprisingly, the Civil War itself was another sore spot for Southern visitors to the Exhibition. The largest of over 1300 paintings in the American Gallery at Fairmount

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[29] "Centennial Notes: A Richmond Man's Observations at the Great Exhibition" in The *Richmond Enquirer,* 4 June 1876.
[30] 'Cousin Nourma' "Jottings by the Way" in *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans) 13 August 1876.
[31] Ibid. Cousin Nourma prefaced these comments with a discussion of "the Radical political junta" and its alleged plans to use bayonets to ensure the Republicans carried Southern states in the fall election; demonstrating again the intersection of politics and Centennial.
[32] "Centennial Chat" in *The Galveston News*, 4 June 1876.
[33] Gold, *The Unfinished Exhibition*, pp. 121-123.

Park was Philadelphia artist Peter Rothermel's *Battle of Gettysburg*. At 16 by 32 feet, it was, according to the *New York Tribune*, the "central showpiece at the Centennial."[34] Besides commemorating a decisive Confederate defeat, arguably the turning point of the war, the picture, according to historian Susanna Gold, "celebrates Northern efforts by depicting the beginnings of the Southern demise." Gold contrasts the painting's depiction of brave, triumphant Union forces with "fearful, helpless and ungainly Confederates."[35] The painting was only the most notable of several works of art depicting the war, and prompted one Texan to comment that "I do not much admire the American paintings (at the Centennial) and there is one- the largest in all the collections- that should never have been hung." The Texan remarked on the painting's prominent position and, noting the large crowds that gathered around it discussing the war, quoted a fellow Southerner as commenting "that picture will make trouble yet, you had better take it down." This observer was particularly galled because the painting's presence there seemed to fly in the face of the Centennial's goal of selective commemoration: "I believe it was understood there was to be no reminders of the 'late unpleasantness.'"[36] The *Mobile Register* used Rothermel's work and the prominent position it was given to demonstrate the "glaring… (lack of) common decency and taste" in what it dismissively referred to as "this love-feast of the centuries."[37] In Bristol, Virginia, the local newspaper's correspondent referred to the "thousands" of works of art on display at the Exhibition but only commented on Rothermel's, pronouncing it a "daub" noteworthy only for its gargantuan size and the "bloody memories it revives."[38] The *Richmond Enquirer's* correspondent, adopting a milder tone, reassured his readers that:

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[34] Susanna Gold, "Fighting It Over Again: The Battle of Gettysburg at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition," *Civil War History*, 54, 3 (2008) 277-310, 281.
[35] Gold, "Fighting It Over Again," 282-284.
[36] "Centennial Chat: Observations on the Exhibition by a Galvestonian" in *The Galveston News,* 6 June 1876.
[37] "Centennial Failure" in *The Mobile Register*, 21 May 1876.
[38] "Centennial Correspondence Number 9" in *The Bristol News*, 30 January 1877.

> There is little to be found that will offend Southern sentiment. I do not think the mammoth picture of the battle of Gettysburg is so very objectionable as it has been made out to be, except that it has a strong tendency to revive the memories which had better be left buried. [39]

Here we see a touchiness on the part of the white Southerner, a wary concern with how the South was represented on this national and international stage. In another example of white Southern sensitivity, an Augusta cotton broker wrote to Georgia Centennial commissioner George Hillyer enclosing a newspaper clipping purporting that a portrait of Robert E. Lee had been refused a place in the American gallery by Centennial officials and was being kept "in a dark corner among the works of Norway."[40] Hillyer relayed the report of this offense to Southern sensibilities to the national commission, testily requesting them to locate the reporter responsible, ascertain the facts, and allow him to publish the truth, as he was "heartily sick of these scurrilous squibs" and wished to reassure his constituents "how little cause there is for persons who sided with the Confederacy… to feel that anything has been done, or would be done…to wound their feelings." [41] John Sartain, who was in charge of art exhibitions at the Centennial, responded to Hillyer's query by explaining that the painting was indeed on display and "well-placed" in the American Gallery. Sartain admitted that it was not in the "centre" but went on to point out that it had been received after the deadline for inclusion and, in his words, had "only been accepted because it was from the South and was a portrait of Gen. Lee." Sartain conceded that "pictures from Norway and Sweden have overflowed into this gallery but it is an American room nonetheless and a sign in large gilt letters makes it known as such."[42] Interestingly, Susanna Gold has pointed out that Sartain took pains to ensure that Rothermel's *Battle of Gettysburg,* in contrast to the Lee painting, *was*

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[39] "Centennial Notes: A Richmond Man's Observations at the Great Exhibition" in The *Richmond Enquirer*, 4 June 1876.
[40] Undated clipping enclosed with Hillyer letter, see ref. 41.
[41] George Hillyer to Alfred Goshorn, 4 August 1876, USCCP.
[42] John Sartain to Alfred Goshorn, 8 August 1876, USCCP.

centre-stage in the gallery, quoting the curator as proposing that "Rothermel's great picture form the centre of the wall in the American portion of the great…hall."[43] Here, the American gallery serves as a microcosm of the sectional divides and tensions besetting 1876 America. White Southerners took offense at a work of art seen as representing *them* apparently being relegated to a less desirable, non-American position in the Gallery. John Sartain, in correcting that misapprehension, made the point that only special consideration of and sensitivity to Southern feeling allowed the tardily-received portrait to be on display at all. The same John Sartain had, however, ensured that a painting bound to provoke Southern ire and resentment was given pride of place in an exhibition explicitly designed to heal the wounds of Civil War.

African Americans and the Centennial

It was not just white Southerners who were sensitive to the Centennial Exhibition's value as an arena for asserting and contesting identity and the symbolic importance of the objects on view there. African Americans hoped to utilise the Centennial to bolster and reinforce their new status as American citizens. The bust of Bishop Richard Allen, founder of the A.M.E. church, which had been the focus of a major fund-raising effort (see chapter 3,) can perhaps serve as a useful exemplar for black experience of the Centennial Exhibition. After successfully raising funds to pay for the statue, and winning agreement from the Centennial Commission for its inclusion on the fairgrounds (for the duration of the fair only, unlike Catholic and Jewish monuments which were intended as permanent) the statue was commissioned.[44] Black sculptor Edmonia Lewis, working in Italy, created the 22-foot base for the statue, a "marble gazebo-like structure with columns, arches, and decorative cherubim and angels."[45] The

[43] Gold, "Fighting It Over Again," 285.
[44] Kachun, "Before the Eyes of All Nations," 314.
[45] "Historic Bust of Richard Allen Returns to Philadelphia" at Philly.com (11 June 2010) at< http://articles.philly.com/2010-06-11/news/24998705_1_bust-richard-allen-black-leaders>

Philadelphia Press described how: "On the pedestal are four Gothic columns, each one of which bears an ideal bas-relief representing the high state of civilization to which the African race had attained many years ago. Above the column is a Gothic pavilion, in the center of which will be placed a bust of Bishop [Allen] carved by the artist Alfred White of Cincinnati."[46]

The site on the Centennial grounds where the statue would be situated was the scene of a dedication ceremony on 12 June, with unveiling of the monument scheduled for 4 July. Andrew Chambers wrote to Exposition Director General Alfred Goshorn on 8 June, about the "unostatious [*sic*] ceremonies contemplated by the colored people Monday next at the laying of the Base of the Allen Monument…hoping there may be no objection to the delivery of fifteen minute speeches of … eminent men of our race…"[47] This was the only occasion during the Centennial in which black people delivered any kind of official speeches. Frederick Douglass, the most prominent black citizen of the day, had been invited to sit on the main platform with President Grant and other dignitaries during the Centennial's opening ceremonies on 10 May 1876, but was not among the speakers. Historian Philip Foner has recounted the humiliating scene that ensued when "The police of Philadelphia…refused him admittance, unable to conceive that a Negro-they used a more pejorative term-would be allowed entrance to this august company on this august occasion."[48]

Chambers had to write again to Goshorn when the bust was not ready in time for July 4 and dedication of the statue was then re-scheduled for 22 September, the anniversary of Lincoln's preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

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[46] Kachun, "Before the Eyes of All Nations," 316.
[47] Andrew Chambers to Alfred Goshorn, 8 June 1876, USCCP.
[48] Philip Foner, 283.

On 7 September, the *Christian Recorder* announced the apparent success of the endeavour:

> With unbounded gratitude to God and rapturous pleasure …I announce to you the success of our grand Centennial Enterprise: inaugurated for the sublime object of representing the four millions of American Negroes at the Banquet of Nations. On the 22nd Day of September 1876 in the presence of all civilizations and nations on earth, amidst stirring strains of music, kindlings of the loftiest sentiments of manhood, patriotic enthusiasm, chanting of children and the ecstatic joy of the rising sons of Africa, the Allen Monument… will be dedicated.[49]

The monument was viewed as a symbolic representation of African-American claims to citizenship; it was even referred to as "The Negro's Bunker Hill, Independence Hall, and Liberty Bell."[50] This claim was then twinned with African Americans' own particular legacy:

> Let the Anniversary of Emancipation Proclamation be to us the counterpart of the Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence…Come in cars, steamers and carts. Come young and old, maid and matron. Thousands are daily visiting the Centennial, let tens of thousands of our race be present and demand a recognition which is not accorded until demanded…[51]

But Chambers' grandiloquent rhetoric and talk of "demands" were in stark contrast to the meek and subservient tone he took in writing to Director General Goshorn, a contrast that points up the sad reality behind his dreams of what a statue might accomplish.

September 22 came and went with no statue and not a peep from Chambers or the *Recorder*. Then, on 5 October the *Recorder* conveyed the sad news of the "Destruction of the Allen Monument."[52] On its way to Philadelphia, the sixteen cars of the train carrying the monument had plunged off a bridge and into the Chemung River in Pennsylvania and the sculpture, columns, arches, cherubim and all, was destroyed.[53] The bust of Allen however, was in another car, and survived. Finally, on 2 November 1876, a

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[49] "The Allen Monument A Success!" in *The Christian Recorder*, 7 September 1876.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] "Destruction of the Allen Monument" in *Christian Recorder,* 5 October 1876
[53] Historic Bust of Richard Allen Returns to Philadelphia" at Philly.com (11 June 2010.) at< http://articles.philly.com/2010-06-11/news/24998705_1_bust-richard-allen-black-leaders> [accessed 7.6.14]

week before the Exposition closed forever, the bust of Richard Allen, on a pedestal made of granite blocks, was dedicated in Fairmount Park. At this point, Chambers and the A.M.E. made another request for the bust to remain in Fairmount permanently. This was turned down by the Centennial Commission in a curt letter citing park standards.[54] The bust, largely forgotten, spent the next century in storage at Wilberforce College in Ohio before being returned to A.M.E. headquarters in Philadelphia in 2010, a sad metaphor for African Americans' experience of the Centennial.

Disappointment in the way the Centennial turned out for black Americans is also evident in a letter to the *People's Advocate*, a black newspaper in Alexandria, Virginia signed "Red Cloud." After describing himself as an American

> standing amidst her accumulated ideas and flower garden of thought at the Centennial grounds I tried to form…some plausible excuse for the absence of any one of my own race in any responsible place; I said to myself that we are all Americans now and as such nothing is lost from the general progress and acceptance of the homogeneity of our advancement, but another thought came rising up and knocked the bottom right out of that two (sic) thin excuse which could not stand scrutiny…when…I could not discover among all that mass of people one single Negro in the discharge of any duty save as restaurant waiters and barbers…I came fully to the conclusion that it was (because) of American prejudice[55]

Red Cloud's letter sparked an outpouring of comment with some writers in agreement, and others arguing that there was no need for any special recognition of the "Negro" at the Centennial, that

> it was [not] the duty of the Centennial managers to give any more of a special invitation to the colored people of this country than that given other citizens. There is a class of men in our midst constantly contending for the obliteration of the color line …and yet those same men are as much out of their element as a fish out of sea unless they are specially named as colored men before they can take part in any enterprise.[56]

Another correspondent to the *People's Advocate*, identified only as "P.H.M.," agreed with Red Cloud, but only to a point. After remarking that attempting to convey an adequate

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[54] "Historic Bust of Richard Allen Returns to Philadelphia" at Philly.com (11 June 2010.) at< http://articles.philly.com/2010-06-11/news/24998705_1_bust-richard-allen-black-leaders>
[55] "No Redeeming Feature of the Exhibition for the Negro" in *The People's Advocate* (Alexandria, Virginia) 8 June 1876.
[56] Ibid.

description of Centennial wonders would be a task "of which even a Hercules would not have dreamed," P.H.M. conceded that "you need be a patient searcher, and one especially bent upon the purpose of finding out the Negro, to discover any creditable product of his hand or brain."[57] The results of P.H.M.'s patient search, as relayed to the *People's Advocate*, were a collection of West African jewellery, Lewis's "Death of Cleopatra" (the black sculptor being commended for "bringing out the voluptuousness of Egypt's amorous queen") and an American-educated African, representing a "fair sample of…[the] finish" of the (black) Hampton Institute, " a live Negro, his tongue still thick with African lingo."[58] As the Centennial served as a proxy for other issues facing white Southerners, it similarly served to demonstrate tensions around black identity and Americanism as seen in the discussion of black identity and assimilation sparked by Red Cloud and in the distinction implied by P.H.M. between African Americans and the 'thick-tongued' African 'Negro.'

White Southern newspapers paid little if any attention to the question of black representation at Philadelphia but the (white) *Atlanta Constitution* did pose this question:

> The radical party in its malignity and insanity, has made the Negro an equal citizen and sharer in the blessings of this republic...if (the centennial) is to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of liberty in this country why should the beneficiaries of its most recent expansion be ignored? If the exposition is the memorial of human emancipation from...subjugation...why are (African Americans) put aside as unworthy of a place in the festival?[59]

The *Constitution's* argument was not, on the surface, dissimilar to the heated complaints about black exclusion in Philadelphia that appeared in the columns of the *People's Advocate* and other African American papers. But the *Constitution* had a different

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[57]"Centennial-Negro Mechanism-Death of Cleopatra-Negro Education" in *The People's Advocate* (Alexandria, Virginia) 22 July 1876.
[58] Ibid.
[59] "No Nigger Need Apply" in *The Atlanta Weekly Constitution*, 23 May 1876.

point to make: "The matter is of no particular concern to us. It is only a queer exhibition of the hypocrisy and duplicity of those who projected this grand farce." [60]

The *Constitution* here conflated the Centennial organisers with the Radical Republicans and claimed a double standard between the civil rights extended to African Americans during Reconstruction and the role allowed black people in the planning and running of the Centennial Exhibition. The notion that African American voters were merely dupes and pawns of corrupt white Republicans is also implicit in the *Constitution's* argument (this trope of black gullibility and lack of agency would persist through the Red Scares and Civil Rights Movement of the next century.) Following the actual Centennial Fourth, the *Constitution* played down the Exhibition's success, claiming that "attendance has thus far been a disappointment" and that "speculators...have already come to grief."[61]

Sectionalism at the Centennial

Running in tandem with the Centennial theme of reunion was an attempt to accommodate Southern distinctiveness and identity within American nationalism. One attempt to woo the former Confederacy took the form of a guidebook especially for Southern visitors to the fair, apparently the only one of myriad Centennial guidebooks that was produced for a specific segment of the American population. This little book, written by North Carolinian Democrat Theodore Bryant Kingsbury, exhorted its readers:

> By all means, whether or not your state has contributed money and material, let all go who can afford to do so, for it is *our* Centennial as well as the Centennial of the Northern people. We are a part of the Union. This country is *our* country…it is now more than eleven years since the last Confederate gun was fired…Let the dead past bury the dead. Let all bitter memories be forgotten.[62]

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[60] Ibid.

[61] "Centennial" in *The Atlanta Weekly Constitution*, 11 July 1876.

[62] Theodore Bryant Kingsbury, *The International Exhibition Guide for the Southern States: The Only Guide-book Specially Suited to the Southern Visitor* (Raleigh: Fulgham, 1876) p. 5. The book went on to offer some helpful advice to its Southern readers: "In travelling, keep off the platform of cars, and do not put your arms or head out of the window [of a moving train]…" p. 40

This promotional effort for the Centennial offered a microcosm of the paradigm that would define American/Southern relations for the next half-century, with Southern distinctiveness being affirmed rather than challenged. An example of this, touted in the guide for Southern visitors, was the "Restaurant of the South" which illustrated "Southern plantation scenes" and featured entertainment by what was described as an "Old Plantation Darky Band" who would "sing their quaint melodies and strum the banjo before visitors from every clime…" The *Guide* offered its view of how this would represent the South to the rest of the world: "… imagine the phlegmatic German…with his frau and kinder, gazing with astonishment at the… essence of ole Virginny…"[63] Meanwhile, writer James Dabney McCabe's widely distributed guide to the Exhibition assured its readers that the Southern Restaurant's proprietor hailed from Atlanta, Georgia and that "the waiters were all colored men." [64] In describing "[American] nationalism's deliberate acquiescence to Southern sectionalism" Christopher Hayashida-Knight has ably demonstrated the lengths that Centennial organisers and backers went to in order to accommodate white Southern sentiment at the Exhibition. As he has observed, "At no point in these Centennial promotions are Southerners asked to "give up" their sectional prejudices for the sake of reunion; on the contrary, their political and cultural biases are stroked and celebrated."[65]

There was, though, some strong Northern and Republican reaction to Southern sensitivity. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated, much Northern press coverage of the Centennial was not conducive to inculcating reunion or unity.[66] In an article headlined

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[63] Robert Rydell, *All the World's A Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) p. 28

[64] McCabe, p. 695. Susanna Gold has cited a contemporary Italian account which claims that the Southern Restaurant was the site of voter fraud- with white Democrats manipulating/defrauding black men into swearing allegiance to the Democratic Party; another intersection of politics and the Centennial. See Gold*, The Unfinished Exhibition*, p. 144.

[65] Christopher Hayashida-Knight, "Philadelphia Plays Dixie: Accommodating the South at the 1876 Centennial." unpublished conference paper.

[66] Ibid.

"Absurd Manifestations of Tenderness for the Feelings of Unconverted Rebels" the white and Republican *Chicago Inter-Ocean* recounted a *contretemps* over black employment at the Exhibition. The newspaper, noting the controversy over Rothermel's *Gettysburg*, commented that

> the commission has been assailed because they let the canvas have a space in the art gallery. It tended to revive the animosities of the war, they said, and therefore it ought to be kept out. So steadily has this prating of reconciliation been kept up, that one might have believed that the Southerns are really converted, that they had given up the doctrine of states' rights…that they were only too willing to accord to the colored men all the rights and privileges to which they are entitled. But it seems this is all a mistake.[67]

The *Inter-Ocean* related that a Centennial Commissioner from Iowa proposed a resolution that the Commission authorise the employment of black men on the Centennial police and guard forces. As the newspaper put it, "nearly every one of the Southern members was on his feet, canes and umbrellas were flourished…these howlers for reconciliation demanded that the offensive resolution be withdrawn…" The motion passed, but barely. The *Inter-Ocean* published the vote tally- the majority of the Southern commissioners voted against the resolution, including, interestingly, John Lynch, Louisiana's black commissioner. *The Inter-Ocean* summed up what it saw as the Centennial management's priorities in pandering to the hypersensitivity of a sulking South at the expense of black Americans: "The fear of offending some over-scrupulous visitors from a section of the country that contributes almost nothing to the Exhibition is a sentiment that will meet no favour with the great multitude of the North…simply the resurrection of that morbid sentiment which has so long disgraced our civilization." [68] The *Inter-Ocean* reported that as of 27 May no African Americans had been hired and that Director General Alfred Goshorn would

> probably decline to do so, on the ground that the positions are already filled . . . [I]t is time to stop talking about reconciliation. The Southerns do not want it and will not have it if it involves any concessions. This is to be a great Centennial year of jubilee but according to the Confederate notion, white men

[67] "Colored Men and the Centennial" in the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, 25 May 1876.
[68] Ibid.

> only are allowed . . . [T]he black men are to be left to peek through the knot-holes. That the colored people feel the slight . . . is apparent. Your correspondent, among the hundreds of thousands of visitors he has noticed . . . has not seen a dozen negroes of any age or sex.[69]

One method of boosting attendance at the Centennial was to hold 'State Days," encouraging residents from specific states to attend the Exhibition on a given date, designated to salute that state. 'Pennsylvania Day' set a daily attendance record of 275,000 unmatched not only for the Centennial but for any world's fair to that date. 'Ohio Day' drew 125,000 visitors. The *Cincinnati Daily Times'* account described both the 'immense crowds' and, with the speech, introduced by Centennial Commission President Joseph Hawley, of that state's governor and Republican presidential nominee Rutherford Hayes, the utilisation of the Exhibition as a political space. At the speech's conclusion cheers were given for "the next President of the United States."[70]

There were no days set aside for specific Southern states, although several Southern governors made speeches in Philadelphia. On 12 September, for example, Texas Governor Richard Hubbard delivered a platitude-laden speech that was ostensibly about sectional reunion, but sounded more like an advertisement for the benefits of settling and/or investing in the Lone Star State. The *Galveston Daily News* reported that the "eloquent orator was greeted by a large crowd…including more than a hundred Texans."[71] The account went on to describe Hubbard's speech as "a description of the resources and capabilities of the state."[72]

There were plans for a day to celebrate Virginia, but the state's Democratic governor, James L. Kemper, issued a well-publicised explanation for his refusal to sanction or participate in "Virginia Day." Kemper, grounding his statement in the Old

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[69] *The Chicago Inter-Ocean,* 27 May 1876. Philip Foner has pointed out that there is no evidence of any black employment in the construction of the Centennial grounds at a time when the black jobless rate in Philadelphia approached 70%. See Philip Foner, 288.
[70] "Ohio Day" in *The Cincinnati Daily Times*, 26 October 1876.
[71] "Our Empire State" in *The Galveston Daily News*, 12 September 1876.
[72] Ibid.

Dominion's dire financial situation, noted that the commonwealth had already "declined to incur the cost of taking part in the Centennial because her poverty, not her will, forbade the diversion of any portion of her revenues to that object."[73] The governor went on, with reference to Virginians' personal fiscal responsibilities, that he "would not, if I could, attract to Philadelphia those who, in view of their necessities at home, ought not to go at all."[74] Kemper managed to embed within this homily on frugality an acknowledgement that while Virginia was of course only interested in reconciliation, others were using the Exhibition as a vehicle for expressing sectional and antagonistic sentiment: "With regretful composure, without abating her known spirit of conciliation, she beholds the untimely sectional animosities and reproaches which, provoked by no act of hers, tend to mar the noblest design of the Centennial celebration."[75] Kemper's refusal garnered some criticism in the Northern press. A New Hampshire newspaper, paying scant heed to the governor's claims of financial concern, zeroed in instead on Kemper's remarks on "sectional animosities," terming them "very unpatriotic." The newspaper then quoted, disapprovingly, *The Richmond Dispatch's* claim that the Centennial may have been "a fine exhibition of art and artifice, but as a celebration of things that live not in the American heart, an abomination."[76] The *New York Tribune* also took Kemper to task over the decision, saying that, in effect, the South needed to get over the war: "The world moves, it cares little for ancient prestige or prejudices. The individual or state which stands indifferently or sulkily aloof will soon find itself thrust to one side and forgotten."[77] Clearly demonstrating the ways the Centennial could spark divisive rhetoric, a New

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[73] "Gov. Kemper's Letter on the Centennial" in *The Alexandria Gazette*, 10 October 1876.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid. While Virginia had no official presence at Fairmount Park, there was a "Virginia House" on the Exhibition grounds-erected at the expense of a private citizen, Edwin G. Booth. Booth was a native Virginian married to a Pennsylvania woman and resident in Philadelphia.
[76] *The New Hampshire Sentinel*, (Keene, New Hampshire) 19 October 1876.
[77] "Virginia and the Centennial" in *The New York Tribune*, 12 October 1876.

Orleans paper described the *Tribune* piece as a failed attempt to "fire Northern hearts" and as "petty sectionalism that we might have expected to find in a back-woods weekly"[78]

In response, then, to what the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* called "the refusal of Gov. Kemper to appoint a day for that state at the Centennial," the 19th of October was designated as 'Southern Day' in joint honour of Virginia, Delaware and Maryland.[79] With a turnout of 170,000, second only to Pennsylvania Day, the highlight of the day was a jousting tournament. It featured fifteen 'knights,' representing each of the original thirteen states plus two bonus gallants, one personifying "the Union" and the other "the Centennial." The knights were garbed inconsistently- some in tinsel and velvet, others in sashes, plumed hats or sombreros and brightly hued scarves. The actual sport, "so popular in the South" according to one newspaper, involved attempting to collect two-inch rings (suspended from three 15 foot high arches) on a spear or lance while galloping at full tilt.[80] Most of the 'knights' were "gentlemen of the South, experienced in the art [of jousting]" according to the *New York Times,* whose skills caused the thousands of spectators to "gape in wonderment."[81] Delaware's 'knight' emerged victorious, and in post-tournament festivities that evening had the honour of crowning a "beautiful brunette from Rockingham County, Va." as "The Queen of Love and Beauty." [82] Following this coronation, "a band of plantation darkies rendered a song in true Southern style in salutation to the Queen, after which the audience paid their respects to Her Majesty."[83]

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[78] "Centennial Reflections" in *The New Orleans Times*, 21 October 1876.
[79] "Solid South: Shot-Gun Policy in South Carolina: Rabid Rebels on the Stump" in *The Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 14 October 1876.
[80] "Southern Day at the Centennial" in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 4 November 1876.
[81] "The Centennial Southern Day: The Solid South at Philadelphia" in *The New York Times*, 20 October 1876.
[82] "The Exhibition: Virginia, Maryland and Delaware at the Great Show" in *The New York Herald*, 20 October 1876.
[83] "The Centennial Southern Day: The Solid South at Philadelphia" in *The New York Times*, 20 October 1876.

While those in Southern newspapers tended to adopt a matter of fact tone, accounts of "Southern Day" at the Centennial in Northern journals seemed to emphasise the distinctiveness and the exoticness of the South, with its velvet-clad cavaliers and serenading "darkies."[84] An often mocking tone further underscores the sense of regional alienation discernible in Southern accounts of the Exhibition. The *New York Herald* commented on the "different shades of peculiar Southern dialect" that could be heard at the Exhibition and in a less than gracious dig at the almost desperate importance many Southerners attached to the concept of honour, remarked facetiously that "a brick thrown in the air would be sure to fall on the head of a 'Kernel' or a Major…who had lost 'all but…honnah, in the late wah, sah!'"[85] The *New York Graphic*, perhaps working on the assumption that Southern visitors would be gaunt, starving and incapable of appreciating the Yankee ingenuity on show, stated that "Reconstructed rebeldom was out in force. The contrast between the representative visitors of the two sections was plain enough, but the Southern visitors appeared well and were profoundly interested in what they saw."[86] At this point the *Graphic*'s tone became even more patronising: "The Exhibition probably made a deeper impression on them than on those of the North who are familiar with mechanical inventions and products and works of art. It showed these Southern visitors what the real deficiencies of their section are and the lines on which their activities must move to win wealth and material success."[87] The New York paper concluded with lines that simultaneously pointed up the reconciliatory and nation-building aims of the Exhibition and the wide chasm that still existed between the sections:

> It [the Exhibition] must have taught them that the contentions of politics and the antagonisms of races are directly in the way of industrial prosperity and material power. Really, could all Southerners spend a week in the Exhibition it would do more to

[84] See "The Tournament," *The Daily Gazette* (Wilmington, Delaware) 20 October 1876, "Telegraphic Briefs" *Memphis Daily Appeal*, 20 October 1876.
[85] "The Exhibition: Virginia, Maryland and Delaware at the Great Show" in *The New York Herald*, 20 October 1876.
[86] "Centennial Successes" in *The New York Graphic*, 20 October 1876.
[87] Ibid.

> extinguish their old war passions, and give them a new conception of their true interests and duties and make them thoroughly loyal and united in their efforts to promote order and industry and education and art…[88]

Massachusetts novelist and journalist William Dean Howells' description of Mississippi's Centennial headquarters, while gentler in tone, still stressed the exotic qualities of that state's representation in Philadelphia:

> Wholly built of Mississippi wood, the rough bark logs showing without and the gables and porch decked with gray streamers of Spanish Moss. A typical Mississippian, young in years but venerable in alligator-like calm, sits on the porch…with his boots on the railing and his hat drawn over his eyes and sheltering his slowly moving jaws as they ruminate the Virginian weed…he answered all queries without looking up or betraying the smallest curiosity as to the age, sex or condition of the questioner. Being tormented (I will not reveal the sex of his tormentress) concerning the use of a little hole or pouch (it was for letters, really) in the wall near the door, he said that it was to receive contributions for a poor orphan. 'I' he added, 'am the orphan.' And then at last he looked up, with a faint gleam in his lazy eye which instantly won the heart.[89]

Howells pointed out that "this Mississippian" was white and that "another, black, showed us civilly and intelligently through the house which was very creditable in every way to the state and told us that it was built of 70 different kinds of Mississippi wood."[90]

The idea that the white South had something to learn from the Centennial and the North was acknowledged, with a strong sense of sectional alienation, by "Traveler," a correspondent for a Macon, Georgia paper, who provided this impression of the Exhibition:

> The most striking feature of this whole Centennial business is the…'get up and git' you see about everything and everybody…There is no 'Sleepy Hollow,' 'wait for the wagon' or 'hang 'round the corner' schedule run here…Move! Go! You catch it from the peanut and popcorn sellers on the sidewalk. You hear and see it and feel it in the jostling, wrestling crowd…you begin to shudder at your own insignificance and involuntarily feel a desire to 'get up and git.' And you do get, and everybody around you gets…the only question is, how much of it can you stand…? Everybody is centennializing….

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[88] Ibid

[89] William Dean Howells, "A Sennight of the Centennial" in *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1876.

[90] Ibid. The white Mississippian Howells mentioned was J. W. Langley, whom the *Vicksburg Herald*, 30 May 1876, described as the Mississippi House's "courteous superintendent…constantly besieged by sight seekers, among whom the fair sex predominate." His black colleague was Tazwell Jones, who, though answering "some ten thousand questions a day," remained as "serene as a huckleberry bush."

This account also endeavours to point out that the South should acquire some "get up and git:"

> What a pity it is that some of this energetic 'matter' can't be taken from these live Doodles and punched into the arms and feet and legs of our sleepy-headed men and boys of the South…[91]

This Southerner's account of the hustle and bustle, the commerciality, the "get up and git" of the North highlights the alleged lack of these attributes in the "sleepy-headed" South and gives us a sense of what proponents of an economically revitalised "New South" hoped to achieve by their programme of industrialisation and boosterism. This report shows the Centennial as a vehicle for confirming identity, through the sense of cultural alienation the reporter describes and the realization that, to paraphrase, "we are not like that." A Centennial visitor from New Orleans, identified only as W.E.S., Jr., also found inspiration for Southern improvement. Commenting, somewhat facetiously, that the only evidence of the South that he could find at Fairmount Park was "a box or two of chewing tobacco from Virginia and Kentucky" this correspondent decried the dearth of fine art in the region. Issuing a "call to action," he continued:

> Unless we would be forgotten we must cultivate the fine arts, nay we must excel in them…To the people of the South I say that oblivion is threatening them. What part do they play in the literature of America? Go into any Southern household and take up the first book you can lay your hands on. It is published at the North and the chances are a thousand to one that it is written by a Northerner. The North makes our literature-makes it to suit itself.[92]

After remarking that Northern literature tended to stereotype Southerners as "rascals," W.E.S., Jr. concluded that the South must

> bestir herself…make and publish her own books, paint her own pictures, sculpt her own figures…For the sake of our individuality we must preserve whatever of devotion, of self-sacrifice, of bravery and heroism that the war called forth. [93]

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[91] "The Centennial: A Practical View by a Practical Man" in *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Georgia Journal and Messenger* (Macon, Georgia) 7 November 1876.
[92] "Centennial Reflections" in *The New Orleans Times*, 21 October 1876.
[93] Ibid.

Here we see a white Southerner whose sense of sectional identity was stirred by the Exhibition, more specifically by the lack of Southern presence and engagement there and who sensed in the Northern version of the United States on display in Philadelphia a threat to that Southern distinctiveness that was so clearly important to him.

Political Identity and the Centennial

Sectional and political identity were closely linked and frequently conflated during the Reconstruction Era; this connection was borne out in much of the discourse surrounding the Philadelphia Exhibition. An example of this can be found in 'Traveler"s account. The Georgian described the headquarters of Philadelphia's Union League (a Republican men's club) as being festooned with gas jets forming the words virtue, liberty and independence. He also quoted a bystander who remarked, after the wind had blown out the first two words "How emblematic of the Republican Party! There's 'virtue' gone, and 'liberty' gone, and but d----d little of 'Independence' left."[94] The Fayetteville, Tennessee *Observer*'s report on the Centennial's opening highlighted President Grant's reference to his "countrymen" by placing it in inverted commas, seemingly indicating that they did not fall into that grouping.[95] The same paper quoted another local visitor as saying that he "couldn't turn around" for the Radicals in Philadelphia.[96] As a majority of white Southerners saw Democratic affiliation as more or less synonymous with *being* white Southerners, this would give an impression of Philadelphia as an uncomfortably foreign place. The Centennial correspondent of the *Cleveland Herald* (Tennessee) felt the need to describe in detail a Democratic Party rally he attended at Bristol, Virginia en route to Philadelphia. He struck up an acquaintance with a South Carolinian visiting the fair, and

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[94] "The Centennial: A Practical View by a Practical Man" in *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Georgia Journal and Messenger* (Macon, Georgia) 7 November 1876.
[95] *Fayetteville Observe*r, 18 May 1876.
[96] "Local" in *Fayetteville Observer*, 6 October 1876.

in the alien landscape of the North, they "swore by Old Father George [Washington] that we would stick to each other like brothers until separated by fate."[97]

A Centennial correspondent for a small town Georgia newspaper included in his Centennial reportage an account of a Republican rally, or what he described as "an amusing entertainment" that he witnessed in that election year of 1876. The purpose of the meeting was to ratify and endorse the nomination of the Republican ticket of Hayes and Wheeler, but "not once was the name of R. B. Hayes…mentioned…poor Hayes was left out in the dark."[98] The reporter listed a series of speakers who castigated the "Southern Rebs" to the approbation of the Philadelphia audience, quoting one who declared that "Southerners were the most ignorant set of people on the globe, that they had no schools or colleges and that there wasn't a Southern man, who when the war broke out was six years old, who could now read and write." Describing his reaction to this diatribe, the correspondent continued, "This struck me like a thunderbolt. I scratched my head to feel if it was really on my body. I pulled out pencil and paper to try if I had forgotten how to write…I only restrained myself from openly calling [the speaker] a prevaricator by the thought that he was a Republican and therefore not to be blamed for falsehoods."[99]

A reporter from Bristol, Virginia, meanwhile, drew a connection between the Gatling gun on display in Machinery Hall and the Federal forces at that time still in control of the state of Louisiana. In the midst of descriptions of "silk fibres" and "rustic Terra Cotta vases" he editorialized that the gun "brought up memories of the death of civil liberties in Louisiana at the hands of men trained to war and unwisely placed in charge of

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[97] "Our Centennial Letter" in *The Weekly Herald* (Cleveland, Tennessee) 13 October 1876.
[98] "Letter From Philadelphia" in *The Sumter Weekly Republican* (Americus, Georgia) 6 October 1876.
[99] Ibid.

such unspeakable heritages as Magna Carta and Habeas Corpus."[100] Analogous to wartime claims that the Confederacy was the true embodiment of the Founding Fathers' ideals, a remark like this extended the sense of Southern proprietorship of liberty even further back as well as incorporating a dig at Federal suspension of *habeas corpus* during war and Reconstruction. The *Mobile Register* also used the Centennial to make political points. Musing upon the changes seen since 1776, the *Register* reflected that, 'For, in precisely the same ratio as today is ahead of that day in steamboats and telegraphs and Gatling guns, it is also ahead in demagoguery, demoralization and Blaineism, and in this latter is the ugliest and worst of the progress we have made."[101] The *Register* complained that Blaine had "stifled much of the fraternal gush, without which the Centennial Exposition is only a Mechanic's Institute." Striking a note of injured righteousness, the paper claimed that the South had been prepared to "gush as spontaneously as any Brotherly Lover" until Blaine's words in Congress "fiendish(ly) rend(ed) open nearly healed scars."[102]

These digressions in generally positive accounts of the Centennial Exhibition serve to emphasize the overlapping sectional and political divisions in the Centennial year as well as the strength of these partisan sentiments. Feelings were running so high that one Southern visitor observed that "there is more excitement than there has been since 1861, and really it looks more like war than it did then." [103] In fact, resumption of war was not an unheard of idea in a year that saw not only the Centennial celebration, but also one of the most bitterly partisan, and ultimately fraudulent, Presidential elections in US history. Ulysses Grant, his administration besmirched by scandal, was approaching the

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[100] "Centennial Correspondence Number 6" in *The Bristol News* (Bristol Virginia/Tennessee) 5 December 1876.
[101] "Sow and Reap" in *The Mobile Register,* 23 January 1876.
[102] Ibid. Senator James Blaine had spoken in Congress against extending amnesty to Jefferson Davis, and was widely accused in the South of "waving the bloody shirt."
[103] Unknown to "Dear Aunt," 2 December 1876. Larkin Newby Papers, SHC.

end of his second term in office. When Grant's most likely successor for the Republican nomination, James Blaine, became embroiled in scandals of his own, the Republicans went for a compromise candidate, the personally honest but colourless Rutherford B. Hayes.[104] The Democrats nominated New York Governor Samuel Tilden. There was a dearth of any real difference between the two parties' platforms, with both agreed on the desirability of withdrawing federal troops from the South and the need for civil service reform. Still, the campaign was rancorous, and in some ways seemed to embody a proxy continuation of the War. This was the same year in which the Centennial Exhibition was meant to provide a setting for Americans "from every corner of this broad land… [to] gather by land and by sea to the City of Brotherly Love and with kindly and loving hearts exchange the warm grasp of common brotherhood under one and the same nationality."[105] Yet as one Republican, stumping for Hayes, declaimed:

> Every man that endeavoured to tear the old flag from the heavens that it enriches was a Democrat. Every man that tried to destroy this nation was a Democrat....the man that assassinated Abraham Lincoln was a Democrat...Soldiers, every scar you have on your heroic bodies was given you by a Democrat![106]

This type of rhetoric, known as "waving the bloody shirt" ensured that the war was never far removed from public discourse. In October 1876, just before the presidential election, *The Christian Recorder* warned that:

> We stand today face to face with a crisis involving the life of the nation. We confront in the contest an enemy bolder, a more adroit, and far better matured than in 1860. Then, as now, there was a "solid South." But now murder, violence, and fraud are more persistent and studied. [107]

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[104] Paul F. Boller, Jr., *Presidential Campaigns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) pp. 133-137. Tilden won the popular vote and was 1 electoral vote shy of victory. The electoral votes of South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana were in dispute and each state submitted multiple sets of returns. The outcome was decided by an Electoral Commission set up by Congress; Hayes was proclaimed the winner 2 days before Inauguration Day 1877. In the "Compromise of 1877," Democrats had acquiesced in Hayes taking all the electoral votes of the disputed states, in return for the withdrawal of all Federal troops from the South. This was the "end" of Reconstruction.

[105] *Journal of the Proceedings of the United States Centennial Commission at Philadelphia, 1872* (Philadelphia: Markley & Sons, 1872) Appendix II, p. 52.

[106] Keith Polakoff, *The Politics of Inertia: The Election of 1876 and the End of Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974) pp. 145-146.

[107] "The Country's Danger" in *The Christian Recorder*, 26 October 1876.

Here the *Recorder* acknowledged a white South made more militant, more cohesive and more determined to define citizenship on its own terms by the events of war and Reconstruction. The piece conflated the two sides in the Civil War with the two main political parties and warned that if the choice between Republican Hayes and Democrat Tilden fell to the electoral votes of South Carolina or Mississippi, "scoured to the Democratic juggernaut by violence and fraud," resumption of war could be necessary:

> Only this, Americans: war or abject, cowardly craven submission to a more wicked and diabolical plot than that of 1860-61…the only patriotic…way out is to elect Hayes… by a majority so crushing that the embodiment of all the crimes in the Decalogue will not dare question the result. "Up guards, and at them!"[108]

The *People's Advocate* also commented on white Southern determination to ensure Democratic control, warning of the sectional alienation that would result from that party's victory:

> ...The Louisiana Leaguers, the Mississippi murderers and the Baltimore "Bloods" are as ready as minute men to take the matter in hand and if necessary to make a united Democratic South they will wade knee-deep in Republican blood at the polls...Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Louisiana are Republican states, and if under fire, they are driven into the Confederate Democracy the status will be fixed and we shall have a Southern grey Democracy and Northern blue Republicanism...with little or no affiliation between the sections.[109]

White Southerners were similarly invested in the outcome of the election. The fiancé of a young South Carolina woman wrote to her about the victory in that state's gubernatorial election of Democrat and Confederate General Wade Hampton:

> Great excitement have prevailed…since the Election, all were anxious to hear that Hampton and Tilden were Elected, some nights last week one of (my) Bro[ther]s. would be in Columbia until near two o'clock to get the latest despatches, Hampton's friends have been almost wild with enthusiasm. Bro. said that when the flag was put through the window of the Democratic Hall with Hampton's portrait on it, and the words 'Our Governor' written above the crowd appeared almost wild.[110]

This emotionalism over the election of a Democrat demonstrates the strength of feeling among white Southerners that their sense of participation in the American nation was

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[108] Ibid.
[109] "Isolation" in *The People's Advocate* (Alexandria, Virginia) 1 July 1876.
[110] William Leaphart to Lizzie Geiger, 13 November 1876, Lizzie K. Geiger Papers 1858-1897, South Carolianiana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

dependent on the success of this party. The *Christian Recorder*'s warning about the "Solid South" seems to make clear that black Americans likewise invested their hopes and aspirations in the success of the Republican Party.

That assumption is borne out by this supposedly humourous snippet from the Democratic *Galveston News*. In ostensibly reporting remarks made by a black member of Virginia's state assembly arguing against a Centennial appropriation, the *News* quoted the legislator: "Wherefor is it, and why I'm axin', never, no sah. What? Ten thousand dollars fur to be giv away to Philadelphia? …Look at de Treasury, look at de money de Governor hov spent in postage stamps a fixin' fur dis occasion…"[111] When not lampooning and infantilizing African Americans, mainstream Democratic commentators deprived them of agency, seeing them as dupes and pawns of the Radical Republicans. The *Richmond Enquirer* noted that:

> We are sincerely sorry for the colored population of the Southern states. This is the time of year when it becomes part of the necessities of the Radical policy that riots between the races should be instigated and that the Northern mind should be fired by reports of bloody massacres of negroes by the cruel Ku-klux. Already from Louisiana and Mississippi there come up blood-curdling and hair-erecting stories, which are published in the Radical journals...setting forth that the innocent negroes, for no provocation except their color and their politics have been waylaid and assassinated by the masked and murderous White Leaguers.[112]

The *Enquirer* concluded that racial turmoil was fomented deliberately by the Radical Republicans "for the coolly calculated purpose of creating a feeling of bitterness against this section" in the North. Reminiscent of Southern attribution of the Civil Rights Movement almost a century later to outside agitators and Communists, this position relegates African Americans to dupes of the Republicans and shrugs off widespread atrocities as the Radicals' fault.[113]

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111 "A Colored Brother on the Centennial" in *The Galveston News*, 20 January 1876.
112 "Lo, The Poor African!" in *The Richmond Enquirer*, 19 May 1876.
113 Ibid.

And yet, as Mitch Kachun has pointed out, "African Americans were hardly monolithic in their views"; some even supported the Democrats.[114] South Carolinian W. A. Leaphart wrote to his fiancée: "We have just heard that a riot is expected at my Uncle's in the upper part of Orangeburg Co., a colord [*sic*] Democrat was severely beaten and had his house burnt by a colord [sic] rad[ical Republican]..."[115]

This anecdotal evidence of political dissent within the black community can be further explored by looking at the 1876 "Negro Declaration of Independence." Philip Foner, in his 1978 examination of black involvement with the Centennial, cites a "Negro Declaration of Independence" which was read out in Washington on July 4, 1876. Foner correctly points out that this document was modelled, as other expressions of black citizenship were, upon the original Declaration of Independence and asserts that this "Declaration" was ignored in the white press, attributing this to white "blindness" towards black grievances in the Centennial year.[116] Foner says that "rather than George III, the target of specific grievances …was the American government." An inspection of the original document, however, reveals it to be both more and less than Foner represents it to be. Foner does not identify its authors, but it was the product of a group calling itself the "National Independent Political Union," headed by one Garland H. White. An ex-slave, formerly belonging to Robert Toombs of Georgia, who served as Secretary of State to both James Buchanan and Confederate President Davis, White escaped to Canada and

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114 Kachun, "Before the Eyes of all Nations," 320.
115 William Leaphart to Lizzie Geiger, 13 November 1876, Lizzie K. Geiger Papers 1858-1897, South Carolianiana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.
116 Philip Foner, p. 294. Foner based his assumption that the white press ignored the "Negro Declaration" on a search of newspapers for July 5-6, 1876 held by the Library of Congress. The Declaration was dated 28 February 1876. Whether or not they reported on the "Declaration" itself, Southern white newspapers certainly gave coverage to the views of Garland White and his associates.

later returned to the US during the war and helped raise a black infantry regiment in Indiana, which he served as chaplain.[117]

The document is, in fact, a sharp critique of the Republican Party; its subtitle being "Republican faithlessness and Corruptions Exposed and Scathingly Denounced by Colored Men." Foner quotes the document in a way that makes it seem like a generic plea for full citizenship and rights rather that a purely political broadside:

> For these and other reasons too numerous for enumeration, we feel justified in declaring our independence of all existing political parties and we hereby pledge to each other…that we will…support only those parties whose fidelity to the original Declaration of Independence is unquestioned… [118]

The original document, published on 28 February 1876, (not July 4) was, though, starkly partisan:

> We, colored men, representing nearly all the States and Territories of the United States, believing with the fathers, that the happiness of the people is the sole end of government, ...do hereby denounce it [Republican Party] as being the primary cause of all the wrongs committed against us...
> For these and other reasons too numerous for enumeration, we feel justified in severing all connection with this profligate party... and deeming the time auspicious when past differences should be buried, and reconciliation and good feeling between the races pervade the land... we ask nothing but FULL AND EQUAL JUSTICE BEFORE THE LAW, PROTECTION FOR OUR LIVES AND PROPERTY AGAINST LAWLESSNESS AND MOB VIOLENCE, AND EQUITABLE RECOGNITION IN THE SEVERAL DEPARTMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT, BASED UPON OUR INTELLIGENCE AND INTEGRITY[119]

Further details of the partisan nature of this group can be gleaned from clippings kept in a scrapbook by Virginia's Centennial commissioner and future governor, Frederick Holliday, a Democrat who obviously approved the anti-Republican sentiments they expressed. One clipping is a letter from Garland White, detailing the harassment and abuse he received as a black Democrat in the South:

> A few weeks ago, while from home in the canvass for Tilden and Hendricks and the Democratic state ticket, they (Republicans) failed to follow me to a single place of public speaking, but went to my church and urged my dismissal as pastor upon the ground that

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[117] A 1997 article in *Civil War Times* recounts White's interesting career as a black Union soldier but does not mention his Democratic activism in the 1870s.
[118] Philip Foner, p. 293.
[119] "The Negro Declaration of Independence" at <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbpe&fileName=rbpe20/rbpe206/2060460a/rbpe2060460a.db&recNum=0&itemLink>[accessed 18 August 2013.]

> I was an enemy to my race because I was a Democrat. That…got up a stampede among my flock, which resulted in my dismissal.[120]

White enumerates further instances of intimidation and harassment, and concludes that: "We are all still slaves and will ever be as long as one portion of us submit to the Republican party lash…Live or die, sink or swim, I will do all in my power to elect Tilden…unless Mr Tilden is elected, the country is gone." [121] In another of Holliday's clippings, W. H. L. Coombs, the black president of a "Tilden and Hendricks Club" writes to a Richmond newspaper stating that "the sensible free-thinking colored people are tired of the radical (Republican) yoke and its injustice to us and its insult to our brave and well-disposed fellow citizens of the South."[122]

It is difficult to credit the sincerity of the reference to well-disposed Southern whites, but perhaps some Southern blacks felt that a degree of appeasement towards their white neighbours and former masters was necessary and made more palatable by the flexibility and agency that came with freedom from strict party loyalty. As the paper that printed Coombs' remarks editorialized, "In dividing their vote between the two parties the colored men are wise and are doing the very best thing they could do to advance their own interests. …in a few years they will be cared for and protected by both parties."[123]

Black Southerners who supported the Democratic Party may have been pragmatically attempting to maintain good relations with their white neighbours, or merely reacting to bullying by local Republicans, but they were still engaging with the American polity and expressing themselves as Americans, and dealing with divisions and a rancorous sectarianism that was typical of the recently recombined nation as a whole.

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120 Garland H. White, "Negro Intimidation-Troubles of Colored Preacher who Turned Democrat- He is Denounced, Dismissed and his Flock dispersed-Toleration of the Southern African- What Do Our Friends at the North Say to This?" Clipping (August 1876) in Frederick Holliday Scrapbook, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

121 Ibid.

122 "Colored Men for Tilden" undated clipping [1876] Holliday Scrapbook.

123 Ibid.

It was in this bitterly divided (both politically and racially) landscape that the Centennial Exhibition aimed to commemorate one hundred years of American nationhood. As has been demonstrated, the timing was far from auspicious. Reinforcing the sectional divide that overshadowed the fair, Cincinnati's *Daily Gazette* categorized the Centennial Exhibition as a Northern venture and went on to link Southern attitudes to the Centennial to a possible recurrence of civil war: "Several of the Southern states have always regarded the Centennial with disfavour…[they have never] concealed their dissatisfaction with an exhibition which has so signally demonstrated the superiority of the North in most of the essential elements of civilization." The *Gazette* then castigated "untaught and unteachable Southern Bourbons" and, in a reference to the 1876 elections, warned that "the evidence is indisputable that the same spirit of disorder and rebellion that brought on the Civil War now animates the Democrats' rank and file and that they are better armed than ever."[124]

Centennial Aftermath

When the Centennial Exhibition closed its gates to visitors on 10 November 1876 it was generally celebrated as a rousing success, with the *Los Angeles Daily Star*, for example, proclaiming that the "future historian…would pronounce it the grandest event of the decade and the greatest exhibit to the gaze of mankind yet made."[125] The African American *Savannah Tribune*, notwithstanding black Americans' largely unfulfilled hopes for the celebration, declared the Exhibition a "grand affair" and argued that Centennial president Joseph Hawley deserved the nation's thanks for the Exhibition's success. In Arkansas, one of the two Southern states (with Mississippi) to fund a presence at the Exhibition, there was satisfaction at the state's involvement. In an account which

[124] "Solid South: Shot-Gun Policy in South Carolina: Rabid Rebels on the Stump" in *The Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 14 October 1876.
[125] "Centennial Exhibition: The Grand Curtain Has Fallen" in the *Los Angeles Daily Star,* 5 December 1876.

exemplified the primacy of economic opportunism as the chief motivation behind Centennial engagement, one newspaper praised the "wisdom of our legislature" for appropriating money for the Exhibition and went on to state that the Centennial had "afforded an opportunity to make a display of the resources of Arkansas which has never been presented… the world has been given a peep into our treasure house…and Arkansas will hereafter be indorsed as a place to move to instead of from."[126] This report also echoes many others in manifesting state, rather than national, pride.[127] In Mississippi, the governor (Democrat John Stone) reported to his legislature, in seemingly grudging fashion, that he had been informed "by many visitors" that the Mississippi House was "one of the most attractive in the Park" and that the state had mounted a "creditable display." [128] In other Southern states, there was some remorse at an opportunity lost and continued, if posthumous, use of the Centennial as a political proxy. A Georgia correspondent reflected that the Peach State had lost out by not participating and pointed the finger of blame at the Bourbons:

> Voluntarily waiving all rights to the immense advantages to have been derived from a participation in it. We have come here in scores and hundreds and wasted in an indefinite, aimless sort of way more money than would have presented us as a state in a better style than either Ohio or New York. And what excuse do we have to offer for this stupidity? None under heaven but the sulky prejudices of a surly executive or the extreme Bourbonistic tendencies of a very small legislature."[129]

The *New Orleans Times,* meanwhile, took the opportunity to take a jab at one of Louisiana's (black) commissioners, ignoring the fact that the roles were unpaid: "The

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[126] "Arkansas' Future" in *The Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock) 8 November 1876.
[127] See for example "Arkansas at the Centennial" in *The Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock) 6 July 1876, *The Weekly Clarion* (Jackson, Mississippi) 16 August 1876.
[128] *Annual Reports of the Departments and Benevolent Institutions of the State of Mississippi for the Year Ending December 31, 1876* (Jackson: Power & Barksdale, 1877) p. 21.
[129] "The Centennial: A Practical View by a Practical Man" in *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Georgia Journal and Messenger* (Macon, Georgia) 7 November 1876.

Centennial has closed, the show is over, and many anxious enquiries are made as to what Honest John Lynch, Centennial Commissioner for Louisiana, did to earn his money."[130]

While many white Southerners did travel to "Centenniadelphia" (with most accounts enthusiastic) the proportion of Southern visitors, both as percentages of fair attendees and of the overall Southern population, must have been relatively low. Mississippi's state building on the Centennial grounds, for example, recorded 3,800 visitors from the Magnolia State over the course of the Exhibition, out of a total population of about 830,000.[131] If the Philadelphia Exhibition served to both reflect, and in some ways amplify, the sectional and political divisions of an unreconstructed nation, it must be remembered that the Centennial Fourth was also celebrated beyond Philadelphia, on a nation-wide scale. Our concluding chapter takes a look at local Centennial celebrations in the Southern states.

[130] *New Orleans Times*, 30 November 1876.
[131] *Annual Reports…1877*, p. 21.

Conclusion

In 1875 the Fourth of July had been, for the New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, "The Day We Do Not Celebrate."[1] A year later, on the eve of the Centennial Fourth, the same paper alerted its readers that: "The observance of the great national holiday is an invariable custom with the *Picayune*. Therefore there will be no evening edition issued from this office on the 4th"[2] As this *volte-face* indicates, the anti-Fourth arguments still being voiced in many Southern quarters in 1875 seem to have largely dried up by 1876, which saw local commemorations entered into enthusiastically across the states of the former Confederacy. The centennial Fourth was observed in New Orleans with "business houses closed…the streets…gay with flags and brilliant bunting and the air resounding with the strains of music and the rattle of the inevitable fire-crackers."[3] After reviewing these local Centennial celebrations, which were generally as politically-charged as the national extravaganza in Philadelphia, we will conclude with some observations on what this study of nationalistic commemoration tells us about reconciliation, commemoration and American identity in the 1870s South.

In Perry County, Arkansas the Centennial Fourth was marked with a "grand barbecue" for which "every horse, mule and wagon" in the vicinity was required to transport the celebrants. The paragraph following the description of the commemoration commented that the "political outlook at present is very promising." Democrats had regained control of the state the previous year, and the paper went on to portray the local population as "jubilant" over the prospect of a Democratic victory in that year's presidential election

[1] "The Day We Do Not Celebrate" in *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans) 4 July 1875.
[2] "Fourth of July" in *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans) 3 July 1876.
[3] "Fourth of July: A Brilliant Procession" in *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans) 6 July 1876.

which, the report prophesized, would lead to "a free and independent nation, instead of a mockery and tyranny."[4]

In Marshall, Texas, the locals, white and black, went all out in celebrating the day. The local *Tri-Weekly Herald* reported that: "All idea of business was forgotten. Stores and workshops were closed and men, women and children surrendered themselves to a day of enjoyment."[5] The *Herald* devoted thousands of words to a breathless recounting of the day's activities, with detailed descriptions of the numerous floats in the town's procession and listing by name many of the participating townsfolk:

> the triumphal car of Columbia 'twas a chariot of rare beauty decorated with taste by Mrs Matthews and other ladies. The character of Columbia was well sustained by the beautiful Miss Laura Marsh, seated on an elevated throne, and protected from the sun by an airy canopy…[6]

This sort of account, with descriptions of the parts played by people most readers would have been acquainted with, lent an immediacy to local celebrations that no account of goings-on in Philadelphia could match. The *Herald* went on to describe an apparently racially inclusive celebration: "the greased pig on the public square…the sack race, and the climbing of greased pole, in which the colored boys took part. Immense hilarity among all and many a hearty laugh."[7]

While the *Herald's* account was focused on the activities of the day rather than any analysis of its significance or meaning, its account of the day's orations provided a momentary distraction from greased pigs and poles. A local reverend gave an invocation which offered thanks for "a new era in our history, with the dark and threatening clouds of anarchy dispersing. And we pray that this may be the dawn of soul liberty, when all tyranny shall disappear from the earth…" Clearly, with the 'dark clouds' of Reconstruction lifting, white Texans anticipated release from the 'tyranny' they had been

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[4] "Perry County, Fourth of July Festivities" in *The Arkansas Gazette,* 14 July 1876.
[5] "How the Fourth was Celebrated" in *The Tri-Weekly Herald* (Marshall, Texas) 8 July 1876.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

subject to for the past decade and proved more amendable to celebrating the national holiday. In a more secular vein, a Mr. James Turner told the Marshall assemblage that the Fourth was day "not of strife but of reconciliation." Turner went on that of the two sides in the war, one had "fought, as they believed, for freedom, the other had fought for the union…and in peace they were once more friends, claiming a common history and common heritage." [8]

A similar story was unfolding two hundred and sixty-five miles south in Brenham, Texas. The conditionality of post-war nationalism in the white South, and the extent to which post-war American nationalism in the South was contingent upon hopes of Democratic Party primacy, can be gleaned from a report of the Centennial Independence Day celebrations in that town. The local newspaper described processions, speeches and "streets thronged with people in holiday attire" and pronounced the commemoration a success, concluding that "everyone was perfectly satisfied and reconstructed. We are now fairly launched on the second century of the Republic, with flattering prospects for an honest Democratic administration of national affairs."[9] Further, it implicitly highlighted the way Republican rule was seen by many Texans and underscored the feelings behind Texan reluctance to be represented at the national Centennial commemoration by a Republican appointee of a Republican governor, as detailed in Chapter 4.

Similarly, a description of the commemoration of the day at Danville, Virginia made clear the connection many Southerners made between re-embracing their Americanism and the electoral success of the Democratic Party: "the Fourth was generally observed as a holiday. Stores were closed and there were picnic excursions…Tonight there will be a grand ratification of the nomination of Tilden and Hendricks (Democratic

[8] Ibid.
[9] "The Celebration: A Complete Success," in *The Weekly Banner (*Brenham, Texas) 7 July 1876.

nominees for President and Vice-President)." [10] Colonel John Simons of South Carolina, addressing a Democratic gathering in New York, predicted "disaster" unless Tilden won the presidency- and the *Macon Telegraph* reinforced this message by, when publishing Simons' remarks, also adding that "Nearly all the speakers insisted that the Republican Party could not reform itself, and the only hope of the country is a Democratic victory."[11]

African Americans stressed black citizenship and social uplift in their celebrations. In 1876 observations of the Centennial Fourth in a Texas Sunday School were linked with the 'elevation' of the black race. A local man provided this report to the national journal of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, *the Christian Recorder:*

> Knowing the great interest you take in the elevation of our race, no matter where located, I will send you a few lines as to our progress in Texas. The A.M.E. Sunday Schools of Columbia and Green Hill met, and a courteous repast was spread by the parents and friends in St. Paul's Church, to which the youngsters did ample justice. It done the heart of your correspondent good to see the cake and chicken, raisins, candy and other good things disappear, and to see the faces of the little ones light up… The recitations were of a fine order. We had a good time. Trusting all the race will be elevated everywhere, and the African banner will yet float over the "Lone Star State…[12]

It is unclear how literally the notion of an 'African banner' over Texas was meant to be taken, but it seems certain that these black Texans were utilising the Fourth as a means of teaching children about their American citizenship, and that citizenship, linked with their religion, was seen as a means of 'elevating' them. In Portsmouth, Virginia, African Americans gathered at the A.M.E. church, "crowded to its utmost capacity," where a choir sang "My Country" and a pastor offered a "brief and most patriotic prayer." [13] This was followed by a reading of the Declaration of Independence and an oration by black educator and former abolitionist John Mercer Langston. The account of Langston's speech in the *People's Advocate* described his focus on The Declaration of Independence

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[10] "The Fourth" in *The Macon Weekly Telegraph*, 11 July 1875.
[11] Ibid.
[12] John Thomas, "Word From Texas" in *The Christian Recorder* (Philadelphia) 20 July 1876.
[13] "The Observance of the Centennial at Portsmouth and Oration by Prof. Langston" in *The People's Advocate* (Alexandria, Virginia) 22 July 1876.

and the Constitution, "showing at once how those great papers had declared the freedom of the Negro from the day they were written." He also stressed African *American* identity with references to Crispus Attucks' Revolutionary sacrifice and the "not insignificant…part which the colored citizen took in this American anniversary." [14]

But as Southern whites reclaimed the Fourth, there were inevitably tensions. Hamburg, South Carolina was, in Eric Foner's words, a "center of Reconstruction black power" with numerous blacks holding local office.[15] As the local black militia celebrated the Centennial Fourth, a local white farmer took offense at being held up on the road by the parade. Over the next few days racial tensions in the area escalated with armed whites facing off against the black militia; the ensuing violence saw several black people killed. This episode, grounded in black observation of the Fourth, proved a rallying point for aggrieved whites and a key development in South Carolina's Democratic "redemption" later that year.[16]

Some white Southerners made use of the Centennial Fourth, though, to perpetuate stereotypes of the docile and content black American: an acquaintance of former Confederate vice-president Alexander Stephens published an account of a Fourth of July visit to the ailing statesman that did just that. This narrative referenced the events at Hamburg by noting that they had been predictable due to the nature of its African American inhabitants with white visitors there "often subjected to annoyances and insults by colored men." However, the correspondent swiftly moved on to a more congenial subject: the loyalty that blacks in his hometown of Crawfordsville, Georgia felt towards Alexander Stephens:

> Mr. Stephens was rolled in his chair out into the long piazza as the vast crowds[of African American Sunday School delegations] advanced up the lawn…perhaps you have never

[14] Ibid. The *People's Advocate* did not report that Langston also called for integrated public schools in Virginia, see "The National Utterances and Achievements of Our First Century by John M. Langston, 1876" at <https://captainjamesdavis.net/tag/banneker-lyceum/>
[15] Eric Foner, p. 570.
[16] Ibid.

> heard a Georgia negro sing. At all events I am confident that you have never heard twenty-five hundred of them sing in chorus as they did on that afternoon… for the entertainment of the invalid statesman whom of all men they love and honor the most…their neat and orderly appearance, with their Sunday clothes and simple banners, not only gratified Mr Stephens…but enraptured him. [17]

Stephens, who in 1861 declared that slavery was the 'cornerstone' of the new Confederate nation, commented later that he almost "wished he could have died" while enjoying this serenade, and then spoke of "the generally good condition of the negroes in that section, where many of them own snug little farms and other properties and between whom and their white neighbors the most friendly relations obtain."[18]

Celebration of the Fourth was not yet universal in the white South, however. A letter published in the *Augusta Chronicle* noted that the centennial Fourth in Oglethorpe County, Georgia "passed off as quietly as if it had been no more than any other day in the calendar. There was no demonstration, no firing of guns, no spread-eagle speeches, no suspension of business, and no old time country barbecue."[19] But in the nearly "redeemed" South of 1876, this Georgia county proved the exception. Local commemorations were less of an abstraction for these Southerners than the Exhibition in Philadelphia so while the local activities also served as arenas for assertions of political and national identities, the appeal of greased pigs, firecrackers and barbecue, in commemoration of a struggle far removed from the more recent one, helped overcome, at the local level, white Southern antipathy to Independence Day. But it seems clear that white Democratic control, or in some cases, just the prospect of 'redemption,' was the key element in white Southern celebration of the Fourth in 1876 and subsequent years.

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[17] "A Beautiful Episode: A Fourth of July Scene in Georgia" in *The Columbus Daily Enquirer*, 11 August 1876.
[18] Ibid.
[19] "Georgia Glimpses: Oglethorpe County Letter" in *The Augusta Chronicle*, 8 July 1876.

Summary

This study has provided insight into the complex interplay of sectionalism and nationalism in the development of the United States, tracing the antebellum development of, broadly speaking, two competing versions, one Northern, the other Southern, of an American nation. The Civil War and ensuing period of Reconstruction was the culmination of this struggle; this thesis has argued that a distinct Southern nationalism was inculcated during the Confederacy's brief life and has highlighted the discomfort, resentment and anger that many white Southerners felt upon finding themselves unconsenting members of an American Union after the war. Northern journalist Whitelaw Reid travelled extensively throughout the South in the years immediately after the war, and noted that to "talk of genuine Union sentiment, any affection for the Union, any intention to go one step further out of the old paths that led to the rebellion than they are forced to is preposterous. They admit that they are whipped; but the honest ones make no pretense of loving the power that whipped them." [20] Anne Sarah Rubin, meanwhile, has highlighted the degree to which white Southerners nursed bitterness while outwardly expressing capitulation. She quotes an Alabama colonel: "Let us keep a pleasant equanimity of mind…we have well learned the lessons of toleration and will we not profit from it? Yes, and when we can stand on our own two feet, will we forget the law 'an eye for an eye?'"[21]

This discomfort was negotiated by some white Southerners in a more flexible, pragmatic way that did not, though, necessarily indicate lesser attachment to the South or greater affinity for the Union. This thesis has highlighted clear indications that the split between utilitarian and disdainful approaches to white Southern engagement with the Exhibition can be linked, broadly, to the accomodationist, New Departure and the more

[20] Rubin, p. 147.
[21] Rubin, Kindle edition, location 2206.

recalcitrant Bourbon wings of the Democratic Party**,** respectively**.** It has suggested that, in general, we see in the embittered rhetoric of those who wanted nothing to do with the Centennial, who saw in it nothing but "Yankee humbug," a reflection of the old planter class, resistant to change. Indeed, the Nashville *Republican Banner*, in describing the vociferous and cantankerous Centennial critic Raphael Semmes, referred to him as "die-in-the-last-ditch anti-Centennial gentry."[22]

Meanwhile, it seems likely that "New Departure" white Democrats, the more liberal wing of the party that favoured a more cooperative relationship with the Federal government and were resigned to some element of black citizenship, were the element more likely to push for Centennial participation. New South proponent Henry Grady's *Atlanta Daily Herald* applied this "utilitarian" philosophy to the Centennial, taking to task a sister journal which apparently fit the Bourbon mould:

> We are not surprised that the editor of the *Savannah News* is opposed to the Centennial. He will continue to oppose it…even while everybody else has gone to the Centennial and are sounding Georgia's glories to the world he will remain at home, raking among the ashes in a garb of sackcloth…there is a utilitarian view of the subject that will bear presenting…nothing but bad blood and childishness can keep the South out of the jubilee. We shall have a show of which every Georgian will be proud.[23]

As we have seen, these hopes for Georgia's participation remained unfulfilled. But Georgia, and the South, would have further opportunities to market themselves: the Centennial of 1876 was America's first world's fair but far from its last. An even grander affair was held in Chicago in 1893 to mark the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus' voyages. As with the Philadelphia Exhibition seventeen years earlier, the World's Columbian Exposition was perceived in the South as a chance to benefit economically, as well as to iterate a distinct identity. Perusal of Southern newspapers in the run-up to the Chicago exhibition provides a sense of Centennial *déjà vu* in that one sees repeated

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[22] "The True Bond of Union" in the *Nashville Republican Banner*, 24 April 1875.
[23] "Georgia's Chance at the Centennial" in *The Atlanta Daily Herald*, "Tuesday 17" 1875. Clipping in USCC Archives.

admonishments that Georgia, or South Carolina, or Alabama, *must* be represented properly at the Columbian Exposition. For example, it was suggested that Georgia's headquarters, which apparently combined "beauty, dignity and strength" would, as an advertisement of the state's resources, be "worth thrice its price."[24] Generally absent from Southern discussion of the Chicago fair, however, was sectional animus, although a distinct sense of sectional identity and pride was evident in white Southern desire to be represented at the fair. The African American experience of Chicago was, though, depressingly reminiscent of Philadelphia. No black persons were appointed to any position of authority with the Exposition, and there was division within the black community over issues such as whether or not there should be a dedicated "Colored People's Day." Black journalist Ida Wells argued that the gesture was condescending, while Frederick Douglass saw it as an opportunity to educate whites on black progress. [25]

The financial success of the 1876 Centennial also inspired Southern world's fairs in New Orleans (1885), Atlanta (1895) and Nashville (1897), among others. Robert Rydell has highlighted the linkage between these fairs and the idea of a "New South," arguing that "each fair presented an image of a New South imbued with the spirit of progress and patriotism."[26] These exhibitions achieved to, a degree, what the Centennial could not: they served as canvases to project an image of a distinct and economically viable South within a reunited nation. In these years in which the white South was being left to order its society as it saw fit, it was keen to demonstrate to the world that the 'problem' of race had been solved and made use of these exhibitions to demonstrate this to potential investors. The fairs included black exhibitions- Atlanta's 'Negro Department,' in particular, was central to that fair's thematic presence. Although the intent of those

[24] "Georgia's Cosey Quarters" in *The Macon Telegraph*, 11 March 1893.
[25] See Rydell, pp. 52-53.
[26] Rydell, p. 73.

African Americans who worked on the exhibit was to demonstrate capability and progress, the real importance of black involvement with the fair was Booker T Washington's famous "Atlanta Compromise" speech, delivered on the fair's opening day. As Bruce Harvey has pointed out, the white press focused on what it saw as Washington's message of letting the South handle race relations free of Northern influence, and largely ignored his focus on black education and uplift.[27] In the eyes of many white Southerners, it seems, the 'race problem' had been solved, and the exhibitions were a way of demonstrating this. These fairs, most particularly the one in Atlanta, framed and defined a new order in the South, a racist and "redeemed" society existing within a re-United States. In the words of Robert Rydell, Southern fairs "forged a link between race and progress that prepared the way for national acceptance of *Plessy v Ferguson."*[28]

In debates around the origins of Jim Crow segregation in the South, historian Howard Rabinowitz has argued that African Americans played an active role in the development of this hierarchical society, seeing segregation as a lesser evil than the alternative: exclusion.[29] The Centennial and subsequent exhibitions might be said to reflect that development. The African American role in the Centennial story provided a poignant counterpoint to the narrative of white Southern ambivalence: eager to use the Exhibition to claim and demonstrate their status as American citizens, their efforts met with obstruction, ill fortune, and indifference. Endeavouring to lay claim to a part both in America's Revolutionary heritage and its industrialized future, black Americans found themselves as marginalized on the fairgrounds as they were becoming in American society.

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[27] Bruce Harvey, *World's Fairs in a Southern Accent* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014) p. 266.
[28] Rydell, p.76.
[29] See Howard Rabinowitz, "From Exclusion to Segregation: Southern Race Relations 1865-1890" *Journal of American History*, 63, (1976) 325-350.

The later fairs, while more inclusive of black Americans, clearly relegated them to a distinct and inferior station in the life of the nation.

We have established that commemorative activity is often as much about the present as it is the past; in particular the discussion of antebellum Independence Day celebrations situated those celebrations as usable rituals for invoking unity or more commonly reinforcing partisan or regional interpretations of what it meant to be American. This held true in the in the immediate post-Civil war South, as well, with the former Confederacy largely shunning celebrations of the Fourth, leaving it for "the Yankees and the darkies."[30]And as we have seen in Chapter 2, these white Southerners' re-embrace of Independence Day was clearly linked with the return to power of the Democratic Party.

The thesis has also laid bare the close connections between the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 and the political concerns of 1870s America. Intended as a patriotic endeavour to commemorate one hundred years of American independence, as well as a demonstration to the world of American unity, nationhood, and technological progress the Centennial fell short in all but the last. John Hepp has described the Exhibition as a "liminal moment" which found America on the cusp between an agricultural past and an industrial future.[31] This thesis has pursued a parallel theme, using the Exhibition to bring into focus a particular moment in the long, rocky road to sectional reconciliation. The deep sectional and political divisions reflected in discourse around the exhibition have been demonstrated, making the case that those white Southerners who did advocate engagement with the Centennial did so largely for pragmatic reasons, basing their positions on the putative economic and political advantages to be had. And in the same way that opportunistic Southern enthusiasm for the Centennial fizzled into anti-climax,

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[30] Diarist Emma LeConte, as quoted in Rubin, p. 243.
[31] Hepp, p. 533.

with only Mississippi and Arkansas having any official presence at the Philadelphia Exposition, Northern investment in the "New South" left the South economically shrivelled and dependent for decades.

Questions around white Southerners' political identities, as well as national, regional and state loyalties were clearly reflected in the discourse around Centennial representation, in terms of both physical presence at the Exhibition and through representation on the fair's organizing Commission. This project has highlighted the importance of identity in the 1870s South with its examination of the heretofore overlooked Parsons/Chew imbroglio in Texas and similar *contretemps* in other Southern states. In these instances, the question of representation on the Centennial Exhibition's organizing commission served as a proxy for discourse around local, state, and national identity in a fractured nation. On a deeper level, though, it was also about political power. There is little to no evidence of any uncertainty about Southern identity; the men involved in these debates saw themselves as "true" Texans or South Carolinians, and controversy around Centennial representation reflected their determination that this identity entitled them to regain, or maintain, power. The sense of Confederate identity spawned by the Civil War did not disappear or transmute smoothly into a renewed American nationalism. It was channelled into that fierce sense of state and partisan identity that made carpetbagger or Republican representation on the National Centennial Commission simply intolerable.

Southern reportage of the Exhibition also revealed resentment at both the North and what was perceived as the political subjugation of the South. And this project has shown that for white Southern visitors to Philadelphia, the American nationalism underpinning the Centennial only served to exacerbate their own sense of alienation from the Union, and their own distinctive Southern identity. For the two Southern states that did participate, the Exhibition proved an arena for expression of state, rather than

national, pride. Further, the Exhibition provided a space for Northern observers to exoticize and 'other' both the South and Southern visitors to the fair.

The importance of commemorative activity in a discussion of the 1870s white South lies not so much in the magnificent exhibits and revolutionary technology on display or the grand scale of the Centennial Exhibition or the barbecues and firecrackers of local Fourths of July but in what these commemorations meant to people and how they reflected the concerns of the day. The great Exhibition was more than a site of memory and a declaration of technological advancement: it highlighted the divisions, the bitterness, and the complexities of a nation that was in many ways still at war with itself.

The Centennial was remarkable in its power to serve almost any rhetorical purpose and in the way it was simultaneously derided as a failure, a cynical Yankee ploy, held up as a potential (or a missed) opportunity for state and local advancement, or extolled as the most marvellous, breathtaking human endeavour of all time. It also served as a looking-glass in which Americans, North and South, black and white, saw reflected back a nation that was far from reunified.

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