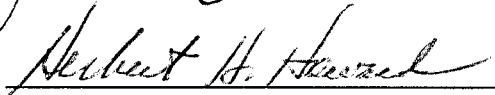


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THE MONROE (ALA.) JOURNAL:
RECONSTRUCTION REPORTING
IN THE RURAL DEEP SOUTH

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

James G. Thornton Jr.

August 1990

... of ...
... in particular ...
... For Anne, ...
Allyson, Ashley and Lesley ...

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the course of thesis research, a number of scholars have assisted me generously. In particular I am indebted to Professors Edward Caudill, James A. Crook and Herbert H. Howard, who served as my adviser and committee respectively. Their direction, criticism and encouragement, is greatly appreciated, and I trust reflected in this thesis. Whatever errors remain in my work, however, are solely my responsibility.

I also acknowledge with thanks the advice and consultation of Professor Allen W. Jones, historian and archivist at Auburn University.

ABSTRACT

Much of the history of the rural Southern press during the Reconstruction era has been overlooked. These small backwoods journals, and their editors, played important roles in shaping community attitudes and in turn being shaped. And the newspapers deserve a closer look.

One such paper is the Monroe Journal, which was founded in June 1866 at Claiborne in southwest Alabama. Undeterred by the uncertainties of the early Reconstruction years, the paper's first editor, Z.D. Cottrell, set up shop in the steam boat town on the Alabama River. Under Cottrell and the editors who followed him, the Journal promoted candidates of the Democratic-Conservative Party, proclaimed the supremacy of the white race and damned Negro rule and Radical Republicans.

This study covered a period of four years, 1867, 1870, 1878 and 1879, during and shortly after the Reconstruction era, and was limited by the availability of newspapers from that time. Though constrained, the study clearly shows that the newspaper played an important role in Monroe County and the state in helping to wrest political power from the Republicans. Reconstruction politics aside, the Journal's editors also displayed varying degrees of skill in keeping their readers informed of news and opinion from other parts of the country and the world. Although the paper faced hard economic times, it was able to attract

sufficient advertising to sustain publication through the long years.

As newspapers go, the Journal was tiny -- usually four pages -- circulated to less than 500 homes. Though it may have been a buzzing gnat, the paper never grew tired in its efforts to harry Reconstruction into an early grave.

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INTRODUCTION

The two generals met at Citronelle, a rail stop in the piney woods of extreme Southwest Alabama. One came to offer terms of surrender, the other to accept them for to do otherwise would only continue pointless bloodshed.

With surrender, the remaining Confederate soldiers in the Department of Mississippi, Alabama and East Louisiana stacked their rifles and prepared for the journey home. The Stars and Bars came down the flag poles for the last time.

Though the War Between the States had not begun in Alabama, the last Confederate surrender east of the Mississippi River took place in the state almost one month after General Robert E. Lee had surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse.¹

On May 4, 1865, Major General Richard Taylor, son of President Zachary Taylor, surrendered what was left of his army to Major General E.R.S. Canby.² For the soldiers, Alabama and the South, Confederate battle flags would wave no more. It was the end of the mass bloodshed, and the

¹Page Smith, Trial by Fire, A People's History of the Civil War and Reconstruction, vol. 5, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1982), 562.

²The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Ser. 1, vol. 49, part 2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1897), 610.

Rebellion, but the beginning of another agony --
Reconstruction.

About one year later, a newspaper began publication in Claiborne, a town on the Alabama River about 55 miles northeast of Citronelle, a surprising fact given the economic conditions of that time. But the Monroe Journal was to survive the turmoil of Reconstruction, all the while reporting and commenting on the effort to strip the South of the vestiges of slavery and bring the region back into the nation.

CHAPTER I AN UNMINED HISTORY

Historical studies of newspapers in the South during Reconstruction are few and tend to focus on metropolitan daily newspapers and their editors. Two such editors are Henry Watterson of the Louisville Courier-Journal and Henry W. Grady of the Atlanta Constitution, both of whom rose to fame in the years immediately after the war.¹

The reporting and editorial views of daily newspapers in the South are also often the themes of books and articles on specific aspects of the war and Reconstruction. Donald E. Reynolds' book, Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis, which contains references to many Alabama newspapers, is one of several examples.²

While the focus of much scholarly work is on the large newspaper and its history, studies of the rural -- and more personal -- newspaper in Alabama are few, even though they have always outnumbered the larger daily papers in the state. For example, in 1870, nine daily newspapers, 76 weeklies, two tri-weeklies and two semi-weekly papers were

¹Two examples of studies of leading Southern editors are: Raymond B. Nixon, Henry W. Grady: Spokesman of the New South (New York: Knopf, 1943) and Joseph F. Wall, Henry Watterson, Reconstructed Rebel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

²Donald E. Reynolds, Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970).

being published in the state. The dailies had a combined circulation of 16,420 per issue while the non-dailies circulated a combined 74,745 per issue.³ If the history of the press in the United States is to be a full and complete accounting, it must include this rural segment of the industry.

In 1948, Thomas D. Clark, Southern press historian and former editor of the Southern Historical Review, wrote:

In the eyes of the historian few or no local publishers have rivaled the more spectacular daily editors for journalistic laurels, and few country papers have attracted major attention beyond the borders of their counties....scholars in many areas of southern history have failed, at serious loss to their readers, to investigate this major source of local history.⁴

Clark went on to state that most readers of a country newspaper know the editor and trust his judgment. "Because editors were close to their readers, another fact is significant: the editors have shared the people's prejudices and respected their mores," he said. "In no printed source in southern history is there a better and more contiguous reflection of the common man's thinking and changing opinion than in the country journal."⁵

³U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Population, I, 483.

⁴Thomas D. Clark, "The Country Newspaper: A Factor in Southern Opinion, 1865-1930," The Journal of Southern History 14 (February 1948): 3.

⁵Ibid., 4,5.

Almost 30 years later, an Alabama writer, John Kent Folmar, was to make a similar complaint:

During most of the nineteenth century the local newspaper was the primary, and often the only, source of media information; and politics was the most popular topic of conversation and dispute. Therefore, a local editor was usually both influential and powerful. Despite this situation, there are relatively few national, regional or local studies of editors or important newspapers of the lower South.⁶

It is somewhat ironic that the country newspapers by reprinting items from the Memphis Commercial Appeal, the Atlanta Constitution, and the Montgomery Advertiser and other dailies gave those papers a much larger readership and much greater influence in the post-Civil War South than they would ordinarily have had.⁷

Yet much of the country press in the South during this era has been ignored. The same is true for the country weeklies in Alabama, which have not been popular topics of study for historians, who have overlooked a treasure of local history.

The Monroe Journal has been chosen for this thesis for the following reasons: It is a non-urban Alabama newspaper of the post-Civil War era; the Journal is the only

⁶John K. Folmar, "Reaction to Reconstruction: John Forsyth and The Mobile Advertiser and Register," Alabama Historical Quarterly 37 (Winter 1975): 245. Folmar cites Howard K. Beale, The Critical Year: A Study of Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1958), 320-24.

⁷Clark, "Country Newspaper," 8.

paper still being published in Monroe County, providing historical continuity; and, the paper began publication in the early days of Reconstruction untainted by the strains and stresses of the steps toward secession and of the years of war.

The focus of this thesis will be on how a small rural newspaper in southern Alabama reported and commented on efforts to reconstruct Monroe County, Alabama and the South with specific attention on the paper's political and social concerns of the Reconstruction era to wit:

Politics of Reconstruction:

What was the paper's reaction to Reconstruction efforts by the national and state governments? What are its comments on President Andrew Johnson, Radical Republicans, activities of the Freedmen's Bureau and military commanders?

What solutions to political problems are proposed by the Journal? What are its comments on the 13th (freeing the slaves), 14th (bestowing citizenship on the ex-slaves) and 15th (black suffrage) amendments? What does the newspaper have to say about voter registration, local, state and national political leaders, and elections?

A Society in Transition:

How did the paper report on problems with the labor supply, if any, which arose with the break-up of the plantation system and the freeing of the slaves? What was the attitude of Monroe countians in the aftermath of defeat?

Resignation? Defiance? Despair? How did the paper report and comment on emigration by ex-Confederates to other states such as Texas and other countries, such as Brazil and Mexico?

Race Relations:

How did the paper report conflict in the country or elsewhere in the South which arose between the newly freed slaves and whites? Was the Ku Klux Klan an active force in the county? Did the paper approve or disapprove of its actions? In what manner did the Journal refer to the freed slaves? Were accounts written with an objective, sympathetic or sarcastic view?

The Aftermath:

Once the Democrats had regained control of the state and federal troops were withdrawn, what political and social issues then came to the forefront?

1. PRIMARY SOURCES

The Monroe Journal was established in mid-1866, by Z.D. Cottrell, who gave himself the title, "editor and proprietor." It was the first newspaper to begin publishing in Monroe County after the war,⁸ succeeding the Claiborne

⁸W.W. Screws, "Alabama Journalism," in Memorial Record of Alabama, (Madison, Wisc.: Brant & Fuller, 1893; reprint Spartanburg, S.C.: Reprint Co., 1976), 2:199 (page reference is to reprint edition).

Southerner, which was established in 1852 and suspended publication sometime after Nov. 25, 1864.⁹

In the Journal's edition of May 11, 1867, a new name, S.B. Baird, appeared in the masthead as publisher. Cottrell remained listed as editor, but no mention of this apparent change in ownership or formation of a partnership was made in the May 11 edition, nor in editions shortly before or shortly after May 11. In later editions that year, Cottrell was referred to as "Rev. Z.D. Cottrell," who was attempting to start a school.

About seven months after becoming publisher of the Journal, Baird started another newspaper, the Monroe County Eagle, also in Claiborne. Edited by the Rev. W.W. Spence, the Eagle was a much more attractive paper typographically than the Journal. W.W. Screws in the Memorial Record of Alabama stated that the Eagle was founded by the sons of S.B. Baird.¹⁰ Exactly what took place is not clear since the first edition of the Eagle is not available, and copies of the Journal for January 1868 are not available. However, on several occasions during 1868 and 1869, the Eagle and Journal engaged in editorial warfare. The Journal was accused of cutting the price of legal advertising below its

⁹The last available copy of the Claiborne Southerner was dated 25 November 1864.

¹⁰Screws, "Alabama Journalism," 199.

published rates,¹¹ and Baird was accused of stealing the subscription list when he sold the Journal. Baird responded by calling the Journal's newest publisher, S. M. Davidson, a liar.¹² Davidson apparently did not buy the Journal from Baird, but from the publisher who bought the paper from Baird. During much of 1869, the two papers hotly debated whether the courthouse should be moved from Claiborne to Monroeville, the county seat. By this time, the Journal apparently had moved its office to Monroeville. Despite the rivalry, both papers remained pro-Democratic and fiercely anti-Radical.

Baird later sold the Eagle to a Capt. T.C. Brewer, who pledged to continue advocating the doctrines of the Democratic Party, the "supremacy of the White, or Adamic race over the negro," and a return to a system of forced labor.¹³ Baird dropped from view, but about 10 years later the Journal mentioned a Samuel B. Baird, "formerly a resident of this county who is now running a newsy paper in Eldorado, Ark."¹⁴ In late 1870, a W.R. Baird became publisher of the Eagle,¹⁵ but the newspaper apparently did

¹¹Monroe Eagle, 27 May 1868.

¹²Monroe Eagle, 30 June 1869.

¹³Monroe Eagle, 24 September 1869.

¹⁴Monroe Journal, 31 March 1879.

¹⁵Monroe Eagle, 12 December 1870.

not survive the decade. After 1871, the Eagle was no longer listed in George P. Rowell's American Newspaper Directory.¹⁶

By early 1867, the Journal, printed every Saturday, had established a healthy advertising base. More than 75 percent of the four-page Jan. 5 edition consisted of advertising. The news to advertising ratio for the Jan. 5 issue is typical of those found in later editions that year. Four of the six columns on the front page were devoted to ads, all 25 of which were one column wide and ranged from one-half inch to seven inches in depth. Every ad resembled the modern-day word classified ad or what is called the display classified, which has type sizes larger than agate. The remaining two columns on the front page were devoted to a letter to the editor, dated Dec. 17, 1866, written by "Tight Eye," a resident of Wild Fork.

Almost 90 percent of Page 2 was devoted to advertising: notices of sheriff's sales, along with legal notices about real estate auctions, sales of cattle, homes, household items, buggies and houses held to satisfy debts to private parties. Many of the commercial advertisements were placed by businesses in other cities, such as Mobile and New Orleans. The Battle House hotel in Mobile, in a one column

¹⁶The Eagle is listed in Rowell's directories for 1869, 1870 and 1871. Listings were published free and contained basic facts, such as newspaper name, editor, place of publication and circulation, which were provided by the editor. George P. Rowell and Co.'s American Newspaper Directory (New York: Geo. P. Rowell and Co. Publishers, 1874), 16.

by 5.5 inch ad at the top of the front page, announced 1867 completion of a renovation. "The Bath Rooms have been also refitted in a splendid style, where Hot, Cold and Shower Baths, can be obtained at all times."¹⁷

Five of the six columns on Page 3 were devoted to advertisements of all kinds: dry goods, legal notices and reports of steamer traffic on the Alabama River. Advertising completely filled Page 4.

The sheet size of the newspaper was slightly smaller than today's so-called broadsheet, which most daily and weekly newspapers use. Since the linotype machine had not been invented, the Journal's type was set by hand, which served -- more than anything else -- to limit the number of pages that could be produced each week.

The newspaper's annual subscription rate was \$3; for six months the rate was \$2. The paper's circulation in 1867 is unknown, but in 1869, a circulation of 600 was claimed.¹⁸ In addition to the Eagle, newspapers which were to follow and compete with the Journal included the Kempville Eagle, 1899, which was a Negro and Republican newspaper; and, the Free Mission Pioneer, also a Negro newspaper.¹⁹

¹⁷Monroe Journal, 5 January 1867.

¹⁸Rowell, Directory, (1869), 8.

¹⁹Rhoda C. Ellison, History and Bibliography of Alabama Newspapers in the Nineteenth Century (University: University of Alabama Press, 1954), 33.

Advertising was sold by the square (10 lines or less) or by the quarter, half and full column. Ten lines covered a space slightly more than one inch deep and two inches wide. Advertisers paid \$1.00 for the first insertion of an ad one square or smaller and 50 cents for each subsequent insertion. If one square of advertising was placed for a three-month period, the cost was \$5, a discount of \$1.50 for a 12-week run. A three-month run for a full column, about 19 inches, cost \$35, earning a significant volume discount. The paper's rate schedule stated that "All bills for advertising were due in advance," that "Obituary notices and tributes of respect charged same as new advertisements" but "All advertisements for charitable purposes half price."²⁰ To compare costs, a physician charged \$8 for a house call within two miles of his office in Claiborne. The charge included prescriptions and medicines. The normal delivery of a child cost \$20, and a vaccination \$2.²¹

While we can gauge the prosperity of the Journal in the early months of its life only by appearance, it seems that the paper was flourishing. Advertising, much of it legal notices, was being sold in sufficient quantity to sustain publication and provide a profit, that is, if the paper was adhering to its published rate schedule and collecting payment in advance for advertisements.

²⁰Monroe Journal, 19 January 1867.

²¹Monroe Journal, 4 May 1867.

This study of the Journal begins in January 1867, 20 months after the war's end, to determine how the newspaper viewed Reconstruction and reported conditions of the day within its home county, Alabama and the South.

Secondary sources on Reconstruction were reviewed to gain a national, regional, as well as an Alabama perspective.

The beginning point for this study is set by the earliest surviving copies of the Journal available from the Alabama Archives in Montgomery. That edition is Volume 1, Number 29, dated Jan. 5, 1867, which is a Saturday. Using an 1866 and 1867 calendar, one can count back 29 weeks and easily determine that Volume 1, Number 1 was dated June 23, 1866, barring any missed printing dates or numbering errors.

The study is, of course, limited by surviving copies of the paper.²² About half the 1867 editions are missing, including the entire months of February, March and September, but the 24 editions that were saved gave substantial information about Reconstruction and the activities of the Radicals in Congress and in the state.

All but six of the 52 editions printed during 1870

²²Two good essays on the nature of historical facts are: Edward Hallett Carr, What is History?, Chapter 1, "The Historian and His Facts" (New York: Vintage Books, 1961); Hans Meyerhoff, ed., The Philosophy of History in Our Time, Part 3, Chapter 3, Carl L. Becker, "What are Historical Facts?" (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959).

are available on microfilm; 40 of the 1878 editions survive; and all but three editions from 1879 are available.

Copies from 1866, 1868, 1869, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875, 1876 and 1877 are not available and will not be included in this study.

Thus, this study will concern only four years of Reconstruction: 1867, 1870, 1878 and 1879, representing the era's beginning, middle and end. While the study is constrained by the availability of newspapers, this is often the nature of historical research and simply can't be overcome. Despite the material's limitations and gaps, it is sufficient to present a consistent and generally unified theme. And that consistency allows us to speak with authority.

2. SECONDARY SOURCES

The lament has been made that

It is a difficult matter to prepare a satisfactory paper on the journalism of Alabama. The details are meager and the sources of information widely scattered. There are but few records in the National Library, and the files of the papers of the present day furnish but little information concerning the publications of the earlier days of the state and territory.²³

While later works, such as Rhoda Coleman Ellison's Early Alabama Publications, have been written on journalism history in the state, the same complaint could be made of

²³Screws, "Alabama Journalism," 161.

them. Books on the state's history may refer from time to time to a specific newspaper and its comment on or report of an event, but most contain little else about the state's newspapers.

The history of Alabama's press as a whole is at best sketchy. Writers have been forced to take bits and pieces of the history of individual newspapers (and not all of them) in their attempts to assemble the story of the state's newspaper industry. Thus, the overall story is full of holes and gaps, and because much of the early history, the early copies of these papers, no longer exist, the story will forever remain incomplete.

There are of course many journal and magazine articles, theses, dissertations and county histories which are either written about individual newspapers or include limited information about them. A bibliography titled "Theses and Dissertations in Alabama History, 1900-1968" by Dr. Allen W. Jones of Auburn University lists a few newspapers such as the Greenville Advocate, or the Lee County Bulletin that have been the topics of theses and dissertations. The bibliography also lists several works on Reconstruction as it unfolded in Alabama or in a particular county of the state, and these studies do pull much material from various daily and weekly papers. But none looks at the state's newspapers or an individual paper in relation to Reconstruction.

A newspaper bibliography prepared in 1985 by Dr. Paul E. Martin, project coordinator for the Coalition for the Preservation of Alabama Newspapers, provides an extensive listing of resources related to Alabama newspapers as well as a title and repository list of newspapers arranged by county.

Included in this bibliography are works on the state's daily newspapers in Birmingham, Mobile, Montgomery, Huntsville, Anniston and Dothan as well as many county seat weeklies, and city and county histories which mention or contain sections on the local newspapers.

But again a study of the state's newspapers in general or of the Monroe Journal in particular in relation to the Reconstruction era is not listed.

In examining what is available, one can find some fascinating accounts of the trials and triumphs of the early newspaper editors in Alabama. Ellison wrote, "They themselves were a versatile lot -- these editors who, in the face of all the difficulties of the frontier conditions, undertook to bring the settlers their weekly ration of news, politics and literature."²⁴

Press development in the state occurred within the four principal centers of settlement. They were: the southwestern section of the state along the Tombigbee and

²⁴Rhoda C. Ellison, Early Alabama Publications: A Study in Literary Interests (University: University of Alabama Press, 1947), 25.

Mobile rivers, the central-southern section on the Alabama River, which includes Claiborne and Monroe County, the central-western area on the Black Warrior River and the northern section in the Tennessee River Valley.²⁵

The first newspaper to be established at Claiborne was the Alabama Courier.²⁶ The Courier carried advertisements for

grocers, for an auctioneer appointed by Governor W.W. Bibb, for Benjamin Levy & Co., for booksellers and stationers, for general merchants (at least six of them) who advertised everything from silks to steel, for one tailor and one printer. There were also notices of dissolution for a partnership, and the settling of estates. A fifty dollar reward was offered for a runaway Negro.²⁷

In a May 29, 1822, edition of the Courier, "some advertisements appeared for medicines that were claimed to cure all ailments and one man advertised that he was ready to fight a duel with an associate, setting the date, hour, place, name."²⁸

During these early years, however, it was not the advertisements which usually determined the success of a newspaper. "The position of state printer afterwards (1819) became the principal plum for which the newspaper presses of

²⁵Ibid., 6.

²⁶Ibid., 7.

²⁷L. Griffith, Alabama, A Documentary History to 1900 (University: University of Alabama Press, 1968), 179.

²⁸"The Monroe Journal is Linked with County's History," The Monroe Journal Centennial Edition, December 1966, p. 2A.

the state contended, and without such patronage many undoubtedly would have been unable to exist."²⁹

Attaining the post of public printer did not mean that keeping it was assured. Printers were often involved in heated legislative battles over this bit of patronage. "Those who were successful in the struggle felt constantly the need to justify themselves for fear of losing the office."³⁰

Before the Civil War and for a period afterward, political patronage was also sought by many Alabama editors. Sometimes an editor sought affiliation with a political party and at other times subscribers attempted to snare an editor by advertising for one.

In Moulton, in 1829, a group of citizens placed this ad: "An editor with printing apparatus suited to a good village paper will be cheerfully patronized by the subscribers, providing he be an undeviating republican and watchful of the people's cause."³¹

The Sumter Democrat of Livingston was fully subsidized by the county party in 1856. In the late 1860s, the Moulton Advertiser was subsidized by the Republican party, which leased the paper for six months. Its name was changed to the Union during this time. Fortunately for the

²⁹Ellison, Early Publications, 9.

³⁰Ibid., 10.

³¹Ibid., 11.

growth of the state's press, Alabama was a state with no single dominant political party prior to the Civil War. Several political parties, including the Democrats, wielded power. Each party used a newspaper as its spokesman within the various communities.³²

As the Civil War drew closer, newspapers were established to foster either the cause of staying in the Union or of seceding from it.³³ From 1850 to 1860, the number of Alabama's daily newspapers increased from six to nine; the tri-weeklies from five to six; and the semi-monthly and weeklies from 48 to 77. Average daily circulation during the decade rose from 445 to 1,000. Average weekly circulation rose from 314 to about 965.³⁴

Although much general information of this kind is at hand about Alabama's newspapers both before and after the Civil War, little of it contributes to an understanding of the circumstances facing the rural Alabama press during Reconstruction.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., 13.

³⁴Spence, "Alabama Journalism," 232.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

1. MONROE COUNTY BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

Claiborne, which gave birth to many of Monroe County's newspapers, was a thriving steamboat stop on the east bank of the Alabama River 12 miles west of Monroeville. While Monroeville was to become the largest town in and the economic center of the county, Claiborne was destined to fade after the war, gradually losing population to other cities.¹

The county, created in 1815, four years before Alabama became a state, is named in honor of President James Monroe.² It lies just south of the state's Black Belt, an area encompassing the middle and central-western counties and named for its sticky black clay soils. The majority of the state's plantations and slave population were also concentrated in this region.

Although Monroe County was not in the heart of the Black Belt, slaves made up 56 percent of the county's total population of 15,667 before the war. Whites numbered 6,916; free blacks 46; and slaves 8,705. Monroe ranked 12th among

¹W. Stuart Harris, Dead Towns of Alabama (University: University of Alabama Press, 1977), 72.

²B.F. Riley, Alabama As It Is, (Montgomery, Ala.: Brown Printing Co., 1893), 210.

the state's 52 counties in the percentage of slaves to total population. Slaves comprised 45 percent of the state's total population of 964,201. In contrast, the slaves of Wilcox County, which borders Monroe to the north, comprised 72.29 percent of the population, ranking Wilcox fifth in the state in percentage of slaves.³

In 1860, the county was ranked 21st in the state in the number of slaveholding families, 676. A total of 101 owned one slave, 66 owned two slaves, while 73 families owned from 10 to 15 slaves, 25 owned 30-40 slaves and only three families owned 100-200 slaves, the largest category.⁴ Of the county's 764 farms, 725 were under 500 acres and 470 farms were under 100 acres. Only 31 farms contained 500 to 1,000 acres and only eight had more than 1,000 acres.⁵

Given Monroe County's large number of slaves and the number of slaveholding families, it is interesting to note the extremely close vote in the county to send either a secessionist or a cooperationist delegate to the Alabama State Convention, which adopted the Ordinance of Secession on Jan. 11, 1861. Those who favored seceding from the Union defeated the cooperationist, who wanted compromise and

³U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Population, 8.

⁴Ibid., Agriculture, 223.

⁵Ibid., 193.

cooperation with the North, by only 50 votes: 515 to 465. The vote in Wilcox County was 676 to 26 for a secessionist delegate. In Conecuh County to the southeast of Monroe, the vote was also very close the other way. Cooperationist won by a 27-vote margin, 399 to 372.⁶

As was the case with most of the South, Monroe's major endeavor was agriculture, but the county was not a major cotton producer. In 1860, the county ginned 18,226 bales of cotton and was ranked 18th in the state. Wilcox County was ranked sixth. Monroe also was not a ranking producer of any other crop but among its major commodities were Indian corn, rice, peas and beans, and Irish and sweet potatoes.⁷

Manufacturing enterprises in the county totaled 36, employing 110 men. The county's six sawmills employed 28, its four furniture-cabinet makers employed 25, and blacksmithing and turpentine distilling employed 16 each. Others worked as shoemakers, carriage and wagon makers and as millers of flour and meal. Annual manufacturing wages totaled \$30,696 and annual value of manufacturing production

⁶In the statewide referendum held Dec. 24, 1860, cooperationists captured 44 percent of the vote to send delegates to the convention on secession. Lewy Dorman, Party Politics in Alabama from 1850 through 1860 (Wetumpka, Ala.: Wetumpka Printing Co., 1935), 194-195.

⁷Eighth Census, Agriculture, 2-5.

was \$92,475, which amounted to .8 percent of the total value of the state's production, estimated at \$10.588 million.⁸

2. ALABAMA AND THE SOUTH AT WAR'S END

As the War Between the States sputtered to an end in the spring of 1865, much of the South lay in ruins. After four bloody years of fighting, the 11 rebellious states lay exhausted, beaten militarily, economically and spiritually. Questions of secession's legality and slavery's morality had been decided at terrible cost for both North and South.

The end of the war, however, did not mean an end to the South's tribulation and pain. Surrender at Appomattox only meant the trading of one kind of pain for another. The latter would last much longer.

Alabama, as did the rest of the South, shouldered the burden of an occupying army. For a time, military rule prevailed and every community in the South was shaken by the forces of political change and economic devastation. Reconstruction -- wrenching, slow, vengeful -- began to exact an awful price from the South for the act of waging and losing the war.

Bringing the Southern states back into the Union went through three phases: Presidential Reconstruction, Congressional Reconstruction, and a period when home rule was gradually restored.

⁸Ibid., Manufactures, 9, 13.

The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln on April 14, 1865, left the responsibility for putting the country back together in the hands of a Tennessean, Andrew Johnson, who as vice president had talked of hard punishment for traitors, winning the admiration of those who wanted the Yankee boot to remain planted on the Southern neck. But within a month after taking office, Johnson had changed his tune and talked of reconstructing the South as President Lincoln had said he would do.⁹ Lincoln was reported to have said during his last cabinet meeting that he wanted "no persecution, no bloody work."¹⁰

Although Reconstruction overshadowed all else during this time, other business did occupy the nation. Shortly after the shooting stopped, Johnson sent an Army to the Mexican border to exert pressure on the French to leave Mexico. Early in 1867, they finally pulled out. That same year, the United States accepted Russia's offer to sell Alaska for \$7.2 million.¹¹

But most of the country's energies were devoted to Reconstruction, which was to last another 10 years. Ironically, Southern Democrats were to make a deal with

⁹George Brown Tindall, America, A Narrative History, vol. 2, (New York: Norton, 1984), 677.

¹⁰Ibid., 675.

¹¹Charles R. Lingley and Allen R. Foley, Since the Civil War, 3d ed., (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1935), 21.

Republican leaders early in 1877 to put an end to Reconstruction. In exchange for much needed economic aid from the government and the withdrawal of the few remaining federal troops in the region, Southern leaders agreed not to challenge the allotment to Rutherford B. Hayes of 19 disputed electoral votes cast in the election of 1876 in Florida, South Carolina and Louisiana.¹²

Hayes with one additional electoral vote from Oregon was able by a vote of 185-184 to defeat the reform governor of New York, Samuel J. Tilden, who had gained fame by breaking the Tweed Ring.¹³ Alabama and the rest of the South, needless to say, celebrated.

But the late spring and summer of 1865 was a time of near-anarchy and despair in Alabama as well as across the South. The old Confederate governments, state and local, were voided by the war's end. It is interesting to note that President Johnson did not officially declare the Rebellion at an end until April 2, 1866.¹⁴

On May 29, 1865, Johnson began appointing provisional governors and issuing proclamations which set forth his program for Reconstruction, but even so, it took time to

¹²John H. Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1961), 211-17.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Albert B. Moore, History of Alabama (Tuscaloosa: Alabama Book Store, 1951), 466.

establish governments to replace those that had operated during the war.¹⁵

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Alabama had no government from the surrender until the late summer, except in the vicinity of the military posts and, owing to the lawlessness of the soldiers in some of the garrison towns, military government was worse than no government.¹⁶

Preventing wholesale starvation was another problem which faced the military and what civil government there was during the first few months after the war. A relief effort began in November 1865 with the importation of thousands of rations of salt pork, cornmeal, flour and sugar.¹⁷

To set his plan for Alabama in motion, Johnson on June 21 appointed a provisional governor, Lewis E. Parsons of Talladega. A native of New York, Parsons pleased the strong but long-submerged Unionist element within the state.¹⁸ Parsons had opposed secession at the war's beginning and had been an "obstructionist" during the conflict, "aiding the Confederacy materially and damning it spiritually."¹⁹

¹⁵Francis B. Simkins, A History of The South (New York: Knopf, 1965), 262.

¹⁶Moore, History of Alabama, 462.

¹⁷Daniel S. Gray, Alabama: A Place, A People, A Point of View (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1977), 158.

¹⁸Sarah W. Wiggins, The Scalawag in Alabama Politics, 1865-1881 (University: University of Alabama Press, 1977), 10.

¹⁹Moore, History of Alabama, 461.

Johnson's proclamation in May also provided that all citizens who wished to vote (with the exception of high Confederate military and civil officials) might take an amnesty oath and once again become citizens of the United States.²⁰

Upon instructions from Johnson, Parsons first declared that all state laws enacted before Jan. 11, 1861, were in force with the exception of those regarding slavery.²¹ This was an attempt to build a new government on what remained of ante-bellum local governments.

The second step in Alabama's Presidential Reconstruction began Aug. 31, 1865, when Parsons ordered an election held to choose delegates for a constitutional convention. Again, following the president's instructions, the convention, which convened Sept. 12, abolished slavery, repealed the ordinances of secession and repudiated the state's war debt.²²

Doing away with slavery came on a 89-3 vote, and even on this question there was debate. A minority did not want this convention to abolish slavery, opting instead to put the issue before the U.S. Supreme Court.²³

²⁰Malcolm C. McMillan, Constitutional Development in Alabama, 1798-1901: A Study in Politics, the Negro and Sectionalism (Spartanburg: Reprint Co., 1978), 90.

²¹Wiggins, Scalawag, 10.

²²Ibid., 12.

²³McMillan, Constitutional Development, 95-97.

The majority of delegates, however, realized that the war had put an end to the institution regardless of whether it was constitutional. No court was going to change that. A Mobile delegate, Charles Carter Langdon, urged the adoption of the majority report on slavery, saying:

We have no choice in this matter. We must accept the terms of our conquerors. We are a conquered people.... There is not a right that we can exercise but by consent of our conquerors. Our streets are full of military, our civil government is provided for us without our choosing -- and by the tinkling of a little bell in Washington, we may be dispersed in a moment and marched out of this hall at the head of a file of soldiers. And we are here as free -- as the representatives of free men in this southern land. We are all slaves, all manacled.²⁴

The only other item to stir any real controversy during the convention was legislative reapportionment, a topic which would start a fight even in good times.²⁵ The struggle, between the rich planters of the Black Belt counties with their large numbers of ex-slaves and the small farmers and poor whites of North Alabama and the southeast wiregrass section of the state, was won by the Unionist who represented the small farmers.²⁶

An editorial in the Huntsville Advocate, located in northeast Alabama, commented before the convention:

There has never been a community of interest nor an identity of feeling and sentiment in Alabama,

²⁴McMillan, Constitutional Development, 96, citing the Huntsville Advocate, 12 October 1865.

²⁵Wiggins, Scalawags, 12.

²⁶Gray, Alabama, 160.

owing to the geographical division of the state. Its people are strangers to each other, and there is but little travel and less trade between the extreme localities. North Alabama trades to Nashville, Louisville, Memphis, etc.; South Alabama to Mobile.... Politically, the case has been the same, and a struggle for supremacy took place, which finally resulted in favor of South Alabama. She grasped the lions share of state honors, offices, benefits, etc., and rather imposed an undue portion of the public burdens upon the weaker and less wealthy section, North Alabama: -- And this state of things was what enabled the stronger section of the state, with less white population, to accomplish secession.²⁷

The planters wanted to retain their long domination of the state by having the freedmen counted as a full part (instead of three-fifths as they were under slavery) of the population for reapportionment. But these attempts were stopped by the small-farmer class which feared the old aristocracy would marshal and manipulate the former slaves to vote in step with their former masters.²⁸ The convention, which also acted as a legislature during its 10-day session, approved a new constitution, divided the state into six congressional districts and set elections for November.²⁹ Voters would choose a governor, members of the legislature, and congressional representatives. Other state officials would be chosen by the legislature.³⁰

²⁷McMillan, Constitutional Development, 93, citing the Huntsville Advocate, 12 July 1865.

²⁸Gray, Alabama, 160.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 161.

³⁰Wiggins, Scalawag, 13.

Alabama elected Robert M. Patton of Lauderdale County as governor. But he did not so easily obtain office. Since Alabama had not yet approved the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery, federal authorities in Washington refused to let the provisional governor, Parsons, turn over power to Patton. The legislature, recognized and approved by Washington, convened November 20 and within a month approved the amendment. Parsons was then instructed to resign, and Patton was sworn in Dec. 13, 1865.³¹

Comments by Patton during his inaugural speech and subsequent actions by the legislature with regard to the status of the former slaves were ultimately to lead to even tougher measures from Washington.

Patton said during the speech:

It must be understood that politically and socially ours is a white man's government. In the future, as has been in the past, the state of Alabama must be guided and controlled by the superior intelligence of the white man.³²

The legislature took Patton at his word and enacted vagrancy and contract labor laws to get the freedmen back into the fields. This legislation was also the result of a months-long campaign to stabilize the labor force in Alabama.³³

³¹Gray, Alabama, 161.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

Debate on the "Negro Question" began soon after the legislature convened in an effort to define the "legal status of the freeman."³⁴ Legislators approved a bill that would make blacks subject to all the ante-bellum laws which had applied to free Negroes, but Gov. Patton vetoed this act. Alabama, and other Southern states, then passed into law what became known as the "Black Codes," a set of laws which among other things punished with a \$50 fine anyone who "habitually neglects his employment."³⁵ The Codes were designed to control the ex-slaves; there was no other valid purpose.

Earlier that December, before Patton was permitted to take office, and before the Black Codes were enacted, an ominous occurrence took place when Congress, under the control of Radical Republicans, convened. Both the Senate and House refused to seat representatives and senators from Alabama and the other reconstituted states by simply excluding their names from the roll call.³⁶ At the same time, Congress established the Joint Committee on Reconstruction to investigate conditions in the South on "whether they (states) or any of them are entitled to be represented in either House of Congress."³⁷

³⁴Ibid., 162.

³⁵Ibid., 163.

³⁶Tindall, America, 679.

³⁷Smith, Trial by Fire, 690.

This tactic proved most effective in wresting from President Johnson the initiative concerning reconstruction of the states. It was also a shrewd move on the part of the Radicals. Southern representation was delayed until after the congressional elections of 1866; Republicans gained more than a two-thirds majority in each House, enabling them to override every veto President Johnson exercised. Johnson hurt his own cause and prestige in Midwestern stump speeches that often turned into shouting matches with hecklers.³⁸

By enacting the Black Codes, Alabama and the other Southern states severely damaged any chance of success for home-grown Reconstruction. In the North, reaction to such laws was severe; the Northern press blared in protest. For example, Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune, declared, "These first fruits of reconstruction were a deplorable harvest, and the sooner the North could gather the tares, plough the ground again and sow new seed the better."³⁹

Congress, in a game of one-up-manship, passed the 14th Amendment on June 16, 1866, and submitted it to the states for ratification, in effect a challenge to the Southern states.⁴⁰

³⁸Tindal, America, 682-84.

³⁹Franklin, Reconstruction, 50.

⁴⁰Gray, Alabama, 163.

While the 13th Amendment abolished slavery, the 14th bestowed citizenship on the ex-slaves, and afforded "equal protection of the laws" and "equal privileges and immunities" to all citizens.⁴¹ Two other sections in the amendment gave Congress the power to reduce representation to any state that denied the vote to any adult male inhabitant and barred federal and state office to any man who had broken his oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution.⁴²

Both latter sections were designed to keep the South from dominating Congress as it had done for decades prior to the Civil War.

The 14th Amendment was poison to Alabamians and most Southern states. With the exception of Tennessee, every state in the South rejected the amendment. Alabama's legislature did so by a vote of 71-9 on Jan. 16, 1867.⁴³ The amendment did not achieve ratification by the Northern states until July 1868.⁴⁴

When Congress passed the first of three Reconstruction acts two months later in early March, all work done under Presidential Reconstruction was swept away. The Johnson state governments remained intact for a time, but the process of reconstitution was to start over under

⁴¹Brown, America, 682-83.

⁴²Gray, Alabama, 163.

⁴³Ibid., 164.

⁴⁴Lingley, Civil War, 12.

congressional direction. Furthermore, 10 of the 11 former Confederate states were divided into military districts, all under martial law. Tennessee, which had ratified the 14th Amendment, was spared.⁴⁵ The second and third acts, passed March 23 and July 19, set procedures for military commanders to register voters and, consequently, disfranchised many whites. Adult male Negroes could vote. And whites who could swear they had never lost their right to vote for taking part in the Rebellion or had never violated a loyalty oath to the United States were also to be allowed to register and vote.⁴⁶

In August, Gen. John Pope, who once led the Army of the Potomac and now commanded the Third Military District of which Alabama was a part, called for a statewide election, as also provided by the Second Reconstruction Act. The election was set for Oct. 1-3 to decide whether another constitutional convention would be convened. At the same time, convention delegates would be elected.⁴⁷

Although many whites were barred from voting, more than enough were registered, and if they had voted, could have either defeated the question or elected far more Conservative-Democratic delegates to the convention. But confusion in the ranks lead to forfeiture at the polls. The

⁴⁵Tindal, America, 684-85.

⁴⁶McMillan, Constitutional Development, 110.

⁴⁷Wiggins, Scalawags, 24-25.

convention began November 5, and of its 100 members, 97 were
Republicans; 18 of the total were black.⁴⁸ Radical
Republican control of Alabama had formally begun.

⁴⁸Ibid., 25.

CHAPTER III

CONGRESS PRESCRIBES BITTER MEDICINE

Two letters published in the Jan. 5, 1867, edition give an idea of the attitude held by the Monroe Journal, if not Monroe countians, toward Reconstruction. Both letters for all practical purposes are anonymous, one signed by "Tight Eye," a term for one who is intoxicated, and the other signed by "Citizen." We do not know whether the letters were from bona fide citizens or were written under pseudonyms by a member of the paper's staff. Tight Eye's "Letter from the Piney Woods," covered almost all of the two right-hand columns on the front page. "Citizen's" letter was carried at the top of Page 3.

They were written as the power struggle over the course of Reconstruction was rapidly being won by Congress. As such, the letters conveyed a humbled acceptance of defeat, a determination to overcome whatever the Yankees dished out, and a fear of growing chaos in a deteriorating society.

Writing in what sounds almost like Negro or a backwoods dialect, Tight Eye quickly made his point in the first paragraph:

Dear Editor: These are times that tries men's souls, and I'll tell you the reason for why. Thars a heap of things to be taken in konsideration, and the fust thing is how we stand with Uncle Sam, and the next is how do we stand with one another

Now how do we stand; well, less see, once we was what was a big people, and we was what had lots of niggers and horses and cows and everything else -- and a more fightin folks didnt draw breth. But now them are things that was -- we got no niggers, monstrous few horses and no great site of cows.¹

It is not clear why the letter is in this language, even given the meaning of the term "Tight Eye." The author may simply have been slightly inebriated, wanted to convey that impression, or spoke that way naturally. Even so, he soberly acknowledged that the South "got whipped" and "now my notion is these yanks are sorter disposed to make us do thar way." While he said Southerners would have to wait and see what happens, he berated the Legislature for saying the same thing when people "looked for assistance and they all looked for and hope that this legislator would do something." And he criticized Gov. Patton, an otherwise good and respected man, who wanted the Legislature to "agree to everything the yanks say."²

During this time, Gov. Patton was urging the legislators to approve the 14th Amendment, which later in January they would reject.

The lawmakers may have followed Tight Eye's advice:

Let a man hold his head up as long as he is honest, no matter how poor he is and -- because a fellow whip's you it's no reason why you should be afraid of him.³

¹Monroe Journal, 5 January 1867.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Citizen wrote to ask "What has become of all the Freedmen?" complaining that since Christmas, almost all had vanished.

They have left the plantations, and farmers cannot engage them for love or money. Nor can you find any willing to contract as onse servants But how do they live? Let our slaughtered hogs and corn cribs answer. If the officers of the law do not hunt up the vagrants both black and white, the people will have to do it themselves.⁴

If the freedman could be found, he could be fitted to a job but not for citizenship. In the Jan. 19 edition, the Journal reprinted on its front page an editorial from the Mobile Evening News. Titled "No Amendment -- Stand Firm," the column exhorted Southerners to reject the 14th Amendment, even though the Legislature had done so the prior Wednesday, on the 16th.⁵ News traveled slow in those days.

Desolate in heart, broken in fortune, isolated in politics, and enduring all the trials and mortifications of a people subjugated by arms the South has yet solemn duties to perform. It has temptations to avoid, the wiles of politicians to resist⁶

An editor's note at the end of the piece referred to the amendment printed the prior week. The Jan. 12 edition of the Journal was not available, however.

We see danger in this Radical Constitutional Amendment and we should be false to public duty did we not warn our countrymen of it. It is a Trojan

⁴Ibid.

⁵Gray, Alabama, 164.

⁶Monroe Journal, 19 January 1867.

horse sought to be introduced into our gates, with the difference that its armed enemies are not even concealed in its belly.⁷

Southern leaders, the column said, owed it to "heroic leaders like Lee and Davis, to Americans in the other states of the former Union and to the genius of Constitutional Freedom, resolutely to decline to become parties, by consent, to this degrading amendment."⁸

Let us be true to ourselves, stand firm and fear not. Radicalism is traveling a road that must come to a speedy end. They are driving the car of revolution with electric speed and a smash-up is inevitable unless the teachings of human history are all false, and the everlasting laws of cause and effect are to be suspended for Radical benefit. Congress is striving to concentrate all the powers of the Government in its own hands -- the President's late message demonstrates this truth with unanswerable arguments.⁹

In the Jan. 26 edition, the Journal printed an item, dated Jan. 16, from a correspondent named "Free" who reported legislative action in Montgomery that took place Jan. 15, the day before that body rejected the 14th Amendment. Some legislative action of Jan. 16 was also mentioned in the report, but the item, about 10 column inches in length, did not mention debate on the amendment on either day, nor the vote itself.¹⁰

Concerning matters on the 15th, Free wrote:

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Monroe Journal, 26 January 1867.

A good many important subjects are already before the Legislature, amongst which are the adoption of a plan to aid RailRoads and to advance the mining and manufacturing interest of the State -- the acceptance of the New Code--a new educational system or plan of public schools; and the State will have to be redistricted in accordance with the late census returns, and in consequence of the new counties created -- a new Revenue bill has also been introduced.¹¹

In his last paragraph Free also referred to the state's labor problem:

From almost all parts of the State, I hear complaints about the "labor question," although there seems to be a sufficient number of negroes congregated here to go a good ways toward supplying the demand, if their money would give out, and they would be induced to make contracts.¹²

In a similar vein, the Journal carried a scathing editorial attack, also on Jan. 26, against that class of white people who are "Too lazy, even amid abundance of fuel to kindle a good warm fire." The editorial harshly condemned this group of "cowards" who were of no help to either side during the war. "There is no more importance to be attached to this class than to those animals such as the skunk, the carrion crow," and the like.¹³

Neither was emigration by disgruntled Southerners to other countries presented in a favorable light by the Journal. Reprinted on the front page Jan 19 from the Mobile Evening News were almost two full columns titled "Brazilian

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

Items," pieces from other newspapers such as the Anglo-Brazilian Times. The story at first appeared to recount the advantages of life in the tropics. The government sold land for 22 cents an acre in a "pleasant and healthy climate" in the country's most temperate area, the southern section. But the government was taking "energetic steps" preparing for its war with Paraguay. Slaves were being freed on condition they become soldiers. Those drafted were warned that they were on their way to the slaughter and should they escape death, life after military service was to be slow starvation. And an apparent warning to Southerners who were thinking of emigrating to South America followed:

.... you either die in a foreign land, far from the country you loved so much, to which you send your last thought, for which you courageously shed your blood, or you go begging along the roads, enduring hunger, now cold, now the rigors of a burning sun, sleeping in the open air, on the way to your country, where you are received by your own with tears of grief and despair.¹⁴

From a Petersburg (Va.) Index clipping, readers learned that Brazil was "not only pleasant to live in, but affords a charming prospect for all who wish to die, as well as to live, easy." Food is only to be picked from trees followed by a nap in the jungle. "When he wakes he will find himself in the belly of a boa-constrictor"¹⁵

¹⁴Monroe Journal, 19 January 1867.

¹⁵Monroe Journal, 1 June 1867.

The February and March editions of the Journal, along with half of April's, are missing from archive records and we do not know the newspaper's reaction to the First Reconstruction Act passed by Congress in March or to the second act approved later that month.

Reacting with dismay over these events were north Alabama Unionist forces, who cooperating with ex-Confederates, had tried to organize themselves into a new political party called the Democratic or Conservative party.¹⁶ For one thing, the Unionists opposed Negro suffrage, fearing the planter class would control the vote of their former charges. Furthermore, the suffrage requirements for whites under the Reconstruction acts and requirements for holding political office under the 14th Amendment left many Unionists, who had held some minor office under the Confederacy, out in the cold. The 14th Amendment, among other things, punished the loyal (in spirit at least) Unionists because they had broken their original loyalty oath to the federal Constitution. No exceptions were made for mitigating circumstances such as the fact that many Unionists took these positions to stay out of the Confederate army. These Unionists would later take steps to organize the Republican Party in the state.¹⁷

¹⁶Wiggins, Scalawaq, 18.

¹⁷Ibid, 19-20.

A locally written editorial on April 20 sneered at the predicament of the Unionists, and yet seemed to despair about the South's future, urging its readers to simply ignore politics and talk about other things:

It is both mortifying and amusing to see the attempts now made by the editors of some Southern Newspapers to write political articles. The bit is in their mouths, well curbed, though the reins are slack, and they know it. Then why champ the bit and stand restless under your riders? Your Democracy or Whigism is a matter of no moment. If you ever wrote an article favorable to the lost cause, even your Radicalism will not avail. Already have simon pure Radical editors established themselves in your midst; and get the public printing

.....
We poor rebels have served out our probation, and are beyond the reach of hope or mercy. We have been hurled over the battlements and 'tis too late to hold counsels in our Pandemonium -- This is not too strong figure according to Radical view respecting us.¹⁸

The paper urged its readers to leave politics to the Negroes and Radicals, referring sarcastically to the Radicals as brave people who before the surrender did not say or do the things they do now. "They were not afraid not they." Remain calm and quiet for the black man can't hurt the white man and forget politics, the paper admonished. "Discuss Agriculture -- scientific farming -- or something else"¹⁹

Adjacent to that editorial was a "telegraphic" report from the New York Associated Press concerning a case before

¹⁸Monroe Journal, 20 April 1867.

¹⁹Ibid.

the Supreme Court, Mississippi v. Johnson. The Court, the report said, declined to take action on a motion requesting that President Johnson be restrained from executing provisions of the Reconstruction Act. "An attempt on the part of the Judicial Department to enjoin the performance of such duties by the President might justly be characterized, in the language of Chief Justice Marshall, as an absurd and excessive extravagance."²⁰

This edition also carried a short item on "Who Can Vote and Who Cannot." Those disfranchised were: governor, members of Congress and the legislature, judges and chancellors, commissioners in equity, ordinaries, sheriff, magistrates, constables, postmasters and coroners. Those not disfranchised included: secretaries of state, comptroller, generals, treasurers, militia officers, clerks of the Court of Common Pleas, state solicitors, surveyor-generals, notary publics and tax collectors.²¹

Receiving an unusual five-line headline on Page 2 of the Journal's May 18 edition was a report of a race riot in Mobile, which the newspaper said, was set off by comments made by Judge "Pig Iron" Kelley, a Radical congressman from Pennsylvania. Two men, one black, one white, were killed and dozens injured.²² Judge Kelly was campaigning throughout the

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Monroe Journal, 18 May 1867.

South, drumming up support for the Republican Party and violence had already occurred in Memphis and New Orleans during speeches he made there.²³

The following issue of the Journal duly reported the imposition of martial law in Mobile. And the editor complained, "What will be the condition, if our Military commanders fail to put a stop to those itinerating Radical speechifiers! Twice have the quiet citizens of Mobile been panic stricken by the uprising of the black population with arms in their hands."²⁴

About the only good news the Journal had to report in early summer was President Jefferson Davis' release from prison on bail. The story was given equal play with the Mobile riot at the top of the page. The editor wrote, "What Southern heart is not thrilled with deep satisfaction upon the long desired intelligence of this event? ... If he be traitor, then we are a nation of traitors."²⁵

The Journal on May 4 brought to the attention of its readers a problem outside the scope of politics: starvation, as if they were not already aware of the problem. A clip from the Mobile Tribune reprinted on the front page noted that while many were uneasy about political conditions, thousands of Southerners were in "actual danger of

²³Gray, Alabama, 166.

²⁴Monroe Journal, 25 May 1867.

²⁵Ibid.

starvation." The article suggested that factories be built near Mobile so that those now receiving charity would be in a position to give it. Then the author stated that he errs in mentioning the idea, because: "The pleasure of giving away money is one that most men will not relinquish voluntarily."²⁶

But the newspaper apparently did not mention in any editions during this period that in light of crop failures in 1865 and 1866, the Freedmen's Bureau, under the direction of Ohio-born General Wager T. Swayne, had saved the lives of untold thousands of black -- and white -- Alabamians through food distributions. More than twice as many whites as blacks received rations in an 11-month period after November 1865.²⁷

Other agencies were providing help to Southerners, including the Southern Relief Famine Commission of New York, which was mentioned in a brief front page item in the Journal. The story said that 8,000 bushels of corn had been shipped to Charleston and Savannah.²⁸

²⁶Monroe Journal, 4 May 1867.

²⁷Gray, Alabama, 158; During early 1867, the Freedmen's Bureau was still distributing food to large numbers of Alabamians, both black and white. From December 1866 to August 1867, 127,247 whites and 41,591 blacks received rations which were designed to feed a person for one week and consisted of corn meal, pork or fat back, flour and sugar. Elizabeth Bethel, "Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama," Journal of Southern History, 14 (February 1948): 49.

²⁸Monroe Journal, 15 June 1867.

During the spring and summer of 1867, registration of voters for the constitutional convention referendum was proceeding across Alabama according to rules laid down by the Reconstruction acts. In May, the Journal announced that the appointment of voter registrars for the 42 registration districts in the state was complete. Two whites and one black were appointed to each district. The paper also printed the names of the registrars of the Mobile District. Representing Clarke and Monroe counties were Corwon Osborne, John R. Wilson and Peyton Finley.²⁹ Finley, a Negro, was actually a resident of Montgomery who would also become a delegate to the November 1867 convention. He was a former doorkeeper for the state House of Representatives.³⁰

In front page opinion pieces on June 8, the Journal urged its readers to register to vote:

.... every inducement is held out to the citizens of this State to make it a first duty to register their names and become qualified to vote in the most important election that has ever been held in Alabama -- an election involving nothing less than the nature of the government under which they are to live in the future.³¹

An item reprinted from the Memphis Clarion stated:

Persons who want to keep their property secure against legislative plunderers should register. People who do not want to be governed by the men who seek to array race against race should register....

²⁹Monroe Journal, 25 May 1867.

³⁰McMillan, Constitutional Development, 118.

³¹Monroe Journal, 8 June 1867.

And the Journal's editor added his own comment to the piece:

And "keep it before the people," that at the South, white men and black men are embarked on the same bottom, and if the white man should be swamped, the black man will be the first to go overboard.

This is the last and only comment the Journal made in urging its readers to register to vote. Only one-third of the registered white voters cast ballots in the October election, while one-third of registered blacks did not vote.³²

The state's white conservative leadership simply did not know how to react to the Reconstruction mandates laid down by Congress. The indecision lead to abdication, which allowed the Radical Republicans to gain total control of the convention. The confusion was also reflected in the state's newspaper editorials. Some urged cooperation with Congress; others urged a fight to the bitter end. The Democrats also wrestled with whether black and white voters could live in the same party.³³

Readers of the Monroe Journal undoubtedly knew S.B. Baird's political position. Where he stood had been reflected for some time in the stories and editorials he clipped from other papers as well as in his own words. But

³²McMillan, Constitutional Development, 113.

³³Wiggins, Scalawaq, 23-24.

in the 52nd edition of the first year, he took the middle ground:

As to the present political aspect, we unhesitatingly pronounce our self noncommittal. It is not incumbent upon us to intermeddle in that which we cannot help or correct. We are a conquered, subjugated people, and must do as our masters prescribe if we do at all, and it is foolish to complain or mouth.³⁴

Baird complained and meddled before June 15 and he would continue to do so afterward.

In a Page 2 editorial, reprinted from the Mobile Evening News the week before, the hand of goodwill -- accompanied by a warning -- was extended to blacks. Here, we get a glimpse of conditions-to-be in the South for blacks during the next 100 years.

The editor wrote, "If we know ourselves, we heartily wish well to the negro race at the South in their new, strange and difficult conditions."³⁵ He went on to note that some blacks, while looking favorably upon the Journal, suspected that opposition to congressional Reconstruction by the newspaper and the South indicated "we are looking to the reserved object of depriving them of certain rights and privileges conferred by that legislation. We will be perfectly frank with them, for we have nothing to hide." The editor explained that if the South had the power to restore slavery, "we would not do it ... the obliteration of slavery

³⁴Monroe Journal, 15 June 1867.

³⁵Monroe Journal, 8 June 1867.

is a good thing." Negro suffrage, however, should be subject to certain qualifications. "We have no more objection to the vote of a black man than that of a white man, provided he is qualified to discharge the trust which the privilege implies."³⁶

While the editor would not call upon blacks in the South to perform duties they know nothing about, he said, "Just as fast as black men are qualified to vote, we should under State Government advocate the right to do it." The question of qualification belonged to the states, said the editor, and not the federal government. And it would come to be so.

The warning and a glimpse of the future were given in the last paragraph:

In the end, the settlement of this question of qualification will be left to the States, and if the black people are wise, they will make friends and unite in political action with the people of the South, to whom their ultimate destinies are committed. If they put themselves in the hands of Northern adventurers, and join their fortunes with a party that is ingrained in hostility to the country they live in, they will find themselves deserted and friendless -- a squeezed orange dropped by the adventurers after they have extracted all its juice.³⁷

Subsequent editions in June, July and August reprinted items from other papers, in particular the New York Herald, which warned of dire consequences of a

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

political union between Southern blacks and whites, a union the Journal advocated in its June 8 edition. An item reprinted from the Montgomery Advertiser stated:

The New York Herald has been one of the most malignant defamers of the South, but it doesn't like the idea of negro suffrage being pushed to its extreme conclusion. It is not even so respectful as the Southern Conservative journals, and can't speak of "our colored citizens" in any other way than as "niggers."³⁸

In the August 17 edition, an item reprinted from the New York Herald stated:

The emancipated blacks call themselves Southerners as proudly as their former masters. Blacks and whites are alike interested in the crops of their section where, ever since the close of the war, so many have been worked on shares. The humble field hand and the strutting colored Congressman, will both, with their friend the planter, go in for removing the tax on cotton.³⁹

The Journal displayed a curious ambivalence about the freedman in its selection of articles from other newspapers and, in its own editorial columns. Many of the reprinted items, especially those from Northern newspapers, served to reinforce the Journal's point of view. On one hand, much space was devoted to railing against giving political power to blacks, considered the first step toward mongrelizing the white race. And on the other, the paper seemed to take pride in pointing out the absence of strife between the races in Monroe County. It's as though the editor could not make up

³⁸Monroe Journal, 15 June 1867.

³⁹Monroe Journal, 17 August 1867.

his mind about what should be done with these ex-slaves, an attitude perhaps common to the South immediately after the war.

On June 8, a reprint from the Home Journal (location unknown) stated that the Negro race had never climbed very high on the ladder of civilization and was destined to become extinct. Only in the southern United States had the black population ever increased. "Of all the uncivilized races of men the negro has been found to be the most tractable and the most docile and he possesses excellent qualities that compensate in great measure for his bad ones." Therefore, kindness toward the Negro was warranted.⁴⁰

In its June 15 edition, the Journal reprinted an article by "M" from the Mobile Sunday Times which ran more than two full columns. The author described his travels through Monroe, Clark and Wilcox counties. "M" wrote that Radicals were rare in "these river counties," and the blacks leaned toward trusting their friends and neighbors and would hardly oppose them politically, "which could but be attended with great disaster to the black men as, without the white men, in good will and kindness with their capital and intelligence to employ and direct their labor, only misery and starvation would come to them."⁴¹ The author clearly pointed out that the hand of friendship still held a whip.

⁴⁰Monroe Journal, 8 June 1867.

⁴¹Monroe Journal, 15 June 1867.

"M's" pretty picture was contradicted by a Freedmen's Bureau agent, Samuel S. Gardner, who was ordered to take a tour of Monroe and Clarke counties in June and July 1867 to conduct public meetings of ex-slaves to explain the benefits of citizenship and voting and to distribute campaign literature for the Republican party. At one such meeting in Claiborne, Gardner found the Negroes "completely cowed under the domination of the whites The whites freely express their belief that they (the freedmen) will all vote their way." But once the whites had left the meeting, the blacks freely spoke out, expressing their sympathies with the government.⁴²

"M's" article also pointed out that Claiborne, where the Journal was still published, was apparently dying. "The town once contained 3,500 people and was the principal trading station for a hundred miles about. Now there is scarcely one-fifth (700) the number resident here and its trade has great fallen off." The railroads had taken the traffic from the river to other towns.⁴³

Sharing space with "M's" article on Page 2 was another, titled "Threatened Civil War in Tennessee." Gov. Parson Brownlow's militia was terrorizing East Tennessee,

⁴²Richard L. Hume, "The Freedmen's Bureau and the Freedmen's Vote in the Reconstruction of Southern Alabama: An Account by Agent Samuel S. Gardner," Alabama Historical Quarterly, 37 (Fall 1975): 222-223.

⁴³Monroe Journal, 15 June 1867.

and intimidating the governor's political opponents as they campaigned to unseat him. The article warned that Tennessee's troubles could disrupt Alabama's tranquility should the Radicals come to power.⁴⁴

Two weeks later, on June 29, another of "M's" articles, "Letter From Wilcox," was printed. The author presented an astonishing picture of two races working in peace, harmony and good will and reminded whites of their noble, if paternalistic, duty toward the Negro.

Not one word of complaint did I hear of the industry and good intentions of the freedmen. They are very generally working for shares in the crop and divided into gangs, seem emulous to rival each other in the advancement of their work.⁴⁵

One large planter did complain, though, that the eager ex-slaves worked his mules too hard. Also, some employers, but no more than might be true of "bad men" in other communities, cheated some blacks of their fair share of the crop the previous year. These dishonest men were now finding, however, that no one would work for them. The "good citizens" deplored these acts of bad faith, and "M" said he believed that civil court judges and juries "have generally been manifested to give full redress to the freedmen."⁴⁶

This can be but the true policy, as only by the most amicable and confiding relations subsisting between the two races can they live prosperously in

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Monroe Journal, 29 June 1867.

⁴⁶Ibid.

the same community in their respective positions, and such relations can only be maintained when founded on the strictest justice to all; and to the securing of this, from the ignorant and simple minds of the negroes, does an especial duty devolve upon the intelligent and well disposed white population.⁴⁷

Several freedmen told "M" that they were uncertain whether they should register to vote. But if they did they would be guided by "their old friends, former owners or neighbors, who had, by their conduct towards them merited their esteem and confidence."

Throughout both Monroe and Wilcox I am fully confident the freedmen will act in entire harmony with the influential and good citizens of old standing, despite any efforts of biasing their minds.⁴⁸

But on August 17, the Journal printed an editorial which seemed to contradict what "M" had written in June.

...but all at once we white folks have ceased to be overseer for northern capitalists, and are releived [sic] from the trouble and anxiety attendant upon the rearing and supporting of the young and old of that bone of contention formerly amongst us. We can move now without so much luggage and baggage, and our children can be taught to say this, that and the other, instead of dis, dat, and tudder. This is making the best out of the situation.⁴⁹

During August, a very serious threat arose to the legal advertising base of the Democratic press in Alabama, but the Journal does not seem to have been affected in the slightest. General Pope issued on Aug. 12, 1867, General

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Monroe Journal, 17 August 1867.

Orders No. 49, which instructed civil officials to award legal advertising and printing to newspapers which "have not and do not oppose reconstruction."⁵⁰ However, the paper never mentioned Pope's directive and during the remaining months of 1867, its legal advertising -- from both county and state sources -- remained undiminished as did its denunciation of Reconstruction, black suffrage and Radical Republicans. Civil authorities may have ignored the order or may have had no choice but to continue using the Journal for official notices required by law, such as mortgage foreclosures, since it was the only newspaper published in Monroe County at the time.

Pope was relieved as commander of the Third Military District in late December by President Johnson and replaced by Major General George G. Meade, who had stopped Lee at Gettysburg.⁵¹ Meade, who did not agree with Pope's methods in dealing with the press, issued General Orders No. 22 on Feb. 2, 1868, to defang Pope's directive. Under Meade, official advertising could be denied only to those papers which attempted to obstruct civil officers in discharging their duties "by threats of violence, of prosecution, or

⁵⁰U.S. Congress, House Ex. Doc. 1, part 1. Department of War, Report of the Secretary of War Ad Interim and General United States Army, 40th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867), 325.

⁵¹Walter L. Fleming, Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama (Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1911), 492.

other penalty, as soon as the military protection is withdrawn."⁵²

Other than continued criticism of the Radicals in Congress, and sad stories concerning the return of Alabamians from Brazil to which they had fled after the war, the available summertime editions of the Journal published no information or comment on the statewide referendum on holding a constitutional convention. The available editions contained nothing on this subject until the issue of Oct. 5, two days after the election. And in no available edition was mentioned the 2nd District -- Monroe and Baldwin counties -- representative to the convention, M.D. Brainard, who resided in Montgomery.⁵³

The Journal's editorials became extremely sarcastic, tinged with a bitterness not seen in the earlier 1867 editions. For example:

VOTE BY BALLOT

We lost it, because we were not worthy of it. We rebels, Unionbreakers, slave-drivers, proud, haughty, Caucasians have no more right to the inestimable privilege of the franchise, than our slaves did a few years ago. We have oppressed our equals (superiors?) for years, and we must pay for it -- do Penance for it -- how many years, Mr. Captain General Pope? Please tell us. We fought the

⁵²U.S. Congress, Senate Ex. Doc. 13, part 1, Report of Major General Meade's Military Operations and Administration of Civil Affairs in the Third Military District, 41st Cong. 2nd. sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1870), 86-87.

⁵³Alabama Official and Statistical Register (Montgomery, Ala.: Brown Printing Co., 1903), 125.

Union Armies, and shed lots of blood, therefore we must suffer for that too! Pshaw, the "nigger" is uppermost now and we cry "nuff." Mr. Pope, grind out some more government for us!⁵⁴

THE ELECTION

The election at Monroeville on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd inst. passed off quietly so far as we have heard. The ebony-hued voters turned out en masse. All voted, but forgot their man before they got home. Very few of the registered whites voted at all. So the negroes have it all their own way. Thus wags the world. The Republic is safe, no doubt of it! the wise intelligent voters of "African descent" will save the country from the clutches of "Rebels and disorganizers" Mr. So & So (we never could get his name out of the voters) will not doubt fully, and conscientiously represent the interests of Monroe County in the Constitutional Convention! So certain were we of this, that we even did not register or vote.⁵⁵

At least one person disagreed with the Journal's description of a quiet election. Peyton Finley, the Negro member of the three-man Board of Registrars in Monroe County, telegraphed General Swayne on Sept. 30, asking for troops: "People riotous. Impossible to hold election. Send Cavalry by train this evening to Monroeville."⁵⁶

The Journal did not soon curtail its publication of these bitter items from other papers. Its Oct. 19 edition

⁵⁴Monroe Journal, 5 October 1867.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Robert S. Rhodes, "The Registration of Voters and the Election of Delegates to the Reconstruction Convention in Alabama," The Alabama Review 8 (April 1955): 139, citing Hurter to Swayne, October 1867, in General Wager T. Swayne Papers (in Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery).

carried a South Carolina account which ridiculed blacks as they came to vote.

Many of them, in fact nearly all of them, had no idea what "registering" meant and as a natural consequence, the most ludicrous scenes transpired. Quite a number brought along bags and baskets "to put it in," and in nearly every instance there was a great rush for fear that we would not have registration enough to go around. Some thought it was something to eat, others and quite a number thought it was the distribution of confiscated land under a new name.⁵⁷

The Alabama Constitutional Convention of 1867 spent most of its time wrangling over the issue of suffrage for whites, not blacks. The debate was bitter and highly emotional. Disagreement was so severe that the Republican members sought instructions from Washington, which in turn "advised moderation."⁵⁸

But the convention's final vote on suffrage was to produce measures more harsh than even those enacted by a Radical-controlled Congress.⁵⁹ The convention adopted a plan to disfranchise all those unable to hold public office under the 14th Amendment and those who had applied for presidential pardons (these men were declared as having admitted treason). Thus, the right to vote was taken away

⁵⁷Monroe Journal, 19 October 1867.

⁵⁸Wiggins, Scalawag, 27.

⁵⁹Gray, Alabama, 168.

from about 40,000 white voters, including many Southerners who had supported the Union.⁶⁰

Only two November 1867 editions of the Monroe Journal survive. The issue of November 9 did not mention the convention at all. The November 30 paper reprinted from the Montgomery Mail a caustic attack on black members of the convention⁶¹ who voted to proscribe whites.

The front page story-editorial, titled "The Moral Perjury of the Convention," castigated the black delegates for at first seeking universal suffrage but then voting to disfranchise 40,000 whites.

Led by the vile Yankee emissaries, every negro in the convention voted for this proscriptive measure and either misrepresented their race or convicted it of the most atrocious hypocrisy. As for the white men ... we have only to say that they have deceived [sic] their constituents, forfeited their plighted word, and stand convicted of a moral perjury unexampled in history, unexampled because inevitably followed by an antagonism of races.⁶²

The story went on to note that the black race would hold the black delegates "to a strict accountability for thus arraying the white race in political hostility to their own."⁶³ And then in the last paragraph another chilling warning was given:

⁶⁰Wiggins, Scalawag, 28.

⁶¹Of the 100 delegates elected to the convention, only 18 were black. McMillan, Constitutional Development, 117.

⁶²Monroe Journal, 30 November 1867.

⁶³*Ibid.*

We wish the negro race to understand that whatever privations and sufferings may befall them hereafter in that contest in which the white race will cleave its way to that power from which it is so iniquitously pushed, will be due to the fact that the white and negro Republicans of the so-called Constitutional Convention have broken plighted faith, and endeavored to involve a whole race in the crime of perjury in order to secure public offices and State spoil.⁶⁴

This indictment may have been far too harsh, according to one source. "Most Negroes (convention delegates) were magnanimous and wanted universal amnesty as well as universal suffrage. Yet on the issue of further proscription of the whites, they were victims of circumstances -- forced in the final vote into a coalition with their Carpetbag superiors and extreme Scalawags."⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the new state constitution along with a slate of candidates for state and county offices was submitted to voters the following February. Voting for ratification were 70,812; voting against were 1,005. Yet, the document failed to gain adoption. The Reconstruction Acts required that at least 50 percent of the state's registered voters take part in the election. Only 42 percent cast their ballots; most whites simply boycotted the election.⁶⁶

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵McMillan, Constitutional Development, 132.

⁶⁶Gray, Alabama, 168.

But the effort was not entirely for naught. State and federal politicians simply ignored the fact that Alabama did not have a valid constitution and went on with the business of government. During the early months of 1868, Congress was too preoccupied with trying to impeach President Johnson to devote any time to deal with Alabama's constitutional tangles. Over Johnson's veto, Alabama, her constitution notwithstanding, and four other states were readmitted to the Union by Congress on June 25, 1868.⁶⁷ The state's new legislature, convened July 13, quickly ratified the 14th Amendment, fulfilling the last condition for readmission.⁶⁸

Those who won public positions on the local level during the election also took office. D.L. Neville was chosen Monroe County's representative to the state Legislature and R.N. Barr was selected state senator.⁶⁹

Indecision, misdirection and confusion amply describe Southern reaction in early 1867, as Congress began to redirect the course of Reconstruction. Alabama's leaders and its newspapers, in reflecting that leadership, were more often than not forced to react with great uncertainty to congressional dictates. In the tiny, remote villages which were home to newspapers such as the Monroe Journal, the

⁶⁷Ibid., 169.

⁶⁸Wiggins, Scalawag, 38-39.

⁶⁹Thomas M. Owen, ed., History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1921), 2: 1,034-1,035.

ripples of doubt were also felt. The Journal at first displayed and encouraged among its readers an apathetic, even fatalistic, attitude toward politics, while it also claimed an apolitical stance. But clearly, the Journal was never politically neutral. As the direction of congressional Reconstruction became more clearly defined, and as it became apparent that the freed slave was to be given a much greater role in politics, Southern and Alabama leaders began to develop a unified approach to blunt, if not sabotage, congressional efforts. That approach was simply to derail the political process by refusing to participate therein. And the Journal aided this approach by virtually ignoring the pending October referendum on holding a state constitutional convention. Too late, the Conservative-Democratic Party and its newspaper allies realized they had allowed the Republicans to grab political control of the state. Afterward, bitter were the Journal's complaints, and heavy was the ridicule and criticism of the new black voters. But abdication of the political game had meant forfeiture of any chance of victory, a point which seemed to have escaped the Democrats and the Monroe Journal.

RADICAL POWER IN ALABAMA BEGINS TO EBB

1. THE POLITICAL STATE OF THE STATE IN 1870

Following the February 1868 ratification referendum on the state constitution, Alabama's state government came completely under Republican control. That fall, the Republican ticket, headed by Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, also won election to complement a Radical-controlled Congress.

Occupying the governor's office in Alabama was Randolph County native William H. Smith, who left the state for Union territory in 1862. Serving as lieutenant governor was A.J. Applegate, tagged with the derisive nickname of "Jack Appletoddy," who had come to Alabama from Ohio as a Union soldier.¹ Other men from the North included: Charles A. Miller of Maine, secretary of state; R.M. Reynolds of Iowa, state auditor; Arthur Bingham, state treasurer, New York (although he was a longtime resident of Talladega); John C. Keffer of Pennsylvania, commissioner of industries² and E.W. Peck of New York, chief justice of the state Supreme Court.³

¹Fleming, Civil War, 735-736.

²John W. DuBose, Alabama's Tragic Decade, 1865-1874, ed. James K. Greer (Birmingham: Webb Book Co., 1940), 206.

³Fleming, Civil War, 737.

Republican control was also evident in both houses of the state legislature. Only three men of 100 elected to the lower house were Democrats. Twenty-seven of the Republican representatives were black and 14 were from the North. Of 33 members of the Senate, only one was a Democrat and only one was black. These legislators, charged with electing the state's U.S. senators, chose two men also from the North, both of whom had moved to Alabama after the war. They were Willard Warner of Ohio and George E. Spencer of New York and Iowa, both veteran Union Army officers.⁴

While Alabama may have been under the thumb of Radical Republicans, the state was never under the domination of black lawmakers nor did any blacks hold high state office. They were too few in number to wield much power or to affect great change.

Also swept into office in February 1868 -- by popular vote -- was the delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives. In the group were five carpetbaggers and one white Southerner.⁵ F.M. Kellogg, formerly of Massachusetts and Michigan, who was a carpetbagger employed with the U.S. revenue department in Mobile, represented the First Congressional District, which included Monroe County. In August 1869, another special election was held to elect a congressional delegation. Republicans lost strength, giving

⁴Wiggins, Scalawag, 39.

⁵Ibid., 40.

up two of the six seats to Democrats. In the First District, the winner was Republican candidate Alfred Buck of Maine.⁶

During 1869 and part of 1870, J.J. Parker represented Monroe County in the state House of Representatives,⁷ replacing D.L. Neville. Apparently chosen during a special election in August 1869, Parker was highly praised by the Monroe Journal for his work in the legislature during 1870. He went on to win election as secretary of state in the November election that year. R.N. Barr, whom the Journal referred to as a carpetbagger, served the county as state senator from 1868-1872.⁸

The alliance between blacks, native-born Radicals and those from the North was never harmonious and the divisions, along with Conservative resurgence, were to contribute to a gradual erosion of their power. The three groups often cooperated on economic matters, but the whites never fully supported their black allies on social questions, especially when it came to enacting laws guaranteeing racial equality in areas such as public transportation and accommodations. Fights over political patronage also created great problems in maintaining party unity,⁹ all of which was carefully watched by the Democrats.

⁶Dubose, Tragic Decade, 206.

⁷Owen, Alabama Biography, 1035.

⁸Ibid., 1034.

⁹Wiggins, Scalawag, 45, 46, 56.

2. MONROE COUNTY FIVE YEARS AFTER WAR'S END

In 1869, S.M. Davidson was listed as editor and publisher of the Monroe Journal,¹⁰ and sometime between the end of 1867 and 1869, the newspaper had moved to Monroeville, the county seat, population 1,597, 1,000 of whom were white.¹¹ The appearance of the newspaper, in January 1870, the middle of its third year, had changed little. The word, "The," had been added to the flag which now ran across the entire top of the front page. The annual subscription rate, however, dropped from \$3 to \$2 and advertising rates decreased slightly, which may be attributable either to competition from the Eagle, hard times, or both. In 1870, circulation was listed at 500,¹² down 100 from the year before. But, judging from the number of commercial advertisements and the quantity of the all-important legal advertising, the Journal was still a profitable four-page weekly enterprise. However, the war's end brought no such prosperity to the county.

From 1860 to 1870, Monroe County lost people, farm acreage, livestock, agricultural and manufacturing production (what there was of it). Furthermore, the value of farmland and farm implements plummeted.

¹⁰Rowell, Newspaper Directory, (1869) 8.

¹¹Ninth Census, 1870: Population, I, 81.

¹²Rowell, Newspaper Directory (1870), 618.

During the decade, the county's population decreased by 1,470 from 15,667 to 14,197, a drop of almost 10 percent. And the county lost more blacks than whites. The 1870 census showed that 7,572 blacks resided in Monroe, compared to 8,751 (slave and free) in 1860, a 13.5 percent drop. The number of white residents fell 4.2 percent from 6,916 to 6,625.¹³

In almost all phases of agriculture, the county suffered disastrous losses. The number of acres of improved land decreased from 98,408 in 1860 to 60,842 in 1870, a drop of 37,566 acres. The cash value of farms fell by almost \$2 million. Land valued at \$2.7 million before the war was now valued at \$768,867, a 71.2 percent drop in value (the loss in acreage no doubt affected this devaluation). The value of farm implements also fell from \$144,549 to \$22,935.¹⁴

Livestock numbers also show appalling losses:

	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>Decrease</u>	<u>% Loss</u>
Horses	1,870	1,068	802	42.8
Mules	1,777	975	802	45.1
Milk cows	4,648	3,134	1,514	32.6
Oxen	1,583	1,134	449	28.4
Cattle	8,054	6,406	1,648	20.5
Sheep	4,759	3,237	1,522	33.0
Swine	30,661	10,746	19,915	64.9

The value of Monroe County's livestock dropped from \$673,257 to \$394,212 during this 10-year span; corresponding

¹³Ninth Census, Population, I, 11-12.

¹⁴Eighth Census, Agriculture, 2; Ninth Census, Wealth and Industry, III, 94.

losses in values and numbers were sustained in counties across the state.¹⁵

Disastrous reductions are reflected in crop and other agricultural production:

	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>Decrease</u>	<u>% Loss</u>
Cotton	18,226 bales	6,172	12,054	66.1
Corn	496,455 bus.	232,486	263,969	53.1
Rice	8,111 lbs.	90	8,021	98.8
Beans	23,226 bus.	2,099	21,127	90.9
Potatoes				
Irish	3,556 bus.	1,418	2,138	60.1
Sweet	118,017 bus.	44,788	73,229	62.0
Butter	51,472 lbs.	45,037	6,435	12.5
Honey	29,115 lbs.	5,328	23,783	81.6

The only agricultural product to show an increase was cane molasses, which rose from 560 gallons in 1860 to 10,629 gallons in 1870. Perhaps this was an effort to find a substitute "sweetener" to compensate for the drop in honey production. The annual value of home manufactured goods in Monroe County declined from \$28,483 to \$7,588.¹⁶

In 1870, manufacturing was almost nonexistent. Four establishments employed nine people compared to 36 employing 110 in 1860. Yearly manufacturing wages fell from \$30,696 to \$1,350; the value of produced goods fell from \$92,475 to \$21,450. However, the value of manufactured goods statewide increased from \$10.59 million to \$13.04 million. Taxes paid

¹⁵Ibid., Eighth Census, Agriculture, 2-3; Ibid., Ninth Census, Wealth and Industry, III, 95.

¹⁶Ibid., Eighth Census, Agriculture, 3-5; Ibid., Ninth Census, Wealth and Industry, III, 95-97.

that year in the county totaled 22,294: \$14,078 to the state and \$8,126 to the county.¹⁷

Piled atop this debilitating economic burden in 1870 was an uneducated populace, almost half of whom could not read or write. Only 5 percent of the population, 724 people, claimed to have attended school; 654 (9.8 percent) were white and 70 (.9 percent) black. A total of 5,944 people above age 10 (41.8 percent of the population) could not read, and 6,234 people above age 10 (44 percent of the population) could not write. Of Monroe County's 6,625 whites, 1,262 (19 percent) could not read and of 7,572 blacks, 4,968 (65.6 percent) were unable to read.¹⁸

2. THE JOURNAL SPEAKS WITH A NEW VOICE

As Monroe County and Alabama proceeded through the second year under a "reconstructed" state government, no longer was there a desperate bitterness in the Journal's protest against the rule of carpetbaggers, Negroes and scalawags. With a confident, loud and strident voice, the newspaper took aim at Radicals -- local, state and national -- and blasted away. With ridicule and sarcasm, much of it borrowed from other newspapers, the Journal criticized anything anti-Southern, anti-white and anti-Democratic, but

¹⁷Ibid., Eighth Census, Manufactures, 13; Ibid., Ninth Census, Wealth and Industry, III, 15, 493.

¹⁸Ibid., Ninth Census, Population, I, 401.

rarely did it address local problems such as those revealed by census statistics. As was common practice, the paper unabashedly clipped news stories and editorial comment, which were often contradictory, from other newspapers in the South and in the North to buttress its point of view, to hammer away at "Puritan" New England, to ridicule Negroes, (while revealing the deep Southern fear of blacks) and to demonstrate that Radical politics and Negro suffrage in the North were not universally accepted. The paper used the same tactic to extol the virtues of Democrats and the white race and any other group which was anti-federal government.

Quietly and in subtle tones, the newspaper got across its point week by week that a day of reckoning was fast approaching. The old message of resignation to whatever the Yankees dished out was replaced by one of defiance and a new resolve to fight.

A prime example of this new spirit of battle was the Jan. 22 edition, which devoted much of the front page and a column and a half on Page 2 to reprinting verbatim a state Supreme Court decision which declared void all judgments made during the Civil War, a decision authorized by the legislature. In an editorial comment, the paper urged its readers to study and keep the article until the November elections when the

present Legislature will be changed to one of worth and intelligence, chosen from among those who fought for and won the liberties of this country and their descendants, as the only class who are qualified to

legislate for the protection of either moral or political rights. No nigger or Puritan is fit to do it, or to execute after it has been done.¹⁹

Although much of the Journal's space was devoted to items of opinion and local and state news, almost every edition studied carried a full column or more of "briefs" on national and international events. In this manner Monroe countians learned in July that war had broken out between France and Prussia, that Congress had approved paving Pennsylvania Avenue and that the Colored Philosophical Society of Virginia had petitioned Congress to change the name of the country to the United States of Columbia.

The paper was also cognizant of the problems in agriculture in the South -- if not in its own county -- and introduced new farming concepts to its readers or urged farmers to diversify, planting more grain and less cotton. An article picked up from the Southern Cultivator announced that a recommended system of deep plowing and "liberal applications of fertilizers" had been vindicated. The story, which ran a full column on the front page, told farmers that it's easier and more productive to thoroughly prepare and work a few acres of land than to work -- because of habit -- more acres with less attention. Northern hay was being sold throughout the South, so plant more oats, the story urged. Other recommendations included planting hedges instead of building wooden rail fences and allowing land to lie

¹⁹Monroe Journal, 22 January 1870.

fallow.²⁰ Planting corn, instead of so much cotton, was also highly recommended in a Meridian Gazette clip played at the top right of the front page.

It is an old error of our planters to suppose that when they make an immense crop of cotton they have made so much clear gain; to forget that when they are without grain they must rob cotton Peter to pay corn Paul....Corn is independence -- it is life!...If foreign buyers felt that planters can hold, they will not wait to buy and the demand will come. If, on the other hand, they know we must sell to buy food, foreign buyers will wait until necessity forces the cotton upon the market.²¹

From time to time the newspaper continued to press this notion upon its farmer-readers. Again in April, planters were warned to plant more grain with the admonishment to "stop driving such miserable teams and owning half famished stock."²² In late July, Monroe County farmers, already feeling the rise in the cost of "breadstuffs" because of the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, were urged to prepare for the worst by planting field peas, fall oats and turnips.

It is an uncomfortable feeling for an agricultural section to know that it cannot feed its population forty days without getting supplies from its neighbors, and we want to see Monroe County free from it, whether the powers of Europe see fit to indulge in the luxury of a war or no.²³

²⁰Monroe Journal, 22 January 1870.

²¹Monroe Journal, 29 January 1870.

²²Monroe Journal, 2 April 1870.

²³Monroe Journal, 23 July 1870.

Similar stories, based on the fact that the region could not eat cotton, appeared sporadically during the year.

But the attack on enemies -- social, political, racial and economic -- continued unabated, with a pause now and then to praise the legislative home team. A Montgomery Advertiser column on Rep. J.J. Parker of Monroe County was dutifully reprinted. Parker made a "profound impression on the legislature" when he spoke in favor of allowing Mobilians to choose their own local government via the ballot box.

Mr. Parker has been so modest and retiring heretofore that even his best friends did not expect so much of him....he was listened to with attention and respect during his entire speech....We predict for Mr. Parker, a brilliant career in the legal and political world.

The Journal added that Monroe countians were flattered by the notice given Parker and made it clear as to whom was responsible for his election.

... the men who sent him there -- the white men of Monroe County who have known him from his infancy -- feel confident that he has the qualities that will not permit him to stand idly by and see a wrong imposed, even upon an enemy, without making an effort to prevent it.²⁴

The newspaper could also praise a member of the home team, even when he was on the wrong side politically. While the Journal derisively referred to the county's state senator, R.N. Barr, as "this carpet-bagger," the paper gave the man a back-handed compliment for making a speech before

²⁴Monroe Journal, 5 February 1870.

the Senate in favor of a resolution asking Congress to remove political disabilities imposed by the 14th Amendment. Barr also served as Senate president.

He made a strong point in his argument by declaring that there were whole districts in Alabama where competent men could not be had to fill the most insignificant offices until these disabilities were removed. This is hard on the "trooly loil" population of Alabama, yet it is true.

The editorial stated that the paper had nothing personal against Barr, only his political creed. Nevertheless, it wished to give him credit for giving "our people something like a fair chance and "for the disposition he has shown to do a little good during his opportunity." But the Journal expected to continue making "war upon all carpet-bag office holders until the last one has disappeared from our State."²⁵

The proposed 15th Amendment -- which forbade states to deny anyone the right to vote on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude -- was another favorite target of the Journal. Noting that the Amendment "is very nearly an accomplished fact," the article pointed out that what was good for the South was good for the North. "Since the South has been forced to take negro suffrage, it is an act of poetic justice to force it on the North." The South should take comfort in knowing that it will one day control

²⁵Monroe Journal, 19 February 1870.

the black vote and may crack the skulls of the Amendment's authors.²⁶

Chief Justice Salmon Chase of the U.S. Supreme Court and his Radical notions of universal suffrage and universal amnesty came under severe criticism in the Feb. 12 edition. Reprinted from the Montgomery Mail, the item said universal suffrage is "one of the most insidious attempts which has been made since the war to delude the Southern people and to blind them by a voluntary assent to their own social as well as political degradation." It is one thing to be humiliated by an oppressor but quite another to cooperate in being the victim, the story said. Southerners were told, as prospects brightened, that to remain neutral was to play into the hands of the Radicals. To do nothing or to counsel submission was criminal and would result in blacks being placed on an equal political footing with whites.²⁷

The Amendment came in for another pounding in a Courier-Journal reprint which contended that Radical celebration would soon evaporate as "it is the last question given the country by the war's end." Negro suffrage may have united the Republicans, but not so for any other proposition concerning blacks such as social equality, "which is an invasion of human nature ... and cannot be made to work as a political instrument." The article also warned that since

²⁶Monroe Journal, 5 February 1870.

²⁷Monroe Journal, 12 February 1870.

the Amendment struck at the concept of state rights, the six New England states, now the apostles of centralization, may find themselves combined into one state.

New England is trying to ruin the South in order to get a consolidation of the government by which she can only apprehend the loss of her individuality and power.²⁸

A one-paragraph item in the same edition noted that the California Senate had refused to ratify the 15th Amendment.

In the same issue, passage of the 15th Amendment was again seen as a threat to the continued political power of the Republican Party in a story printed with a "serves 'em right" flavor. Quoting the New York Sun's Charles Dana, "one of the sharpest eyed, shrewdest calculators ever graduated by the Radical party," the item stated that many Republicans would feel no "special attachment" to President Grant or the party once Reconstruction was completed and many were also disgusted with the nepotism and policies of the Grant administration.

Though the bond which has unified these classes to the party is not yet severed, it is seriously weakened, and may snap at the first severe strain.²⁹

Finally, the May 21 edition picked up a story-editorial from the Louisville Courier-Journal, which stated that the 15th Amendment had been ratified, "a logical

²⁸Monroe Journal, 19 February 1980.

²⁹Ibid.

consequence of the successful war against slavery." (The news was old. The 15th Amendment became part of the Constitution on March 30.)³⁰ In its last salvo specifically against the Amendment, the paper warned that "having made the negro a freeman, a citizen and a voter," the next Radical-inspired move was to "educate him at the expense of the state."³¹

They have made the negro -- who is unfit to vote -- a voter; and now, in order to qualify him for voting, they propose to tax the people of Indiana and Ohio for school purposes in Kentucky, Georgia, and South Carolina.... It shows us that the extremists never mean to let go the negro until they are driven from power.³²

Although the 15th Amendment was an accomplished fact, the Journal continued to criticize the concept of Negro suffrage in column after column during the year.

In the last issue of May, the harshest language yet appeared in the Journal, compliments of the Savannah News, on voting rights for Negroes. The story also revealed the deep fear, irrational or not, Southerners had concerning the new political paths they were being forced to walk. While expressing the opinion that once the "Radical theory of political equality of the races came to be practically enforced upon the Northern people, they would resist the monstrous innovation and outrage" with greater violence than

³⁰Franklin, Reconstruction, 84.

³¹Monroe Journal, 21 May 1870.

³²Ibid.

seen during the recent war. The article warned that it was "impossible for the Republic to exist with a constituency half white and half black."

If the South is mongrelized it will become alien and antagonistic to the North. The white men of the North will be more hostile to the negroized South than they ever were to the slave-holding South, for the reason that the negro element will have been converted from a passive to an active aggressive, sectional political power.³³

National financial-economic news mixed with opinion was also dished out in hearty doses by the Journal. A New York Day Book clip outlined the disparity between the New England state and the rest of the nation with reference to the number of banks and the amount of capital each region controls. Less taxation, not more currency in circulation, was the answer to the country's economic stagnation, the article stated.

New England and New York, with some 8 million population, or about one-fifth the population of the country, hold one-half of the banks and three-fifths of the capital.... When, however, the West or any portion of the North, supposes that more money, and more money only, is the panacea for the present stagnation in the business world, it is a grave mistake; crushing taxation is the evil; it is not the lack of money.³⁴

In a related item, an unknown source stated that the income tax would expire in January 1871, but taxes for 1870

³³Monroe Journal, 28 May 1870.

³⁴Monroe Journal, 19 February 1870.

would still be due. Congress might reduce the 5 percent rate to 3 percent, the story said.³⁵

In a Page 3 story, the paper reported that steamboats were now carrying iron up the Alabama River to be used in building the Selma & Gulf railroad which was to pass through Monroe County. "As we said months ago, the 25th of December, 1870, will be enlivened by the whistle of the railroad engine in Monroe County."³⁶

The Journal rarely had anything good to say about Negroes, unless they were voting Democratic or criticizing the Radicals, which was also rare. Most of the news printed about blacks was pure scorn and ridicule.

In reprinting a Montgomery Advertiser item, the newspaper got a chance to blast the legislature and its black members with the same load of printed buckshot. The story reported that a House committee had attempted to employ a "scholar to overlook, correct spelling and make good grammar of all bills introduced in the House" before they were brought up for a second reading. Apparently Gov. Smith had complained about bills sent to him for approval which contained "such wretched butchering of the English language as to eternally disgrace the Alabama Legislature." The story said several black legislators protested the proposal because it "kast 'flections on de 'telligence and

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

edikation ob dis onerable boddy." The newspapers noted that the "side in favor of good spelling" was defeated and "'de onerable boddy' was triumphant.³⁷ The next month, the subject came up again:

The colored engrossing clerk of the House ought to stop putting on airs. The Senate yesterday returned six bills, all in a lump, the spelling "dar" for there, being more than the "onerable" body could get over.³⁸

For more serious and widespread problems, such as the perceived scarcity of Negro laborers, the black man again caught the blame. One Journal article contended that Negroes were lazy, making up most of the large number of "worthless idlers" which abounded in every town and village, refusing to work, preferring to steal if given the opportunity. Every working man, white or black, was called upon to help end this affair because there was cotton to be picked. Fifty thousand bales were lost last year because "a legion of loafers are free to lie in the shade." The paper then suggested enforcing the Vagrant Laws.³⁹

A Greensboro (Ala.) Beacon reprint attributed the scarcity of laborers to several causes, one of which was that many freedmen were renting land and farming for themselves, which contradicted earlier comments on the black man's general unwillingness to lift a finger to help

³⁷Monroe Journal, 22 January 1870.

³⁸Monroe Journal, 5 February 1870.

³⁹Monroe Journal, 19 February 1870.

himself. The paper also charged that black women now found field work "disreputable and they would rather "live on one meal a day in idleness, than two and have to work in the field." That the larger boys and girls were attending school caused "another heavy drawback to the field labor of the country." The story recommended that planters not rent land to freedmen, even at high prices, questioning whether the practice was in the interest of the freedmen. "There lies one source of the evil." The main remedy, though, was to import European and Asiatic laborers (an effort which fell on its face) to show that blacks were not the "masters of the situation."⁴⁰

When blacks could be hired for non-farm work, they still would not perform satisfactorily, according to the Journal. Replying to a complaint by the New York Commercial Advertiser about mail service in Mobile, Savannah and New Orleans, a clip from the Mobile Register informed Monroe countians that black mail clerks were to blame in Mobile.

The gentlemanly colored clerks are often found with their heels cocked up higher than their heads poring over the pictorial papers, while masses of mail matter are behind them waiting to be assorted.⁴¹

Clipped editorials and news stories about whites and blacks interacting socially were written in language that is even more caustic than usual. A Mobile Register clip

⁴⁰Monroe Journal, 9 April 1870.

⁴¹Monroe Journal, 19 March 1870.

described a party given in honor of a "select lot of illustrious negroes" at the home of John W. Forney, publisher of the Washington Chronicle.

We are not told whether they entwined their manly arms around the waists of Forney's wife and daughters in the round dance. But they did figure conspicuously about the ice cream pyramids and the spun candy.... Forney has proved himself not so good as a "free nigger," and the latter ought to be ashamed to associate with the hypocritical and degenerate white face.⁴²

Another reference to a Forney party is made the following week: "black niggers were present on terms of perfect equality with the white niggers who graced the occasion."⁴³ The paper was also fond of placing the Negro in a ridiculous light, reporting that the Colored M.E. Church in Covington, a nearby county, arraigned one of its members, Edward Brooks, on a charge of having two wives. Brooks admitted the fact, said he would not give up either wife, and was thrown out of the church.⁴⁴

In studying the Journal's news about crime, it was apparent that only two types of people ever broke the law: Negroes and white Radicals. The Journal picked up a story from the Macon (Ga.) Telegraph, which got the story from the Knoxville Press and Herald, about Georgia's colored members of the legislature passing through Knoxville as a drunken

⁴²Monroe Journal, 5 March 1870.

⁴³Monroe Journal, 12 March 1870.

⁴⁴Monroe Journal, 12 March 1870.

mob -- at the expense of Georgia's taxpayers.⁴⁵ Another story, datelined Knoxville, related that Rev. W.H. Bays, a Methodist Episcopal minister, was the victim of a black and white Radical mob at D. Logan's chapel six miles east of Maryville. The minister and his party managed to get away unhurt from the "brutish ruffians." This was the third reported case of "preacher mobbing in the loyal county of Blount" in the last three years.⁴⁶

Closer to home, the Journal reported the rape of a 15-year-old white girl by a "black scoundrel by the name of Dennis Davison" at Pollard in Escambia County. The girl was drawing water from a well near her home when she was "attacked and overpowered by the fiend."⁴⁷

In the Feb. 19 issue, a one-sentence paragraph in the national new briefs column stated that in New Castle, Del., "Two negroes, named Jones and Carpenter, were hung to-day for rape."⁴⁸

On April 23, the Journal announced that its editor and proprietor, Samuel McDonald Davidson, 42, died the prior Tuesday, April 19, at the Farmer's Hotel in Monroeville. Cause of death was not given. The sketchy Page 3 obituary stated that Davidson had been editor since the paper had

⁴⁵Monroe Journal, 26 March 1870.

⁴⁶Monroe Journal, 28 May 1870.

⁴⁷Monroe Journal, 23 July 1870.

⁴⁸Monroe Journal, 19 February 1870.

moved to the town, and he was well liked by members of both the black and white community. The only survivor mentioned was a daughter, but her name was not given. Burial was in the Baptist Church cemetery. Column rules on pages 2 and 3 were "turned" (the rules print in a broad black line) to denote mourning.⁴⁹

3. A NEW EDITOR TAKES OVER

Three weeks after the death of Davidson, James McLaughlin announced he had purchased the Journal. The new editor pledged that the paper will be a "friend and ally to everything that is good or calculated to improve the condition of this community and a stubborn opponent to that which is evil." He also stated he would produce as good a paper as the income would allow.⁵⁰

The change in ownership made little difference in the appearance, overall tone or editorial direction of the newspaper. It remained staunchly Democratic, anti-Radical and pro-white man.

In the latter half of 1870, the Journal devoted much of its space to the upcoming state elections on Nov. 8, urging its readers to register and then vote for the Democratic Party candidates. From July to November, the paper continued to praise the candidates on the Democratic

⁴⁹Monroe Journal, 23 April 1870.

⁵⁰Monroe Journal, 14 May 1870.

Party ticket, to publicize the proceedings of the county and state democratic conventions and to keep the party platform before the eyes of its readers. The Journal also continued its longstanding practice of criticizing and ridiculing Radical Republicans and Negroes on the national, regional and state level, but in late 1870, the paper was also blasting away at the practices of Radical leaders on a local level, especially in Wilcox and Conecuh counties. However, any form of Radical leadership in Monroe County might as well be non-existent judging by the lack of criticism of local officials.

The heaviest fire in the campaign to discredit the Radicals and rid the state of their leadership began July 2 with the publication of a letter from a Greenville lawyer, Col. Hillary A. Herbert, whom the paper called "one of the rising young men of the state." Herbert wrote to take himself out of the running for any office, and to urge a united effort to defeat the Radicals. He did not engage, however, in the bashing of Negroes, taking what could be termed a moderate view of race relations. He did not relinquish the idea that the "Anglo Saxon is superior to the negro," accepted the "fixed fact" of Negro suffrage, and urged that the Democratic Party "adopt no platform that will perpetuate strife between the races." Given Negro suffrage,

Herbert wrote, "I would use it as an implement for the destruction of Radicalism."⁵¹

In late July, a report of the Democratic County Convention was published and the names of all 36 delegates to the state convention were published along with the name of the delegation's chairman. Two secretaries were also selected to attend. In its resolution, the convention stated:

WHEREAS, The people of the State of Alabama for several years past have been ruled over by radical and unscrupulous officers not of their choice, who have been imposed on them by unlawful and arbitrary power, and who are alien to us, in interest, principles and sentiments,.....
.....
RESOLVED, That we will use all lawful means in the approaching elections to eject them from office and elect honest and faithful men in their stead.⁵²

Following the state convention in September the Journal published the "Democratic and Conservative Convention Platform" on its front page every week until the election. Likewise, the party slate of candidates for state offices, for the six congressional seats and for the county seat in the state House of Representatives was published every week on Page 2. The state Senate, elected for four-year terms in 1868, was not up for election in 1870. Candidates for state offices were: Robert B. Lindsay of Colbert County, governor; E.H. Moren of Bibb County,

⁵¹Monroe Journal, 2 July 1870.

⁵²Monroe Journal, 30 July 1870.

lieutenant governor; John W.A. Sanford of Montgomery, attorney general; L.F. McCoy of Lee County, treasurer; J.J. Parker of Monroe County, secretary of state; and Joseph Hodgson of Montgomery, state school superintendent. Congressional candidates were: S.J. Cumming of Wilcox, First District (included Monroe County); B.M. Welborn of Barbour, Second District; J.G. Harris of Sumter, Fourth District; P.M. Dox of Madison, Fifth District; and J.A. Sloss of Colbert, Sixth District. Dr. J.M. Lindsey of Claiborne was Monroe's Democratic Party candidate for state representative.⁵³

The nominations of Lindsey, Parker and Cumming were accepted with glowing acclamation by the Journal, which proudly noted that all three were native sons of Monroe County. Cumming, a resident of Wilcox County, resided in Monroe for 20 years and "Monroe has not lost the appreciation of his worth," the Journal stated. A reprint from the Wilcox Vindicator called Lindsey "an accomplished gentleman, a true Southerner, talented, ardent and energetic," while the Evergreen Observer in Conecuh County recalled Parker's bold stand "for the rights of the people" in the recent "black and tan" legislature.⁵⁴

In August and again in October, reports of Radical misconduct in neighboring counties were printed by the

⁵³Monroe Journal, 1 October 1870.

⁵⁴Ibid.

Journal. In Wilcox, "extravagant appropriations" were made to the county solicitor, circuit court clerk and the sheriff, who were "carpet baggers of the approved pattern."⁵⁵ In Conecuh County, a citizen's committee "discovered frauds upon the people to an extent much greater than any community should bear." The Observer, which published the committee's findings incurred the wrath of the probate judge, a Radical, who began sending the legal advertising to a Radical newspaper in Montgomery. The Journal offered the following alliterative advice:

Get your sharp lawyers on his track, and see if your Radical Judge has not committed a radical breach of the only redeeming feature of a most rascally Radical law. He will surely not persist in breaking the laws of his own party, in order to take away a small portion of patronage from the county paper, because it dared to speak in behalf of a robbed and cheated people.⁵⁶

In the midst of the Journal's anti-Radical rhetoric appeared material which would seem to work at odds to getting every Conservative-Democratic vote to the polls in November. In late August and again in late September, the newspaper published letters from former Alabamians encouraging emigration to Texas. A.T. Ritchie of Fairfield in Freestone County wrote:

Young men, take my advice and leave that poor State (Alabama), and get out from among the free negroes. We can live here always and never have a lock on our doors, and so can you if you will try. Here, the

⁵⁵Monroe Journal 15 October 1870.

⁵⁶Monroe Journal, 27 August 1870.

white people stick together and work for each other's interest.⁵⁷

Another letter writer spoke of Texas as a land of boundless opportunity, where land was cheap and the climate healthy. "Could the poor, toiling farmers of Alabama see the chances here waiting for them, they would bundle up and come right along."⁵⁸

Doubtless, some Monroe countians did emigrate to Texas in the late 1860s and early 1870s as did many residents of Alabama's hill counties.⁵⁹ Such movement could account in part for the decrease in the county's white -- and perhaps black -- population from 1860 to 1870. In his letter, Ritchie noted his former residence in the county. Only two such "letters from Texas" were found in the available 1870 editions of the Journal; the newspaper never commented on the letters nor indicated its reasons for printing them. Its actions do seem highly illogical. Why contribute to a decrease in the number of white voters and/or readers for one's own newspaper?

The Journal did not totally omit news of Radical political activities from its pages during the fall of 1870. In the paper's telegraphed "briefs" column, readers learned that the Radical convention "wrangled" for half an hour, then

⁵⁷Monroe Journal, 27 August 1870.

⁵⁸Monroe Journal, 24 September 1870.

⁵⁹Dubose, Tragic Decade, 303.

adjourned, and, "There is a great confusion in the proceedings, and a high old time may be looked for."⁶⁰ Later, the convention's nominees for state offices were announced with the comment: "That ticket will be badly beaten by the one put out by the Democrats and Conservatives."⁶¹ A group of speakers on behalf of the Radical ticket visited Monroeville on Oct. 27, and apparently enlivened the local debate. One speaker, identified only as Buck, made "assertions so far away from truth, that even the negroes could not believe it." However, a Mr. Agee countered the Radical efforts in a speech that was "necessarily short" but "he handled the Rads without gloves, in a style that can only be accomplished by an honest and earnest Democrat."⁶²

Less than two weeks prior to the election, the First District candidate for Congress, Samuel James Cumming, was afforded space on the Journal's editorial space to refute "Radical slander," which charged that Cumming owed money to the state. In a letter, Cumming, a former Confederate soldier, described a visit by federal troops to Monroeville in April 1865. The soldiers

broke open my office, burned my office furniture, broke open and robbed my safe and scattered my papers for miles around Monroeville, after stealing

⁶⁰Monroe Journal, 3 September 1870.

⁶¹Monroe Journal 17 September 1870.

⁶²Monroe Journal, 29 October 1870.

all they desired to steal and destroying all they wanted to destroy.⁶³

The soldiers also poured several gallons of oil on the floor of the offices and "like dirty brutes, left their excrement on the floor, all because I was a Confederate soldier." Receipts for school funds paid out by Cumming to various school trustees had been left in the safe and were either destroyed or carried away by the soldiers, Cumming charged, and thus he had no way of proving that the funds had been legally and properly disbursed. Cumming, a lawyer, further charged that the Radical Party, not content with the vandalism and robbery of the soldiers, was now bent on destroying his reputation:

I call upon all good citizens of Alabama, by their vote at the ballot-box on the 8th day of November next, to stamp with eternal infamy the vile slanderers, who coward like, attack the character of the Confederate living and dead.⁶⁴

Although Cumming carried Monroe County, he lost the district vote to an ex-slave, Ben Turner of Mobile, who became the state's first black congressman.⁶⁵ The Democrats managed to put most of their candidates in office, some by very thin margins. The Journal had little to say about Turner prior to the election, noting briefly in a reprinted

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Richard Bailey, "Black Legislators During the Reconstruction of Alabama, 1867-1878" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Kansas State University, 1984), 150.

item that he "mounts the platform of universal amnesty, universal suffrage and repudiation of the war debt."⁶⁶

The Journal in its last edition prior to the election reprinted a Mobile Register editorial which compared the duty of citizen to register and vote to that of a soldier's duty in combat.

Is the citizen less guilty of moral treason to his country, who, in the presence of a political invader that threatens the safety, the integrity and honor of the country, shirks the trifling duty of registering his name and polling his vote against the enemy?

.....
Society is now engaged in a great struggle with an enemy that has almost throttled its existence -- a vital struggle, a life and death struggle.⁶⁷

The item also pointed out that the best opportunity since Lee's surrender to liberate the state would come Nov. 8. The "fires of popular awakening are burning brightly in North Alabama," and the carpet baggers were losing their hold on the black vote. The Register, speaking through the Journal, urged voters to "Make the victory overwhelming, decisive and final."⁶⁸

The outcome of the statewide Democratic victory was slowly revealed in the four editions of the Journal immediately following the election. The paper quietly and with great satisfaction reported in an editorial-news piece

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Monroe Journal, 5 November 1870.

⁶⁸Ibid.

that election day passed peacefully and without any disorder. And "the town was as quiet as a funeral, and we hope it was the funeral of Radicalism in the State of Alabama." Returns were not listed by candidate, but by beat or polling place. County totals showed the Democrats outpolled the Republicans 1,363 to 637 -- a 726-vote margin. In Monroeville, however, the Radical ticket won by 42 votes, 256 to 214. The newspaper also related that it believed the counties of Mobile, Escambia, Conecuh, Montgomery, Madison and Talladega had been carried by the Democrats, along with the state, except Wilcox and Dallas counties.⁶⁹

In its next edition, the Journal broke down the voting totals by candidate and beat. Every Democratic candidate carried Monroe County by wide margins. A revised county total showed the margin of victory to be 1,361 to 578 -- a 783-vote margin. The overwhelming victory statewide hoped for by the newspaper proved to be beyond the efforts of the Democrats: the "indications are that the Democratic and Conservative State ticket is elected by a small majority."⁷⁰ The Journal reported that Turner won his First District congressional seat by a margin of about 4,000 votes. The paper also listed voting results from several other states, including New York, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Tennessee and Kansas, which either voted

⁶⁹Monroe Journal, 12 November 1870.

⁷⁰Monroe Journal, 19 November 1870.

Democratic or returned Republicans to office by "reduced majorities."⁷¹

The election of 1870 in Alabama was not destined to go quietly into the history books, however. The Radical Republicans did not relinquish their power easily. The Journal sarcastically referred to the situation: "Alabama still glories in the possession of two Governors."⁷²

Claiming election fraud, the defeated Republican governor, William H. Smith, and the defeated Republican state treasurer, Arthur H. Bingham, both refused to give up their offices. The Republicans also secured a court injunction to prevent R.N. Barr, state senator from Monroe County serving as Senate president, from counting the returns for governor and treasurer. Returns for other positions were counted, however, and these Democrats took office without delay. Afterward, some parliamentary maneuvering circumvented the court order and the returns for governor and treasurer were counted. The two Democrats, Lindsay and J.F. Grant, were then sworn in and for about three weeks the state had two governors and two state treasurers. Ironically, a scalawag judge, James Q. Smith, a

⁷¹Monroe Journal, 26 November 1870. The paper also printed an "approximate" composition in the state House of Representatives: 65 Democrats, 35 Republicans. Eighty-five of the legislators were white and 15 black. Democrats won seats in the Third, Fifth and Sixth congressional districts, while Republicans won the Second, Fourth and First districts.

⁷²Monroe Journal, 10 December 1870.

longtime enemy of Smith, finally forced an end to the⁷⁰ standoff when he ordered the governor to appear in his court. Smith complied, left his barricaded office and gave up his claim to the governorship. Bingham followed suit. Lindsay became governor on December 10.⁷³

The Journal gave a similar account of the standoff in its December 3 edition, adding that federal troops had been withdrawn from the capital. The story also said Lindsay had received a dispatch from President Grant informing him that federal authorities would not interfere. Thus, "Smith is now left alone," which was true. A clip from the New Orleans Times trumpeted:

The fact is, the reign of Radicalism is over in this country; the late elections merely exhibited the changing ripple of public opinion which precedes the great tidal wave of '72 destined to sweep it into oblivion.⁷⁴

In the December 17 edition, the Journal briefly recounted Smith's surrender and allowed a clipping from the Selma Times to do its editorializing on the election victory. The editorial promised that "In power, the Democratic party of Alabama will make good on all its promises of reform." The item also warned:

Unless the Democratic party shall make good the promises of the canvass, it will not, cannot, should not command the confidence of the people for the two

⁷³Wiggins, Scalawag, 67-68.

⁷⁴Monroe Journal, 3 December 1870.

years it is to be in power and at the next election will be turned by the opposition....⁷⁵

The words were prophetic. For Alabama at least, the great tidal wave foreseen by the New Orleans Times would not come until 1874. Aided by failures of the Lindsay administration, a hopelessly deadlocked legislature and internal dissension in the Democratic party, the Radical Republicans recaptured the Alabama state government in the election of 1872. But in turn, the Republicans were to suffer from similar problems, during the next two years.⁷⁶ The election of 1874 was to break the back of the Republican Party in Alabama. By emphasizing the issue of white supremacy, the Democrats won both houses of the legislature and elected George S. Houston of Limestone County governor.⁷⁷

Although they continued to exert local control in some Black Belt counties, control by Radical Republicans of Alabama's state government was over forever.

In 1870, the Democratic response to the Radical Republican enemy was clearly defined: inflict a resounding political defeat from which he could not recover. And toward that end the Monroe Journal enthusiastically published. The paper mixed hefty portions of opinion and fact in its news

⁷⁵Monroe Journal, 17 December 1870.

⁷⁶Allen J. Going, Bourbon Democracy in Alabama 1874-1890 (University: University of Alabama Press, 1951), 5-8.

⁷⁷Ibid., 10-18.

columns to promote a return of political power to the native white Southerner. While it unashamedly promoted its own political positions, it worked just as hard to cast Radical Republicans, their views and their allies in the worst possible light. To the Journal, one of those allies, the Negro, was the poor unfortunate tool and fool of the Radical, fodder for editorial cannon. He was to be praised only when he danced to the tune of those who were his "only real friends," such as a former master. Otherwise, he was a Republican ally, fair game for ridicule, lazy, ignorant, destined for extinction and fit only for field work. By the end of 1870, the Democrats had begun to swing the tide in their favor. And the constant criticism of the Republican Party from members of the Democratic press, such the Monroe Journal, certainly did not hurt that process.

THE AFTERMATH OF RECONSTRUCTION

As the year 1878 began, another new editor, Horace R. Hood, stood at the helm of the Monroe Journal, which may have suspended publication either in 1874 or 1875. There were indications that Hood brought the newspaper back to life. Rowell's newspaper directories, which printed listings free of charge, showed a continually declining circulation from 1869 to 1874, when, under McLaughlin, the paper's claimed circulation hit a low of 276.¹ Rowell's directory did not list the Journal in 1875 and one historian commented that Hood, formerly with the Montgomery Evening Journal, "re-established the Monroe Journal at Monroeville and managed it capably and acceptably for some years...."² Rowell's began listing the Journal again in 1876 along with Hood as its editor.

Never to be revived, however, was Radical Republicanism, which had long ceased to be an effective force in Alabama state politics. In early 1877, the last federal troops had been withdrawn from the South.³ The state's Democratic Party was busily constructing an impregnable political fortress from which it would not be

¹Rowell, Newspaper Directory (1874) 18.

²Screws, "Alabama Journalism," 200.

³Franklin, Reconstruction, 211-217.

dislodged for 100 years. For 11 years or so, through several editors, the Journal fought Congressional Reconstruction and harried it into its grave. Under Hood, the newspaper continued a somewhat different fight. In its reporting and editorial columns, which remained a mixture of fact and opinion, the newspaper helped to cement in place the building blocks of Fortress Democrat, using as a foundation the issue of "white supremacy." But gone was the shrill cry against the Northern invaders; the newspaper's editorial tone was now that of a victor, but a victor on guard against a political enemy who still showed signs of life. In 1878, there was really only one enemy; he was black and his political power was gradually weakening.

The newspaper was now published on Thursday and sported a different appearance, along with a revamped mission. Hood now used the "patented insides," a journalistic innovation of the Civil War. Under this system, editors purchased sheet paper with two of the pages (one side of the sheet, which became the inside) preprinted. The other side of the sheet, which became pages one and four (the outside), was left blank to be filled by the editor.⁴

The Journal's ready-to-print pages were similar to those found in thousands of weekly newspapers of that era throughout the nation and the South. The left-hand page and five of the seven columns on the right-hand page were filled

⁴Clark, "Country Newspaper," 5-6.

with a mixture of short stories, recipes, news items, biographical sketches, how-to-do-it articles and short fillers. The remaining two columns on the right-hand page consisted of advertisements, most of which touted the advantages of various patent medicines from which the name "patented insides" is derived. Examples of some of the advertised medicines were: Vegetine, The Great Blood Purifier; Dr. Radway's Sarsaparillian Resolvent, another blood purifier; Compound Oxygen Treatment and Dr. Radway's Regulating Pills.⁵

These ready-print pages reduced the workload of an editor by half.⁶ Most of Hood's front and back pages consisted of advertisements, legal notices on the front and mercantile ads -- mostly from Mobile -- on Page 4. For reasons unknown, a significant drop in local advertisements occurred between 1870 and 1878.

More than economics may have been behind Hood's use of the ready-print pages. Apparently, he was deeply involved in county politics; he was chosen as one of two secretaries for the convention which met May 6 in Monroeville.⁷ The post gave him an excellent position from which to report the convention's activities. His partisanship was reflected in another way within the newspaper. Indeed, a greater portion

⁵Monroe Journal, 29 January 1878.

⁶Clark, "Country Newspaper," 5.

⁷Monroe Journal, 14 May 1878.

of the Journal's in-house copy was devoted to news and comment of a purely political nature than ever before. A few inches of space was still allotted each week to international, national, regional, state or local news, but compared to the editions of 1870, this allotment had been drastically curtailed.

The Journal's editor did more than serve as a convention secretary. He offered two resolutions -- both unanimously adopted -- endorsing several candidates for the Democratic ticket. Among them were: C.C. Langdon for governor, Willis Brewer for auditor, Charles L. Scott for secretary of state, James T. Jones for congressman for the First Congressional District, and W.T. Nettles as county representative to the state legislature.⁸ The editor-secretary added his own comments about Nettles at the end of the front page article on the convention. He praised Nettles as "one of our best citizens," and

his nomination will harmonize all the conflicting elements of the party in our county and we confidently expect his election by over 1500 majority. At any rate, his election is a foregone conclusion, for in this county, a nomination by the conservatives is equivalent to an election.⁹

Hood, who had been promoting Langdon in the Journal before the convention met, endorsed the candidacies of

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

Langdon and Scott on his front page the next week.¹⁰ Langdon got another editorial the following week.¹¹

But, only one of Monroe County's nominees for state office, Brewer, was also selected by the state convention. Others chosen for the ticket were: Rufus W. Cobb of Shelby County, governor; William W. Screws of Montgomery, secretary of state; Isaac H. Vincent of Chambers County, treasurer; Henry C. Tompkins of Bullock, attorney general; and, Leroy F. Box of St. Clair County, superintendent of education.¹² Nevertheless, the Journal threw its support behind the party's choices for the August 5 gubernatorial election:

We place the ticket at our mast head this week, and while we are somewhat disappointed and feel sad over the defeat of our favorite candidate for governor, we yield our cordial and hearty support to the ticket as nominated, and predict that it will carry the state over any opposition by an overwhelming majority.¹³

The Journal's support was extremely enthusiastic. The paper now went over to the attack, pounding Radical Republicans week-by-week and warning its readers that the rattlesnake may not be entirely dead.

The Journal paid much attention to one local "rattlesnake" in particular, Anthony Davison, a black man who challenged W.T. Nettles for the county's seat in the

¹⁰Monroe Journal, 21 May 1878.

¹¹Monroe Journal, 28 May 1878.

¹²Monroe Journal, 4 June 1878.

¹³Ibid.

state legislature. The announcement of and comment on Davison's candidacy was afforded about three inches of space at the top of the left hand column on Page 4.

Anthony (better known as Tony) Davison is an intelligent looking bright mulatto; but if he really expects to represent Monroe in the legislative halls of Alabama, he has less sense than his looks would indicate.¹⁴

Immediately below the item on Davison were two other short stories about the body of a black man found near Pine Apple, a community near the Wilcox-Monroe county line. "The body when found presented a horrible and sinckening [sic] sight. The head was split open and flies and maggots and buzzards had indeed made a loathsome add (sic) nauseating spectacle of the corpse." The second item related that another negro had been arrested in the slaying. "Cause, jealousy."¹⁵ Whether the editor intended to convey a message to Davison and other blacks through the language and juxtaposition of the three stories, is not known. If that were the editor's purpose, Davison declined to take the hint.

On July 2, the newspaper warned that county Radicals, meeting in Monroeville, appointed delegates to attend their district convention to nominate a candidate for Congress and the action "is in accord with the programme of the national republican executive committee." The Republicans had given

¹⁴Monroe Journal, 25 June 1878.

¹⁵Ibid.

up on retaining control of the U.S. Senate and "their efforts will be confined exclusively to gaining a majority in the house," the Journal said.¹⁶

On its front page in the July 16 issue, the newspaper soundly thrashed the platform of the Republicans, which was adopted "in lieu of a state ticket." The Journal called the platform "simply a tissue of brazen faced falsehoods and misrepresentations that will make the blood of every true son of Alabama boil with indignation who reads it." Republicans claimed "in their platform of slanders" that they could not win an election in Alabama because of Democratic Party fraud and were attempting to persuade the federal government to interfere, the Journal charged. On the same page, the paper exclaimed that whites had little to fear, even of Davison's candidacy, if they would simply vote.¹⁷

The Journal saved its most severe editorial battering for its last issue before the election. Davison bore the brunt of the storm, but the newspaper in a "Last Appeal" for votes, repainted the gloomy scene of a South driven to her knees by war and kept there by "glistening bayonets."

The whole southern land was enshrouded in dark and appalling despair....The negro race became the top rail in the palitical [sic] structure of reconstruction; ignorance became the dominant power and influence to enact laws at the expense of

¹⁶Monroe Journal, 2 July 1870.

¹⁷Monroe Journal, 16 July 1878.

intelligence. It was indeed a dark and sombre period in the history of the southern whites.¹⁸

Monroe countians had answered the call many time to do battle with the ballot box and must again now that the "election of a vile and crafty and ignorant negro to misrepresent them in the legislature" threatened. A letter to the editor, signed "Veritas," gave a brief history of Davison's activities since the end of the Civil War, when at age 15, he helped federal troops drive away the stock near his home community of Scotland. Davison also left with the troops, "at once fallen greatly in love with his Yankee brother," and spent several years in the North, "time enough to imbibe the hatred and envy, that so characterized that section against the South." Davison then returned to Sparta, a community in neighboring Conecuh County, depicted as a "nest of black radical polution [sic]." "Veritas" concluded that Davison "shows the malicious disposition of a low bred and depraved mind. Such being the case he deserves nothing but contempt and not entitled to notice." But Davison rarely escaped the Journal's notice.¹⁹

Since the Republicans did not field a state ticket, election day was a holiday for the Democrats. Voter turnout was termed "light," except in a few closely contested counties. The Journal pointed out that the "returns show a

¹⁸Monroe Journal, 30 July 1870.

¹⁹Ibid.

decided falling off of our vote compared to the vote for governor in 1876," but since Nettles had defeated Davison 1,372 to 628, "All's well that ends well." Nettles carried Monroeville 168 to 85. The newspaper could not let pass another opportunity to hammer Davison:

Tony Davison was in town one day last week and looked hacked; but let off considerable gas, so we learn. He complained of being mistreated; said that his votes had not been fairly counted, etc. etc.... We advise Tony to stay close at home for a while, and keep his mouth shut. The white people have been very patient with him.²⁰

In an unusually threatening tone, the newspaper pondered the "propriety" of employing Davison as a school teacher in Monroe County any longer if he could not "let politics severely alone hereafter."²¹

The Journal also offered its congratulations to the "white people" of Dallas, Montgomery and Perry counties who elected white state legislators for the first time since the end of the war. "Verily, Radicalism in Alabama is dead as a door-nail." ²²

From September to November, the Journal directed its attention to the November 8 congressional elections, turning its editorial guns on what it perceived to be an old political threat wearing new clothing. The paper threw its support behind Col. Thomas H. Herndon of Mobile, chosen as a

²⁰Monroe Journal, 13 August 1878.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

compromise candidate in the August 26 district convention in nearby Jackson. After 375 ballots, neither the incumbent, James T. Jones, nor a challenger, D.C. Anderson, could muster the necessary two-thirds majority vote for nomination. Herndon's name was placed in nomination by D.L. Neville of Monroeville and on the 385th ballot, Herndon was chosen the nominee.²³

In endorsing Herndon, the Journal said, "In peace and in war he has been true to his people." Herndon rose to the rank of colonel in the 36th Regiment of the Alabama Volunteers and was wounded at the battle of Chickamauga and at Atlanta. He returned to Mobile after the war ended to practice law.²⁴ Herndon's candidacy was indicative of what had been happening for some time in Alabama and across the South: the return of former Confederate military and civilian leaders to positions of political power. In 1872, Congress had adopted the Amnesty Act which re-enfranchised about 150,000 whites. After 1872, the law continued to bar only about 500 very high Confederate leaders, such as Jefferson Davis, from political participation.²⁵

Opposing Herndon was the nominee of the Greenback Party, Judge W. Bailey of Choctaw County. The Journal's view of the party was best summed up in a short reprint from the

²³Monroe Journal, 3 September 1878.

²⁴Monroe Journal, 7 September 1878.

²⁵Simkins, The South, 286.

Montgomery Advertiser, which characterized the party's convention as "the gathering of the Radical-Republican-Greenback-National Labor-Independent soreheads."²⁶ Economic distress among farmers contributed to the national rise of the Greenback Party, which lasted only a few years. The party urged the issuance of large amounts of paper money to ease debt payment, but many North Alabamians, chafing at the Democratic domination of the state Legislature, were more concerned with and demanded fairer elections, including an honest counting of votes, better schools and an equitable system of taxation.²⁷ The Journal called the party a fraud and warned that it was a scheme whereby Radical Republicans were attempting to regain power. The paper also helped paint Bailey as the "negro candidate" in the district.²⁸

Herndon defeated Bailey by 3,636 votes in the district: 6,577 and 2,941. In Monroe County, he won 728 to 11. Although pleased with the vote, the Journal scolded the county for the light turnout. "But Monroe did not do her whole duty. This county should have polled at least 1400 votes for Herndon."²⁹

In reporting the election results, the newspaper again made the most of an opportunity to make fun of Tony

²⁶Monroe Journal, 7 September 1878.

²⁷Moore, History of Alabama, 581-582.

²⁸Monroe Journal, 5 October 1878; 28 October 1878.

²⁹Monroe Journal, 25 November 1878; 11 November 1878.

Davison, now promoted to "General." Of Judge Bailey's 11 votes in Monroe County, eight were cast at Claiborne and three at Ridge, "the home of Tony Davison," the paper reported. Why it chose to include Davison in this story is not clear. The paper also reported a rumor that Davison was obtaining signatures for a petition to form a new county from parts of Monroe, Butler, Wilcox and Conecuh.³⁰

We presume the General wants a county over which he may preside as Probate Judge and dispense justice by the pound to his woolly-pated compatriots. Of course, those white men who may be affected by the formation of a new county, will sign the General's petition.³¹

To its credit, the newspaper printed Davis' letter in reply about three weeks later. Davison said the title of General, one he's never held before, was given to him in derision. Furthermore, he said he was not trying to form a new county and wondered why the Journal could not report the election without "calling my name in connection with it."³²

It is always best to let bygones be bygones; but I should like to know why the authorities did not appoint the inspectors and returning officers of the two political parties in this county. We have 2 political parties in this county and we should have had our justice at the polls. We do not look for civil rights with you, but political rights we do look for.³³

The newspaper did not reply.

³⁰Monroe Journal, 11 November 1878.

³¹Ibid.

³²Monroe Journal, 2 December 1878.

³³Ibid.

Personal squabbles aside, the dust of Radical Republicanism was being rapidly blown away by Southern breezes and references to that party became fewer and fewer in the Journal. Elections might prompt some editorial flogging, deserved or not, but announcing the death of a former Republican leader was done more respectfully if succinctly. When one of Monroe County's former Republican legislators died, the event was noted in five lines on the front page:

Dr. R.N. Barr, who came from Ohio to this county many years ago, and represented Monroe in the Alabama Senate during Republican rule in the state died at Chatanooga, [sic] Tennessee, of yellow fever, a few days ago.³⁴

Other concerns of the Journal in late 1878 included the spread of that disease from New Orleans, up the Mississippi River valley, and eastward to Mobile and to Florence and Tuscumbia in North Alabama in the Tennessee River Valley. Again in the summer of 1879, the newspaper printed several accounts of a "Doomed Memphis." The city's population had been reduced from 50,000 to little more than 16,000 by August and the number of cases was growing worse.³⁵

Within the editions of 1879, national political matters become a faint echo, and Reconstruction became even fainter, no longer of concern to the South for that struggle

³⁴Monroe Journal, 21 October 1878.

³⁵Monroe Journal, 28 July 1879; 5 August 1879.

had been won. Late in the year, the Journal reprinted an item from the New York Herald, titled "Grant at the South." Under Hood, the newspaper had moved away from publishing clippings verbatim from other papers, and publication of the Grant piece illustrated the significance the Journal attached to the article. The item stated that many Southerners favored Grant, now out of the presidency for two years, over any candidate the Republicans might field and would go so far as to vote for him, despairing of any chance to elect a Democrat to that office. The article called the "present state of Southern feeling toward President Grant noteworthy and truly remarkable."³⁶ Grant, of course, did not serve a third term. During the 1880 Republican Convention, Grant received strong support, but the nomination in the end went to James A. Garfield.³⁷

But issues closer to home were of more concern to the Journal. Five shootings, four of them fatal, within a 30-35 day period in July and August prompted the paper to report on its front page that the county's record of crime was "very sad" and showed a "wanton and reckless disregard for human life."³⁸ In January and several editions thereafter, the paper noted the comment from exchange papers favoring a law to regulate carrying concealed weapons. Southern men

³⁶Monroe Journal, 1 December 1879.

³⁷Lingley, Since the War, 161-164.

³⁸Monroe Journal, 18 August 1879.

were apt to settle their differences with gunplay and carrying weapons was common practice. The story was told of a North Georgia judge, who upon seeing a weapon stuck in the belt of a man in his courtroom, announced that if the man would come forward, surrender the weapon and pay a \$1 fine, he could go on his way. Twenty-two pistols and \$22 later, the man the judge saw finally came forward.³⁹

Debate on the passage of the "Cotton Seed Bill" was probably the most controversial political item discussed in the Journal in early 1879. A compromise law was eventually passed by the Legislature in an effort to stop the widespread theft of cotton in several Black Belt counties. Monroe County was added to the list by its representative, W.T. Nettles. The measure made it unlawful to sell seed cotton or lint cotton grown on rented land before the seed cotton was divided by the landlord and tenant. Furthermore, buyers and sellers were required to make monthly reports of their transactions to the probate judge of each county. The Journal at first opposed the law because of its affect on small farmers in the county and took issue with Nettles on the matter.⁴⁰

The second "War Between the States" was over by 1878-79 and this time the South had won. The political efforts of the Journal during these years were directed at making sure

³⁹Monroe Journal, 5 May 1879.

⁴⁰Monroe Journal, 1 September 1879.

the victory remained intact -- at least in Monroe County and Alabama. As election days drew near, the Journal probably used a bit of overkill to get out the Democratic vote. Even the threat of a new political party, such as the Greenback Party, was viewed as Radical Republicanism in disguise. And the political invective was quickly forthcoming. By 1878, the Negro was no longer an effective independent political force and the Journal demonstrated that reality by toying with Tony Davison, the black candidate for Congress. Other less political concerns filled the Journal's pages once the elections were over. Reconstruction was over and it was time to move on.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

From its inception and through the long weary years of Reconstruction, the Monroe Journal was a Democratic newspaper -- a white man's journal. Though there are gaps in the record, enough editions survive from the reigns of five editors to demonstrate the newspaper's primary and unswerving editorial position. The editors displayed varying degrees of typographical and editorial competence, and some editors relied much more than others on matter from faraway newspapers to fill their columns. While each brought to the newspaper his own ideas of what was fit to clip to print, not one ever strayed far from that common political and social pathway undoubtedly walked by most Monroe countians and Southerners.

If one can set aside the temptation to judge the Journal by today's newspaper standards and societal values, it is easy to see that the newspaper could not have survived with any other editorial position. Monroe County may not have shown great enthusiasm in the 1861 drive toward secession, but after the war, her white people, ex-slave owners or not, did not and could not embrace the black man as brother, and neither could the county newspaper in spite of any claimed political neutrality. Also, the economic base of the county remained in the hands of white merchants and

what local advertising could be attracted came from not only the white-owned businesses but also white officials who still held the reins of public power and patronage.

It was also clear that in its early years, the Journal followed rather than created an editorial direction. How other newspapers were commenting on Reconstruction filled many a column inch as did the "clipped" gospel of agricultural progress. Early indecision among the state's white leadership over how to react to congressional requirements with regard to Reconstruction, was reflected in the daily newspapers in the state and in turn the rural newspapers. Once the political navigators had charted a course to regain what they had lost by forfeiting the fight early on, the Journal quickly fell into line astern, always following. The newspaper echoed the call to battle. Congressional medicine was bitter indeed and damned if Alabama was going to swallow it. Thus, the newspaper did play its part in spreading the political message -- and influence -- of the larger papers into the hinterland. This is not to say that the Journal was always a parrot; many times editors would add their own biting comments at the end of someone else's message.

News of Reconstruction in other states was also obtained by clipping stories from exchanged papers, an apparent common practice. Most of the time the name of the paper from which the item was taken was printed in very

small italic type either at the end or beginning of the story. The Journal also received copies of other newspapers from Monroe citizens who had traveled to other parts of the South. More often than not, the stories, especially those from Northern papers, were published to reinforce the newspaper's editorial point. Nevertheless such stories, though biased, probably served as a valuable source of information for Monroe countians. It was not until Hood's editorship, with most of the Reconstruction years behind it, that the Journal began serving an editorial stew of its own making. Hood, deeply involved in the local political structure, may have followed the party line, but he followed no one's editorial recipe. Hood also limited the practice of clipping news stories and probably was forced to do so, since the "patented insides" made up 50 percent of his newspaper.

Until late 1870, Radical Reconstruction apparently was not a great cause for alarm within the immediate Monroe County area. Either Monroe politicians were all Democrats or the newspaper simply chose to ignore the Radical Republicans. News of problems with Radical Republican officials in nearby counties was reported but Monroe County apparently never had the same problems. McLaughlin and later Hood paid great attention to state and federal races where Monroe County and First District congressional candidates faced Radical opposition. Only under Hood was much attention

given to homegrown Radicalism and that often took on the look of a personal feud. In the early years, Reconstruction was of concern to the county newspaper and duly reported on. But in terms of having any real impact on Monroe countians, concern was minimal. Reconstruction was a problem of some other distant place: Montgomery, Mobile, New Orleans, Atlanta, Savannah or Washington D.C.

Under no editor did the Journal advocate extreme measures in dealing with Negroes. Never did the newspaper, so far as can be determined, advocate violence or attempt to incite its readers to harm blacks. Indeed the paper sometimes took pride in pointing out the absence of civil unrest in the county. However, the newspaper often reported the alleged crimes committed by blacks and the resulting punishment meted out by citizens known and unknown. But surprisingly, nothing about the activities of the Ku Klux Klan within the state or within the county could be found in the Journal. Negroes were seldom shown in a favorable light. Their fate was ridicule. The Journal was inconsistent in its opinions and descriptions of Negroes. They were either lazy, hard-working, industrious, cheerful, treacherous, ignorant savage or childlike. They were not to be trusted but they were urged to put their trust in their friends and former masters. They were sought as political allies but were not considered fit for political office. They were to be pitied, held in contempt or treated sympathetically, but always kept

in the fields. Any sign of Negro independence was viewed as a threat to white supremacy. If he voted the Republican ticket, he was turning his back on his best friends. The Monroe Journal of the Reconstruction years, as did most Alabamians, found it easy to make up its mind about white scalawags, carpetbaggers or Republicans in general. But the Negro was another matter. He was hated but needed too much to drive away.

Under Davidson and McLaughlin, the Journal did a far better job of keeping before its readers international and national news outside the scope of Reconstruction. These editors, perhaps unintentionally, let their readers know that the world was not standing still while the politics of reconstructing the South were played out. Though usually presented in the form of a one or two-sentence paragraphs, these tidbits probably presented the newspaper's subscribers a welcome break from the often depressing reading of Reconstruction fare.

As for fulfilling its duty as a good soldier in the anti-Reconstruction war, there can be no doubt as to the Journal's commitment. And it is clear that Monroe countians responded to the newspaper's editorial urging in numbers sufficient to help turn back Radical Republicanism. Of course, the state's press alone did not stop the Radicals. Other factors, including Republican in-fighting, blunted the party's political staying power. But without the work of the

Conservative-Democratic press, the rule of the Radicals in Alabama at least, probably would have lasted much longer. That the Monroe Journal worked and worked hard to bring about an end to Reconstruction is without question. And in August 1878, the newspaper could with great satisfaction make the statement: "Verily, Radicalism in Alabama is dead as a door-nail."

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James G. Thornton Jr. was born at Fort Hood, Texas on July 14, 1947. He attended elementary schools in Escambia County, Ala., and was graduated from T.R. Miller High School in Brewton, Ala., in June 1965. He received an Associate of Arts degree in June 1967 from Jefferson Davis Junior College in Brewton and transferred to Auburn University where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism in June 1969.

After working as a reporter and city editor of the Columbus (Ga.) Ledger, he and his wife, Anne, purchased The Tri-City Ledger, a weekly newspaper, in Flomaton, Ala., in 1973 and operated the newspaper until December 1986. In the fall of 1987, he began study toward a Master's degree at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This degree was awarded in August 1990.

He also served as publisher of the Auburn Bulletin in Auburn, Ala., from October 1980 until April 1982, and then taught in the Journalism Department at Auburn University from September 1982 until June 1983. Other newspaper experience includes the layout desk of the Playground Daily News in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., and the copy desk at the Herald-Courier in Bristol, Tenn. He also taught in the Communications Department at Emory and Henry College in Virginia from August 1988 to May 1989 and again at Auburn University from September 1989 until June 1990.

The author is a member of Omicron Delta Kappa and Kappa Tau Alpha, and a former member of the Alabama Press Association.