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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Timothy P. Ezzell entitled "Yankees in Dixie : the story of Chattanooga, 1870-1898." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.

Paul H. Bergeron, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Charles Aiken, James C. Cobb, John Muldowny, W. Bruce Wheeler

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Paul H. Bergeron, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of the Graduate School

YANKEES IN DIXIE:

THE STORY OF CHATTANOOGA, 1870-1898

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Timothy Paul Ezzell

May, 1996

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For Dad

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Lastly, I owe thanks to my wife for her undying patience, my mother for her unyielding support, and my son, Will, for putting it all in perspective.

ABSTRACT

"Yankees in Dixie" traces the development of Chattanooga, a southern industrial city, in the post-Civil War era. Historians have long debated the origins of the urban South. Many scholars have suggested that regional cities were built by a new generation of southern political and business leaders. Others contend that the South's antebellum elite was responsible for the region's post-war urban growth. None of these explanations, however, adequately explains the rise of modern Chattanooga which, although a southern city, was largely built and governed by northern immigrants.

In the years following the Civil War, northerners, including many Union Army veterans, settled in Chattanooga and transformed the town into an important industrial center. In the process, they also altered the city's political character. At the close of Reconstruction, Chattanooga's northern industrialists overthrew the town's Radical government and, with the support of black voters, established a moderate Republican regime which dominated local government for the next twenty-five years.

Chattanooga's Republican leaders maintained their hegemony throughout the 1870s and 1880s. As time progressed, however, their rule became increasingly difficult and by the 1880s the city's northern industrialists faced numerous

challenges. Black voters, aware of their political importance, demanded a growing number of concessions from Republican city officials. At the same time, Republicans faced rising opposition from rival factions of the local Democratic party. Reform minded moderates, known as Mugwumps and Conservatives, called Bourbons, vied for control of the town's Democratic constituency. Together these groups presented a formidable, though discordant challenge to Republican rule.

Things worsened for Chattanooga's northern industrialists in the 1890s. The city's economy, which had boomed during the 1880s, collapsed following of the panic of 1893. Local industries, faced with increased competition from Birmingham, also fared poorly. The town's leaders similarly saw their political fortunes wane. Democrats, aided by newly-passed Jim Crow laws, deposed the Republicans and installed a moderate Mugwump administration. Although these new leaders enacted much-needed improvements in Chattanooga's government, they did so at the expense of black voters; and municipal reform was achieved through the deliberate sacrifice of black suffrage.

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Introduction

The very name "Chattanooga" has long confounded historians. The word, derived from a long forgotten native tongue, has been obscured by time, and today scholars can only guess as to its true meaning.[1] Similarly, the nature of the city's past is also somewhat baffling. Although modern Chattanooga was largely a product of post-Civil War regional industrialization, it defied many popularly held beliefs concerning southern urbanization. In terms of race relations, urban leadership, and municipal politics, the city was, in many ways, quite different from its neighbors. In these respects, Chattanooga offers a new and distinct view of southern urbanization. At the same time, the city provides an excellent example of regional economic and social development, and gives new insight into the challenges facing municipal leaders and urban residents in the post-war South.

Of particular interest to scholars of the urban South has been the issue of race relations. Recent studies suggest that blacks in southern cities enjoyed greater social,

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[1]Interpretations of the city's name have varied widely over the years and include "eagle's nest," "broken mountains," and "to draw fish out of water." Recently, however, most scholars have endorsed the definition "rock that comes to a point." *Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby Counties of Tennessee* (1887; reprint, Nashville, 1974), 857; Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country, 1540-1976: From Tomahawks to TVA*, 3rd ed.(Knoxville, 1977), 21.

political and economic opportunities than their rural counterparts. In *Race Relations in the Urban South*, for example, Howard Rabinowitz demonstrates that the segregation generally found in southern cities often afforded blacks limited access to heretofore unavailable services and occupations. In addition, black urbanites also often found work in local industries. In Chattanooga, for example, freedmen frequently found employment in the town's iron mills and with local railroads.[2]

Southern cities also offered black residents unprecedented political opportunities. In all of Tennessee's major cities, for example, former slaves participated in the political process until the introduction of Jim Crow laws in the late 1880s. Yet nowhere in the state did black voters wield more power than in Chattanooga. There, as one historian has noted, freedmen played a "conspicuous role in municipal affairs." Chattanooga's black citizens not only voted in local elections, they also served in city government and throughout the post-war period blacks usually commanded at least one seat on the town's Board of Aldermen.[3]

By the 1880s freedmen comprised one of Chattanooga's

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[2]Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South* (Urbana, 1980).

[3]Joseph H. Cartwright, *The Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880s* (Knoxville: 1976), 147.

most critical political constituencies. As a result, the city's blacks commanded concessions unthinkable in other southern communities. Freedmen, for example, received an extraordinary share of municipal patronage. Blacks worked in virtually every branch of local government and even served on the town's police department. In fact, at one point in the early 1880s, nearly sixty percent of the town's police force was black.

Chattanooga's leadership also proved to be quite distinct. Historians of the post-war South have long questioned the origins of the region's leaders in the years following Reconstruction. Many scholars, for example, endorse the redeemer thesis, first set forth by C. Vann Woodward in his 1951 work *Origins of the New South*. According to Woodward, conservative southern businessmen "redeemed" their homeland at the close of Reconstruction by rescuing it from Radical Republican rule and steering it onto a course of industrial development.[4] Subsequent historians have since questioned various elements of Woodward's thesis. Some, such as Dwight Billings, suggest that planters, not businessmen, led the region's industrial transformation.[5] Other scholars, including Jonathan Wiener,

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[4]C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, 1951).

[5]Dwight B. Billings, Jr., *Planters and the Making of a "New South": Class, Politics, and Development in North Carolina, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, 1979).

contend that planters successfully thwarted industrial growth.[6] In recent years urban historians have also entered the leadership debate. Foremost among these is Don Doyle who, in *New Men, New Cities, New South*, emphasizes the role of urban business leaders in the region's modernization.[7]

Although all of these works have contributed to a greater understanding of the post-war South, none of them seems to explain adequately the rise of modern Chattanooga. The city's prominent businessmen, though they actively embraced the New South Creed, were neither planters nor redeemers. In fact, the majority of the Chattanooga's leaders were not even southern. Chattanooga's business class was composed primarily of veteran officers of the Union Army of the Cumberland. Men such as John T. Wilder, Henry Clay Evans, and Henry M. Wiltse helped conquer Chattanooga during the war and soon recognized the town's potential for growth and industry. After the war, this group stayed behind to shape the political and economic destiny of the community.

At the close of Reconstruction, Chattanooga's northern industrialists overthrew the town's radical government and installed a moderate Republican regime which, with the support of black voters, dominated municipal politics for a

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[6]Jonathan M. Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge, 1978).

[7]Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill, 1990).

quarter century. Under their rule, Chattanooga became a "Republican Gibraltar" in the midst of the Democratic South. The party's hegemony, however, was not supported by all members of the community. Many residents resented the power held by the city's blacks. Still others objected to apparent domination of northern elites. As a result, Democratic factions flourished, and turmoil often characterized local elections.[8]

In the 1890s these Democrats united and, with the help of newly-passed Jim Crow laws, deposed Chattanooga's white Republican elite. Local Democrats then established a new city government which was dominated by reform-minded moderates. These men referred to themselves as "Mugwumps" and devoted their administration to the cause of good government. Once in power, Chattanooga's Mugwumps visibly reduced the amount of waste, fraud, and corruption in local government. In the process, they lowered taxes, increased city services, and upgraded the local infrastructure. Such improvements, however, were made at the expense of Chattanooga's blacks, who were often disfranchised in the name of municipal reform.

Northern industrialists also dominated Chattanooga's economy and helped transform the sleepy river town into a thriving industrial center. In this effort they received considerable assistance from Adolph S. Ochs, publisher of

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[8]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, October 14, 1884.

the *Chattanooga Times*. Ochs proved to be the city's greatest booster and he tirelessly promoted Chattanooga throughout the region and the nation. This in itself was not unusual. Many southern cities could claim boosters among their publishers and editors. Men such as Henry Grady, Walter Hines Page, and Henry Watterson championed the South and its advantages before the world.[9]

Ochs, however, was different from his colleagues in many respects. He was a Jew, born in Ohio, and raised by a liberal and free-thinking father. As a result, Ochs was often more moderate on political and social issues than other southern journalists. On the race question, for example, Ochs urged toleration and the *Times* consistently condemned lynchings and violence against blacks. Ochs was also devoted to municipal reform, and though he was generally pro-business, he usually sided with the public's interests over those of the town's industrial elite.

In other respects Chattanooga appears to have been more typical. Yet, the city still provides valuable insight into the difficulties of post-war southern urbanization. For example, the boom-bust cycles unleashed by rapid industrial expansion and reckless speculation are vividly demonstrated

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[9]For more information of these men see: John Milton Cooper, *Walter Hines Page: The Southerner as American, 1855-1918* (Chapel Hill, 1977); Harold E. Davis, *Henry Grady's New South: Atlanta, A Brave and Beautiful City* (Tuscaloosa, 1990); Joseph F. Wall, *Henry Watterson: Reconstructed Rebel* (New York: 1956).

in the town's volatile land market. Chattanooga's rise also demonstrates the importance of transportation, raw materials, and labor in the ultimate success of any urban center. In addition, the fierce competition which existed among southern cities is also visible in the region-wide race for capital and markets.

Foremost among Chattanooga's competitors was Birmingham. The Alabama city, established in a barren corn field in 1871, rose from obscurity to become one of the South's leading industrial centers. During the 1880s Birmingham and Chattanooga emerged as the leading contenders in the race for regional industrial supremacy. A fierce rivalry ensued, and although Chattanooga held the initial advantage, it eventually succumbed to Birmingham and its natural advantages.[10]

An examination of post-war Chattanooga also reveals many of the concerns of town leaders and urban residents in the late nineteenth century. Issues such as crime, public health and public morality all influenced city dwellers and often affected the course of municipal elections. State and national issues, such as prohibition, also stirred considerable debate in the community, and the local significance of these controversies is apparent as well.

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[10]For more information on nineteenth-century Birmingham see Carl V. Harris, *Political Power in Birmingham: 1871-1921* (Knoxville, 1977) and W. David Lewis, *Sloss Furnaces and the Rise of the Birmingham District: An Industrial Epic* (Tuscaloosa, 1994).

Finally, Chattanooga provides an excellent example of racial, sectional, and ethnic coexistence. In the decades following the Civil War, thousands of men and women from all parts of the nation and all corners of the globe converged on the Tennessee town seeking the same basic goals. Northerners, southerners, European immigrants and former slaves mingled together on the same muddy streets in their quest for opportunity, prosperity, and security. As they pursued their common dreams, however, their lives together were far from peaceful. Relations between the city's assorted populations were generally contentious and were, at times, even violent. Yet, despite a pair of lynchings and a few near riots, Chattanooga remained a place of hope. For there, at the doorway to the Deep South, black men became aldermen, Yankees became mayors, and a Jew from Ohio helped transform a community.

Chapter 1

The Spoils of War: Chattanooga to 1870

On December 25, 1918 a trio of Chattanooga's oldest and most respected citizens came together and, for the last time, drank a toast to their collective past. John B. Nicklin, Zeboim C. Patten, and T.H. Payne were all veterans of the Union Army and as they met on that holiday, as they had every Christmas since 1865, they no doubt thought of their fallen comrades. Yet as these men reflected on their lives, they also must have thought of Chattanooga and the city they had helped build. For even though each of these men had served in the northern army, they all played a significant role in the development of this southern city. Nicklin, for example, once served as the town's mayor; Patten was a leading local industrialist; and Payne founded and operated the city's oldest house of business. All three men came to the city as conquerors and yet, as they neared death, each was now considered a revered elder of the community.[1]

Elsewhere in the South, such prominence might have been unusual for a northerner. In post-war Atlanta, for example, less than one-fourth of the city's business leaders were

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[1]Zella Armstrong, *History of Hamilton County and Chattanooga, Tennessee* (2 vols., Chattanooga, 1931), 1: 443, 450, 457.

from the north. In Nashville northerners comprised only six percent of the local elite. In Chattanooga, however, just the opposite proved true. Here, northern elites tended to be the rule, rather than the exception.[2] The explanation for this phenomenon lies in the city's troubled past. Modern Chattanooga was built, in large part, by Union Army veterans and their Yankee peers. In the three decades following the Civil War, northerners dominated the city's economy and government and helped shape the town's social, racial and political institutions. Yet, despite the wealth, power and acceptance northerners found in the community, neither they, nor their southern neighbors, could ever forget their sectional differences, and the bloody conflict that brought the Union Army to Tennessee.

Chattanooga lies on a bend in the Tennessee River, near a natural opening in the Southern Appalachians. Surrounded by mountains and ridges, the river's banks formed a secure, temperate, and fertile plain well-suited for human habitation. Permanent white settlers came to the site in the

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[2]Doyle defined "Business leaders" as the "officers and directors of the major financial institutions, corporations, and commercial associations" and based his findings on 1880 city directories. According to these criteria, few of Chattanooga's southern residents qualified as "business leaders." All of the city's banks, for example, were owned and operated by northerners, as was the town's largest lumber mill. Similarly, of the eleven directors of the Roane Iron Company, only one came from the South. Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill, 1990), 89-91; *Chattanooga City Directory* (1879), 115-20.

early 1830s and established Ross's Landing, a trading post on the Tennessee River located near the foot of present-day Broad Street. The community thrived and in 1839 its occupants incorporated the settlement as the town of Chattanooga. Starting with just fifty- three families, the village quickly grew into a center for river commerce.[3] The development of the railroad furthered the town's progress. The city's first line, the Western and Atlantic, came to the town in 1850 and brought with it an immediate economic boom. Other lines followed and by 1860 Chattanooga was a vital link in the region's rail system.[4]

Known as the site "where cotton meets corn," Chattanooga served as the doorway to the Deep South. Whether by river or rail, much of the cargo passing in and out of the region travelled through the city. Warehouses overflowed with goods in transit, and freight sometimes spilled into public streets. Throughout the period, citizens retained strong social and economic ties to the Deep South. Many felt the city shared the "social, moral, religious, political, and commercial peculiarities" of the region. Such feelings became apparent in 1861 during Tennessee's secession crisis. Although most of East Tennessee remained loyal to the Union,

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[3]Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country, 1540-1976: From Tomahawks to TVA*, 3rd ed.(Knoxville, 1977), 108-13.

[4]James W. Livingood, *Hamilton County* (Memphis, 1981), 29-31.

Chattanoogans voted overwhelmingly to join the Confederacy. "We are in the South," one resident rejoiced, proclaiming "long live the South."[5]

Given the city's strategic importance, Chattanooga immediately became a center of military activity. The first Confederate troops arrived in late 1861 to protect the community from East Tennessee unionists. By 1863 the junction was a critical southern administrative center and supply depot. Soon it was also a target of northern forces. As Union armies moved through Tennessee that year, they increasingly turned their attention toward the city. Even Abraham Lincoln recognized the town's importance. "If we can hold Chattanooga and East Tennessee," he wrote, "I think the Rebellion must dwindle and die."[6]

In the fall of 1863 Union forces launched a major attack on the city, resulting in some of the bloodiest fighting of the war. Residents, terrified by the conflict and the prospect of Yankee rule, fled the city *en masse*. Most would never return. The battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga inflicted over forty-seven thousand casualties on both armies and resulted in a costly Union victory. Northern forces secured Chattanooga that November and thus

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[5]Charles Stuart McGehee, "Wake of the Flood, A Southern City in the Civil War, Chattanooga, 1838-1873" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1985), 62-78.

[6]*Ibid.*, 92-99, 113.

began a lengthy and lucrative occupation.[7]

The town came under the control of the Union's Army of the Cumberland. The few townspeople who remained noticed immediate differences among the northern troops. The Reverend T.H. McCallie, for example, noted that while Confederate troops were well mannered, their northern counterparts possessed "a rough and ready rudeness." He further noted that Union servicemen "decidedly" surpassed southerners in "industry and obedience" "The Confederate," he found, "did not like to work and was not as obedient to discipline as he should have been." McCallie's observations led him to conclude that the Yankee was the better soldier. "We soon perceived," he later recalled, "that there was strength, and tremendous strength in this northern army."[8]

Within weeks Chattanooga was transformed into a huge fortified military complex. As the gateway to the Deep South, the city was to be the staging point for Sherman's March into Georgia and South Carolina. A vast invasion force

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[7]Govan and Livingood, *Chattanooga Country*, 211-51; McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 120-30. Numerous works have been written on the battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga. Among the most recent are James Lee McDonough, *Chattanooga: A Death Grip on the Confederacy* (Knoxville, 1984); Peter Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes: The Battles for Chattanooga* (Urbana, 1994); Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Urbana, 1992).

[8]Reverend McCallie's memoirs were published in the *Chattanooga Free Press*, September 21, 1938. They can also be found in: Thomas Hooke McCallie, "An Early Family Record: The McCallie Family in Tennessee" (typesript, Univeristy of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1959).

assembled near the town, and virtually everything needed to supply and maintain this great army was readied. Army construction crews worked around the clock preparing a base for the coming campaign. Scores of new structures sprang up, including dozens of stockyards, barracks and warehouses. An impressive bridge across the Tennessee River was built to facilitate supply lines and miles of fortifications were erected to protect the vital community. Hospitals were built as well, in anticipation of coming casualties. Soldiers even raised the town's first fire station, and equipped it with a modern, steam-driven, army-issue pumper.[9]

Union personnel also established necessary manufacturing facilities, including a shipyard, a lumber mill, and numerous blacksmith shops. Northern crews constructed extensive rail facilities as well. Machine shops, pattern shops, and a car repair works were all built to maintain the army's rolling stock. Most importantly, military engineers erected a rolling mill in the town. The war had devastated the South's transportation system. Soldiers and sympathizers from both sides often disrupted train traffic by removing, heating and bending individual rails. Chattanooga's rolling mill, built at a cost of

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[9]James A. Hoobler, *Cities Under the Gun: Images of Occupied Nashville and Chattanooga* (Nashville, 1986), 127-52. For information on Civil War military hospitals see Glenna R. Schroeder-Lein, *Confederate Hospitals on the Move: Samuel H. Stout and the Army of the Tennessee* (Columbia, 1994) and George W. Adams, *Doctors in Blue: The Medical History of the Union Army in the Civil War* (New York, 1952).

$290,000, was designed to straighten and repair such tracks. Working at full capacity, the plant could produce fifty tons of rails per day. The facility, completed in April, 1865, allowed Union forces to rebuild needed routes without the time and expense of forging new rails.[10]

The operation of this sprawling military complex required hundreds of support personnel, including quartermasters, clerks, engineers, and physicians. One typical soldier was Henry Clay Evans, a clerk in the Quartermaster corps. Others included Hiram S. Chamberlain, a supply officer with the Second Ohio and Eli Wight, an army surgeon. Keen businessmen, these soldiers immediately recognized the economic potential of Chattanooga. One casually remarked that "Yankee spirit will make something of this place if the war does not cease soon."[11]

Northern troops also made note of the region's rich mineral resources. One Union officer theorized that local hills were "undoubtedly filled with iron." "The ore," he noted, "crops out so plainly that it is visible to all passers."[12] One such observer was John T. Wilder, a colonel from the Seventeenth Indiana. An experienced ironmaster,

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[10]Hoobler, *Cities Under the Gun,* 161; James F. Doster, "The Chattanooga Rolling Mill: An Industrial By-Product of the Civil War," *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 36 (1964), 45-55.

[11]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 141.

[12]*Ibid.*; John Beatty, *Memoirs of a Volunteer: 1861-1863* (New York, 1946), 242.

Wilder first became aware of East Tennessee's mineral deposits while leading his troops through Roane County, sixty miles north of Chattanooga. There, according to legend, he witnessed local women dying red cloth with the region's iron rich soil. A short time later he acquired an 1839 geologic survey of Tennessee and began compiling his own detailed notes on area resources. Based on his findings, Wilder purchased large tracts of potential mining land from cash-poor locals and undertook preparations for the post-war business era.[13]

Alongside Wilder and his comrades were thousands of newly-freed blacks. These former slaves, now refugees, drifted into Chattanooga on the heels of the Army of the Cumberland seeking food, freedom and protection. Sustaining and controlling the large number of freedmen posed a massive logistical problem for army officials. Most officers viewed the blacks as an unwelcome burden and a threat to military order and efficiency. Based on these beliefs, most freedmen were denied entry into Chattanooga and were instead assigned to camps across the river from town. There they built makeshift huts from war debris and lived under the watchful control of the Quartermaster Corps.[14]

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[13]William Howard Moore, *Company Town: A History of Rockwood and the Roane Iron Company* (Kingston, 1989), 14-15; Samuel C. Williams, *General John T. Wilder: Commander of the Lightning Brigade*, (Bloomington, 1936), 40-42.

[14]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 135-37.

Black refugees soon proved useful to the army, however, as a labor source. Able-bodied men were mustered into military service, and formed four regiments of United States Colored Troops (USCT). Others in the camp, including women and children, were pressed into service as well, performing "such labor as may be suited to their several conditions." As soldiers, freedmen fared little better than their slave kin. Considered unworthy for combat, Chattanooga's black troops were used exclusively as a work force. USCT men toiled long hours paving roads, mending tracks, and cutting timber. Blacks also worked in the town's military rail shops, including the rolling mill.[15]

Yet, despite their labors, black troops earned just eight dollars per month--half a white soldier's wage. This discrepancy reflects the racial attitudes of many northern servicemen, particularly those from the rural Midwest. One Illinois unit "scorned the thought of fighting to free the 'nigger,'" while other "western men" insisted "they were fighting for the Union and not for the negro." Such troops identified themselves politically as "Union Democrats" and often found themselves in agreement with their southern prisoners. One Confederate prisoner, for example, recalled that his captors "believed in slavery" and "would all go home" in protest if emancipation took place. Southern Democrats thus learned they still held common beliefs with

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[15]*Ibid.*, 137-39.

their Union cousins, a discovery which would prove useful in the party's post-war reconciliation.[16]

The close of the war in April, 1865, brought an end to Chattanooga's role as a military staging area. Within weeks of the Rebel surrender at Appomattox, military authorities began the process of demobilization. Officers discharged troops and most soldiers immediately left for homes in the North. In only a matter of weeks, the town's population dropped from over 13,000 to just 6,093.[17]

Federal facilities constructed for the war were disposed of during the demobilization. Some assets, such as the military bridge and the garrison's fire engine, were donated to the city, but most of the government's property was sold at auction. In charge of this liquidation was Henry Clay Evans, now a civilian clerk for the War Department. Just twenty-one, Evans was responsible for the disposal of millions of dollars' worth of federal property. Dozens of army warehouses, along with their contents, were sold to the public, often at bargain prices. Evans also disposed of the military's railroad shops and repair facilities in this manner. Even government livestock went up on the block; and for years following the war visitors to Chattanooga noted that virtually every horse in town had "U.S." burned on its

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[16]*Ibid.*, 140.

[17]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby Counties of Tennessee* (1887; reprint, Nashville, 1974), 868-69.

hindquarters.[18]

The jewel of the government auctions was the town's rolling mill and its sale generated considerable controversy. Valued at nearly three hundred-thousand dollars, the plant had been in operation just six months when it was advertised for sale in October 1865.[19] A bevy of government administrators, including General Ulysses S. Grant, pleaded with federal authorities to set a fixed price for the mill. These officials, having witnessed the low prices garnered by other government assets at auction, feared the facility might sell for a fraction of its real worth. One local bureaucrat even advised his superiors, "if the rolling mill is sold . . . the government will lose no less than $250,000."[20]

War Department officials, however, ignored such warnings and the rolling mill was auctioned off for a fraction of its value. The winning bid, submitted by John A. Spooner of Plymouth, Massachusetts, was just $175,000. The sale provoked a flurry of protests in Washington. President Andrew Johnson expressed his belief that the government was somehow cheated in the arrangement. Acting on this belief, Congress ordered an investigation into the sale and the War

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[18]John B. Seehorn, "The Life and Public Career of Henry Clay Evans" (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1970), 9-10; McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 146-47.

[19]Doster, "The Chattanooga Rolling Mill," 48.

[20]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 147.

Department dispatched a special agent to investigate the transaction. In the end, however, authorities uncovered no evidence of wrongdoing and found local administrators guilty only of poor business practices.[21]

Though investigators uncovered no evidence of collusion in the sale of the rolling mill, some federal employees did profit from the government auctions. Among these was Henry Clay Evans, the man appointed to supervise the disposition of army assets. While serving in this capacity, Evans purchased "a big sternwheel boat" for two-thousand dollars. Less than a month later he disposed of the same vessel for thirty-thousand dollars in "snug cash."[22]

Still others chose to take advantage of the political and economic chaos present in post-war Chattanooga. Rebel homes and farms in the city were confiscated and sold for back taxes, unpaid during the war. Properties were also seized under the pretext of repossession, as many mortgages had lapsed in the conflict. Still others resorted to legal action to acquire local assets, and T.H. McCallie bemoaned the wave of "harassing lawsuits" which were "brought against men who owned any property by men whom they had never injured."[23]

The availability of cheap property helped convince some

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[21]*Ibid.*

[22]Seehorn, "Life and Public Career," 14.

[23]*Chattanooga Free Press*, September 21, 1938.

northern soldiers to remain in Chattanooga following the war. Others stayed in hopes of business opportunities. The city's role in that conflict convinced many veterans of the town's economic potential. One later recalled: "We had been taught by the government of the United States, and of the Confederate states . . . that Chattanooga was the 'key to the South.'" "We believed it," he added, "and 'pitched our tents' and 'staked our claims.'"[24]

Together the veterans made grandiose plans for the future. "Our goal," one former soldier boasted, "is to build the largest inland city in the central South." Yet before them lay innumerable obstacles. Chattanooga and the surrounding countryside had suffered greatly during the war and occupation. By 1866 the region was "a barren waste, covered here and there, with ugly ditches, earthworks, forts and empty "sutler's shebangs." One observer remembered that there was "very little attraction to the human eye" in the once scenic town and noted "not a tree, shrub, stump and scarcely a blade of grass was to be seen."[25]

The unstable nature of post-war society also caused problems, as a wave of refugees and transients descended upon the community. "Crime was rampant," one resident recalled, and "for a time thieving and violence were open

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[24]*Chattanooga Times*, February 27, 1873.

[25]*Ibid.*

and defiant."[26] T.H. McCallie similarly complained that "a reign of terror prevailed in some neighborhoods."[27] Vice also remained a local concern. A legion of camp followers had followed the Union army into town, and although most left with the troops, other stayed to carve out an illicit career in the new city. Among them was a young Alice Cooper, who, in years to come, would be the city's leading merchant of "sin, debauchery, and shame."[28]

Development efforts were hampered still further by a massive flood which struck the city in March 1867. The deluge, which crested at 58.6 feet, was the greatest inundation ever recorded on the Tennessee River and struck with such suddenness that few residents had time to prepare for it. As a result, the disaster had the maximum destructive effect. Structures, including the town's only river bridge, were washed away. Rail facilities were damaged, businesses were destroyed and many homes were ruined beyond repair. Some factories located near the river simply vanished. At the height of the flood a steamboat

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[26]*Ibid.*, December 8, 1892. The December 8, 1892 edition of the *Chattanooga Times* was a special souvenir issue which discussed Chattanooga and its history at length.

[27]*Chattanooga Free Press*, September 21, 1938.

[28]*John Wilson, Chattanooga's Story* (Chattanooga, 1980), 128; *Chattanooga Times*, November 30, 1895; James B. Jones, "Municipal Vice: The Management of Prostitution in Tennessee's Urban Experience. Part II: The Examples of Chattanooga and Knoxville, 1838-1917," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 50 (1991): 110.

sailed down Market Street, attempting to pluck stranded citizens from the roofs of their homes.[29]

Yet residents soon recovered from the disaster and despite their hostile surroundings, northern entrepreneurs soon set about building a viable and prosperous community. Zeboim Patten and T.H. Payne opened a small store on Market Street; John B. Nicklin established a pharmacy. Xenophon Wheeler and Timothy Stanley, both Ohio officers, formed a law practice. Two other Ohio veterans, William P. Rathburn and Theodore G. Montague, founded the city's first post-war bank. Flush with optimism, the new city fathers advised others in the North to join them in their ventures. They sent countless letters to friends, relatives, and former comrades telling them of Chattanooga and its bounties. One discharged northern soldier received a telegram from his former superior simply stating, "Come to Chattanooga on the first train to go to work."[30]

At one point, local boosters even advertised for northern settlers. For a month a Chattanooga paper ran the following announcement: "WANTED IMMEDIATELY ANY NUMBER OF CARPET-BAGGERS TO COME TO CHATTANOOGA AND SETTLE." Prospective residents were further advised to "leave the

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[29]Govan and Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country*, 300-02; Tennessee Valley Authority, *The Watts Bar Project: A Comprehensive Report on the Planning, Design, Construction, and Initial Operations of the Watts Bar Project* (Washington, 1949), 34.

[30]Wilson, *Chattanooga's Story*, 130-33.

bleak winds of the North" and "place themselves on the high road to wealth, prosperity and power" amid the city's "vast mineral resources." The announcement further informed readers of the town's "mild and healthful" climate, its "fertile" soil, and its rail facilities, which were "unequalled in the world." Fears about the South were also allayed. "Those who wish to come," the ad assured, "will NOT BE REQUIRED TO RENOUNCE THEIR POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS TENETS, as the jurisdiction of the ku klux and other vermin does not extend over these parts."[31]

Persuaded by such pleas, Union army veterans continued to immigrate to Chattanooga, many of whom had served in the town during the war. Among these new arrivals was John T. Wilder, who returned to the city in 1866. Now retired from military service, Wilder moved south to resume his career as an iron manufacturer. He soon formed a partnership with two other ex-officers, Hiram S. Chamberlain and W. A. Rockwood. Together they formed the Roane Iron Company, an enterprise designed to exploit the iron resources first observed by Wilder in Roane County. A blast furnace was built near the deposits and a town, named for Rockwood, was established. Yet, although the operation was based in Roane County, Wilder made his home in Chattanooga. He was joined there by his family and Chamberlain, his partner and business

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[31]*Chattanooga Republican*, December 8, 1868.

associate.[32]

Also returning to Chattanooga was former quartermaster clerk Henry Clay Evans. Evans, equipped with twenty-eight thousand dollars in steamboat profits, was well prepared for an entry into the business world. Noting the damage inflicted on southern railroads during the war, Evans decided to become a manufacturer of rolling stock. In 1870 he established the Bromley and Evans Car Wheel Foundry. The business prospered and subsequently expanded into the Chattanooga Car and Foundry Company, of which Evans remained sole proprietor until 1917. Evans also gained partial ownership of another local railroad supplier, the Wasson Car Works and, because of his management skills, was named general bookkeeper of the Alabama and Chattanooga railroad. The appointment only served to further Evans' wealth and status, and he soon joined Wilder and Chamberlain as a member of the city's industrial elite.[33]

Also among this group was John C. Stanton, a flamboyant Massachusetts capitalist with an interest in rebuilding southern rail lines. In 1868 Stanton came to Chattanooga and purchased the troubled Wills Valley Railroad. The line, under construction when the war began, was an early attempt to link Chattanooga with the resource-rich hills of northern

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[32] Wilson, *John T. Wilder*, 42; Moore, *Company Town*, 14-23.

[33]Seehorn, "Life and Public Career," 15-16.

Alabama. The venture was never completed, however, and survived the conflict with just two engines, four freight cars, and fourteen miles of track. Undeterred, Stanton boasted of grandiose plans for the railroad and soon gained a number of prominent supporters. Local industrialists, eager to see the line completed, enthusiastically backed the scheme. Stanton also received considerable support from the Alabama state legislature, which granted him a two-million-dollar loan to finish the project.[34]

Stanton's undertaking, now dubbed the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad, provided much-needed city improvements. In addition to laying track, Stanton's company also constructed numerous facilities in Chattanooga, including rail shops, a depot, and a freight terminal. Employee housing sprang up around these structures, as did a grand new company-owned hotel, the Stanton House. Located at the southern end of town, this district became known as "Stanton Town" and quickly became the city's most vibrant neighborhood.[35]

The Alabama and Chattanooga also gave a boost to the local iron industry. The rolling mill, purchased by John A. Spooner at the close of the war, failed to live up to its owner's expectations. Unable to operate the facility profitably, Spooner joined forces with a syndicate of

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[34]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 210-16.

[35]*Ibid.*

northern investors headed by New York financier and politician Abram S. Hewitt. The new partnership, organized as the Southwestern Iron Company, assumed control of the plant in 1866. The group, however, proved only slightly better at managing the mill. The venture's chief problem lay in the South's lack of capital. although southern railroads possessed thousands of tons of damaged rails in desperate need of rolling, few companies had the funds to pay for such repairs. Some lines, in fact, were in such disrepair they were incapable of transporting tracks to and from Chattanooga.[36]

Lacking access to the South's supply of damaged rails, the plant was in danger of closing down. To prevent this, the company's directors authorized the construction of nine puddling furnaces. Completed in 1869, these hearths allowed for the production of pig iron, and ended the mill's dependence on damaged rails. They also provided the city with a local source of unfinished iron which, in turn, encouraged the fabrication of other iron goods locally. The Southwestern furnaces thus helped establish a thriving iron industry which would dominate the local economy well into the next decade.[37]

Manning the rolling mill, as well as Stanton's railroad work gangs, were Chattanooga's black residents. Freedmen

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[36]Doster, "The Chattanooga Rolling Mill," 50-51.

[37]*Ibid.*

dominated the city's labor force in the years immediately following the Civil War. In practical terms their lives had changed little since the conflict. although now civilians, most continued to work as they had in the USCT, often laboring at the same jobs under the same white administrators.[38] Living conditions remained poor as well, and most blacks still lived across the river, in shanty towns known as "Contraband" and "Africa."[39] A journalist who visited the site recalled seeing freedmen living in improvised huts "built of rails and mud" which were "not much more than a dozen feet square." There he observed a large number of blacks still unemployed. One resident informed the writer that "a heap is workin'," but added, "and a heap is lazin' around."[40]

To ameliorate the plight of local blacks, the American Missionary Association sent a representative, Ewing Ogden Tade, to Chattanooga at the close of the war. Tade, a Congregational minister and an outspoken abolitionist, soon emerged as a powerful advocate for the city's freedmen. He also undertook a number of projects designed to promote blacks economically and spiritually. Soon after arriving

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[38]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 209, 214-15.

[39]Govan and Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country*, 277; *Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby*, 868.

[40] J.T. Trowbridge, *The Desolate South: 1865-1866, A Picture of the Battlefields of the Devastated Confederacy* (New York, 1956), 132.

Tade founded Howard School, the city's first black educational institute, and Pilgrim Church, a biracial and nondenominational chapel. Tade also attempted to improve the former slaves' material lives. He organized a local branch of the National Freedmen's Savings and Trust Bank and even purchased land inside the city for black homes. The community, named "Tade Town" by grateful freedmen, housed dozens of families and was one of the city's first black neighborhoods.[41]

Tade's success earned him the respect of Chattanooga's blacks and even some radical whites. In recognition of his contributions to local education, Tade was named the city's first superintendent of public instruction by the town's Republican leaders.[42] Most whites, however, viewed his efforts with increasing enmity. T.H. McCallie, for example, complained of "ministers and missionaries from the North" who "inflamed the minds of the colored people."[43] To his superiors, Tade lamented: "Here I must live a sort of dog's life--hated, shunned, and despised because I am a 'nigger preacher.'"[44]

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[41]C. Stuart McGehee, "E.O. Tade, Freedmen's Education, and the Failure of Reconstruction in Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 43 (1984): 379-82.

[42]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby*, 841-42.

[43]*Chattanooga Free Press*, September 21, 1938.

[44]McGehee, "E.O. Tade," 384.

Such racial attitudes were typical among the town's whites, particularly those from the South. During the final months of the war, southerners again began taking up residence in Chattanooga. Few of these persons, however, had lived in the city prior to the conflict. Less than fifteen percent of the adult males living in Chattanooga in 1860 came back to the city following the war. Those who returned often found themselves in a foreign and sometimes hostile environment. One such Confederate veteran was David M. Key. Key, a distinguished local attorney, came back to Chattanooga in 1865 on the advice of friends. Penniless and in "wretched" health, he and his family subsisted on corn and potatoes while his wife sold family possessions to blacks for much needed cash.[45] Others returned to find their homes and property completely gone. "The town has been pretty roughly handled by the 'merciless Yankees,'" one visitor observed, noting "many of the finest residences . . . have been torn down and 'Yankee forts' erected in their stead." He thus concluded, "the way of the transgressor is hard, or at least it seems so in this case."[46]

Southerners soon began adjusting to life amidst their former northern adversaries. Most regarded the Yankees as opportunistic interlopers and viewed them with scorn and contempt. "From our window," one ex-Confederate commented,

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[45]Govan and Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country*, 273.

[46]Wilson, *Chattanooga's Story*, 123.

"we could see those who wore the blue promenading the streets." "It did not take us long, though," he sneered, "to size them up as quartermasters, commissaries, and hangers-on to an army far enough in the rear to hear no bullets whiz." Northern residents, for their part, seemed quite aware of the hostility. Xenonphon Wheeler, for example, recalled "the old members [of the community] and especially the women did not take kindly to the newcomers."[47]

The changes wrought upon the town proved so shocking that some southerners left town completely.[48] Others, however, remained and adapted to the new social and economic order. David M. Key, for example, began representing northern interests in court. Soon afterward, he was named a director of Wilder's Roane Iron Company and was elected district court judge.[49] Gustavus W. Smith, in charge of Southwestern's rolling mill, was a former Confederate general. Less distinguished southerners also found cooperation profitable, and hundreds of ex-Rebels found work in the city's Yankee owned enterprises.[50]

Yet, although former Confederates found acceptance in

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[47]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 156-59; *Chattanooga Times*, January 8, 1906.

[48]*Chattanooga Free Press*, September 21, 1938; Wilson, *Chattanooga's Story*, 111-27.

[49]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby*, 871, 956.

[50]Doster, "The Chattanooga Rolling Mill," 49.

the postwar community, they held little political power. Prior to secession, political power in Chattanooga was closely divided between Democratic and Whig factions, with the latter holding a slight edge in local elections. Though somewhat overadventurous in their quest for economic development, the town's pre-war leaders maintained a tradition of moderate and stable civil administration.[51] Following the war, federal authorities attempted to restore this type of government and, in October 1865, allowed the resumption of municipal elections. With the blessing of military officials, the town's few eligible voters elected a slate of moderate Unionists and redeemed Rebel sympathizers. The results were in accordance with federal policy at the time which, pursuant to the wishes of Presidents Lincoln and Johnson, provided for a forgiving and dispassionate reconstruction of the South.[52]

Such plans, however, were soon dashed, as Radical Republicans gained control of national and state reconstruction policy. At the forefront of this movement in Tennessee was the state's governor, Parson William G. Brownlow. Brownlow, a Unionist zealot, wanted to punish the Rebels whom he held responsible for the war. He was especially contemptuous of Chattanooga, since it was one of the few communities in East Tennessee to vote in favor of

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[51]Govan and Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country*, 169.

[52]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 165-167.

secession. As retribution, Parson Brownlow sponsored bills in the state legislature which severely altered Tennessee's political system. One such measure, the Franchise Act of 1866, essentially disfranchised all former Confederates and their supporters. Later that year, in legislation directed at Chattanooga, Brownlow and his supporters amended the city's charter and made most southern residents ineligible for public office.[53]

Ironically, as Brownlow disfranchised the state's Confederate veterans, he extended suffrage to Tennessee's black population. Radicals in Chattanooga wasted no time in enlisting black voters. Although freedmen were not formally granted the right to vote by the state until 1867, they participated, without discrimination, in the 1866 city canvass.[54] By allowing black votes, Brownlow's supporters effectively ousted the town's moderate leaders and facilitated the election of a more sympathetic city government. The new administration, consisting of a mayor and Board of Aldermen, was dominated by recent northern settlers. New Yorker Dudley Carr served as mayor, and was reelected in 1868. Carpetbaggers also comprised the majority

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[53]*Ibid,* 169-70; Thomas B. Alexander, *Political Reconstruction in Tennessee* (Nashville, 1950), 18-32, 98-113; James W. Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee: 1860-1869* (Gloucester, 1966), 97-102. For more information on the life and career of William G. Brownlow see E. Merton Coulter, *William G. Brownlow: Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands* (Chapel Hill, 1937).

[54]Govan and Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country*, 283.

of aldermen and in the three years of Radical rule, only one antebellum resident earned a seat on the powerful Board.[55]

Chattanooga's reconstruction governments were characterized by waste and fraud. Although some notable accomplishments were realized, especially in the area of public education, they came at great cost. Public corruption was rampant and municipal patronage was regularly abused. Republicans assumed all public offices, and Brownlow personally named Radicals to the powerful posts of chancellor, police commissioner, and registrar. Local elections were similarly tainted. One Freedmen's Bureau official, for example, denounced the 1867 city canvass as "a gross and flagrant outrage." During that election Hugh Alexander, the city's Commissioner of Registration and a Brownlow appointee, refused to register voters unless they pledged to support Radical candidates. Later, when polls had closed, Alexander and a team of Brownlow appointees counted ballots secretly, in a locked room, with no independent or opposition witnesses. Not surprisingly, Radical Republicans always prevailed.[56]

The excesses of the Radicals infuriated local Democrats. One northern Democrat, for example, recalled Brownlow as "a withering curse to his state" and deplored his "frightful abuses of power" and "the carnival of

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[55]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 171-72.

[56]*Ibid.*, 170-91.

stealing that went on during his mob government." The writer then credited the governor with doing "more to promote strife, civil feuds, and bloodshed in East Tennessee than all other causes."[57] Others remembered the impact of Brownlow's policies on Chattanooga. One resident called the period a "devilish revel" when the community was ruled by "a lot of irresponsible loafers and shysters who enforced no law but the will of a despotic master."[58]

Residents were especially angered by the presence of the Metropolitan Police. This body, established by the state legislature in 1866, was ostensibly formed to protect freedmen from racial violence in the post-war cities of Nashville, Memphis and Chattanooga. Locally, however, the squad proved to be more political than constabulary in nature. Its officers were all Radical sympathizers, appointed by state officials but paid by local taxpayers. The policemen's duties seem to have been only partially connected with law enforcement. In fact, only once did the force protect a black man from a white mob. Instead, the department's main function was the organization and registration of black voters.[59] The force, the Republican press admitted, was "necessary in Chattanooga to prevent the

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[57]*Chattanooga Times*, March 10, 1880.

[58]*Ibid.*, March 13, 1874.

[59]Govan and Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country*, 284-85; Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction*, 227-28; Alexander, *Political Reconstruction*, 172-73.

benighted residents of that little village from voting wrong."[60]

Chattanoogans chafed under the rule of the Metropolitan Police. One citizen later called the force "a gang of ruffians" who "robbed the people's substance."[61] Even local Republicans began to resent the squad's presence. Most onerous to city leaders was the expense of paying the officers. The department, with twenty-nine members, was far too large for a city of barely six thousand to support. Faced with this financial burden, city fathers withheld police salaries, thus sparking a lengthy legal battle. The town, represented by attorney David M. Key, argued that officers were essentially state employees and therefore were not the community's responsibility. The courts, however, found otherwise, and ordered the city to reimburse the state for twenty thousand dollars in back pay and expenses. The ruling created the city's largest single reconstruction debt and indignation over the Metropolitan Police led to bitter divisions in the Republican ranks.[62]

By the late 1860s support for the force became a divisive issue among local Republicans. Chattanooga's

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[60]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 184.

[61]*Chattanooga Times*, March 13, 1874.

[62]Govan and Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country*, 284-85; McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 183-85; Lon Eilders and Skip Vaughn, eds., *Centurion: A History of the Chattanooga Police Department* (1974), 29-30.

northern industrialists and businessmen were attempting to build long-term economic interests in the region and sought reconciliation with southerners. As such, they wanted no part in Brownlow's bitter policies. In 1867 northern immigrants broke with the state's Radical element and ran their own slate of candidates for city offices. Their ticket was composed primarily of Union Army veterans and pledged an end to the Metropolitan Police Force and other Radical policies. The moderates won at the polls, but their victory was largely ineffectual. Radical election officials refused to concede defeat and, in order to secure their offices, successful candidates had to promise continued support for Brownlow's policemen.[63]

Radicals again faced certain defeat in the 1868 city elections. Desperate to maintain power, party leaders appealed to the only untapped source of votes in town--Confederate veterans. In a dramatic reversal of policy, Radicals began registration of ex-Rebel voters. They also added former secessionists to their slate of candidates, a move clearly designed to guarantee southern support. The ploy apparently worked, for the Radical ticket, cleverly dubbed the "Franchise Extension Party," prevailed by a clear margin. Their victory, however, was short-lived, for in returning southerners to the polls, Radicals helped initiate

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[63]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 185-88; *Chattanooga Times*, December 6, 1914.

their ultimate downfall.[64]

Changes in Nashville soon brought Chattanooga's Reconstruction ordeal to a close. Just weeks after the 1868 city canvass, Parson Brownlow resigned the governorship to take a seat in the U.S. Senate. He was succeeded by Dewitt Senter, a moderate Republican who proved to be unpopular among the party's Radical element. During the 1869 gubernatorial campaign, Radicals refused to support Senter, and instead ran their own candidate, William B. Stokes. Faced with a divided party constituancy, Senter authorized the statewide registration of former Confederates to ensure his election. This ploy proved effective, for ex-Rebels voted overwhelmingly for Senter and helped him win a landslide victory.[65]

Senter's triumph, however, was short-lived, for the very southerners who supported his candidacy also elected a conservative, Democrat dominated state legislature. A short time later, in early 1870, these representatives sponsored a constitutional convention which repealed the bulk of Brownlow's post-war legislation. The Metropolitan Police soon disappeared from Tennessee's cities, and Chattanooga received a new charter, now free of Radical

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[64]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 189-90; *Chattanooga Times*, December 6, 1914.

[65]Roger L. Hart, *Redeemers, Bourbons, and Populists: Tennessee, 1870-1896* (Baton Rouge: 1975), 1-9; Alexander, *Political Reconstruction*, 215-25; Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction*, 200, 241.

influence. The time of redemption, it seemed, was at hand.[66]

Reconstruction left a powerful impression on Chattanooga politics. For one, it established a lasting tradition of Republican rule. Though Brownlow's Unionists were now out of power in the city, moderate Republicans soon took their place. Union Army veterans, supported by black voters, would dominate local government for the next two decades. Radical governments also set a precedent of patronage abuse, and politicians from both parties would continue this practice well into the 1890s. Finally, the Metropolitan Police Force left its own legacy. The politization of the police department persisted long after Reconstruction, and would become a point of contention among candidates in numerous campaigns to come. Yet, despite the challenges before them, most Chattanoogans looked forward with optimism. No longer burdened by war and slavery, residents shared a vision of peace and prosperity and as their long ordeal drew to a close, "the whole South breathed freer."[67]

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[66]Roger L. Hart, *Redeemers, Bourbons, and Populists*, 1-9; Alexander, *Political Reconstruction*, 215-25; McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 191-93.

[67]*Chattanooga Free Press*, September 21, 1938.

Chapter 2

"This Embryo City": Chattanooga's Post-war Economy and Society

On March 26, 1873, the *Chattanooga Daily Times* published a letter entitled, "How we are to build a city." Its author, a northern emigrant named J.S. Wiltse, had recently travelled throughout the country and visited many booming cities. Based on his observations, he now advised Chattanoogans on the proper way to build a modern, prosperous community: "It is not to be done by trade, by commerce, or even agriculture, but by manufacturing for the essential element." Wiltse emphasized the local importance of the iron and textile industries. "Our ores and our coal must be brought out and used and worked up into every article that is made of iron," he insisted, and "we must take the lead in making up the great southern staple--cotton." Although Wiltse stressed the advantages of economic strength, he was also very aware that a successful city had to be politically and socially viable as well. "We must prepare those things that in all other places attract money, enterprise, and people--schools, churches, law and order, good roads, and good public morals."[1]

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[1]*Chattanooga Times*, March 26, 1873.

Wiltse's letter must have found a receptive audience, for industry was clearly the order of the day in Chattanooga. The most promising, and most lucrative business at the time was the iron industry. Post-war industrial and railroad expansion created a huge demand for iron products. This was especially true in the South, where virtually the entire rail system had been destroyed during the war. This strong demand drove iron prices to unusually high levels; by 1872, for example, the average price for a long ton of pig iron was at an all-time high of $48.27. This was a full thirteen dollars over the previous year's price and even higher than in the last year of the war.[2] Local entrepreneurs, fully aware of the mineral resources of the surrounding region, were quick to recognize the lucrative potential of this market, and thus iron manufacturing soon became the town's chief enterprise.

The city's largest iron manufacturer was the Roane Iron Company, operated by General John T. Wilder. Wilder, a trained ironmaster and a native of New York, first became aware of East Tennessee's mineral deposits while serving in the region as a Union officer in the Civil War. After the war, Wilder teamed up with another Union veteran, Captain Hiram S. Chamberlain, and established the Roane Iron Company in Rockwood, Tennessee. There, with the help of numerous

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[2]*Historical Statistics of the United States* (2 vols., Washington, 1975), 1: 599-600.

northern investors, Wilder built the South's first coke-fired blast furnace and in his first year produced an average of fifteen tons of pig-iron daily. Doubtless encouraged by this early success, Wilder soon expanded his operations to include Chattanooga by merging with Abram Hewitt's Southwestern Iron Company.[3] This consolidation gave Wilder control of the city's lucrative rolling mill and caused the Roane Iron Company to be Chattanooga's greatest economic asset. It also made Wilder, who moved to Chattanooga with his family in 1872, a powerful local figure.[4]

Under Wilder's direction, the foundering rolling mill operation was soon revived. Using inexpensive and abundant scrap rails, along with newly-puddled iron from Rockwood, Wilder was able to manufacture iron rails at prices low enough to compete with much larger northern iron producers.[5] The success of the rolling operation soon led to a major expansion of the iron works, and by 1872 it had added twelve new furnaces and a puddling mill to the Chattanooga facilities. The plant soon became the town's largest employer, using an average of 225 workers a day, but sometimes employing as many as five hundred, or one-fourth

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[3]Morrow Chamberlain, *A Brief History of the Pig Iron Industry of East Tennessee* (Chattanooga, 1942), 6-7.

[4]William Howard Moore, *Company Town: A History of Rockwood and the Roane Iron Company* (Kingston, 1989), 22.

[5]Chamberlain, *History of Pig Iron*, 7.

of Chattanooga's working population.[6] Roane Iron was also responsible for a rise in Chattanooga's population, as Wilder brought in many new residents to work and manage the expanding ironworks.

Like many other northern industrialists, Wilder and his associates preferred to employ northern immigrants as skilled workers and managers. "After the war," Chamberlain reported, "all skilled labor in our line was, of course, brought in from the North." Wilder also excluded southerners from management positions, preferring instead to use former administrators from the Union army. For some highly specialized workers, such as puddlers, Wilder had to go even farther, importing these workers from England, Wales, and Saxony.[7]

Southerners were also employed at the ironworks, but usually only as manual laborers. Although some skilled workers earned as much as five dollars per day, the pay for most local workers was considerably less. Northern businessmen openly discussed Roane Iron's "very low wages" which ran as low as one dollar per day. To make matters worse, low-wage workers often found themselves in debt to a company store where they bought necessities on credit

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[6]Charles Stuart McGehee, "Wake of the Flood, A Southern City in the Civil War, Chattanooga, 1838-1873" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1985), 207.

[7]*Ibid.*, 209; Moore, *Company Town*, 32-33.

between paydays.[8] Such establishments generally charged higher prices than conventional stores but were preferred by many wage earners for their convenience and easy credit. Yet the more workers patronized company stores, the less independent they became, and many workers found themselves virtually indentured by debt to their employer.[9]

One way in which Wilder was able to keep wages low and maintain control over his workers, particularly white southern workers, was through the extensive use of black labor. Blacks had worked in the rolling mill since it opened during the war and Wilder continued and even encouraged the practice when he took over operations. "As far as unskilled labor is concerned," Chamberlain once noted, "we will always use colored men." Though generally hired "for heavy work around the mill," black workers occasionally rose to well-paying skilled or semi-skilled positions.[10] One such worker was D.T. Edinburg, who came to Chattanooga in 1870 and a short time later found a job on a construction gang. Soon thereafter he was promoted to yard foreman at the plant and eventually became assistant master mechanic. Another freedman, B.F. Whiteside, began at the rolling mill in 1867 as a common laborer but later worked as a gas generator and

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[8]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 208-09.

[9]I.A. Newby, *Plain Folk of the New South* (Baton Rouge, 1989), 220.

[10]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 209.

finally as a heater for one of the large furnaces.[11]

The use of black workers in the Roane Iron mill was a practice soon emulated by other local northern industrialists. Their motives in using and promoting black workers, however, were neither altruistic nor progressive. Although a few fortunate blacks were promoted to well-paying jobs, the vast majority of black workers in the region worked for lower wages than whites. The presence of black workers in both skilled and unskilled jobs served as a powerful reminder to white workers of the precarious nature of their own employment. Few unskilled white workers were willing to risk a strike or a union, knowing that they could be replaced at any moment by a less expensive black worker. On one occasion when white workers did threaten a strike, remorseless Roane managers replaced them with black laborers. "We discharged every man we had about the mill," Chamberlain reported, "and put the colored men . . . into every place."[12]

The extensive use of black workers by northern industrialists, however, was not without some risks, for

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[11]J. Bliss White, *Biography and Achievements of the Colored Citizens of Chattanooga* (Chattanooga, 1904), 56, 66.

[12]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 217-18. Iron manufacturers in Birmingham also employed blacks as a means of controlling skilled white workers. For more information on black labor in Birmingham see John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (Cambridge, 1982) and Henry M. McKiven, *Iron and Steel: Class, Race, and Community in Birmingham, Alabama, 1875-1920* (Chapel Hill, 1995).

employers faced the prospect of alienating the local community. So many blacks worked at the Roane rolling mill that the local press sometimes referred to it as "the sombre hued rolling mill" and the "black cloud rolling mill."[13] Using a large number of black workers could also prove costly to factory owners with political ambitions. Henry Clay Evans, for example, was publicly criticized for using black labor in his railroad car factory and sometimes found himself out of favor with white working class voters.[14]

Wilder's success in taking advantage of cheap labor and local resources soon inspired others in the area to enter into the iron business. By 1876 Chattanooga boasted a handful of ironworks capable of producing a combined output of well over one hundred twenty tons of pig iron daily.[15] In addition to these operations, Chattanooga also benefitted from iron manufacturers in neighboring communities. The largest of these, located twenty miles west of Chattanooga in South Pittsburg, was the Southern States Coal, Iron, and Land Company. Founded by a syndicate of English industrialists in the late 1870s, it operated two blast furnaces capable of manufacturing seventy tons of iron daily.[16] This level of production, combined with that

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[13]*Chattanooga Evening News*, May 1, 1889.

[14]*Chattanooga Times*, October 10, 1885.

[15]*Ibid.*, October 31, 1876.

[16]Chamberlain, *Pig Iron*, 17.

already in place in Chattanooga, brought nationwide recognition to the region as a major iron producer. Even the trade publication *Iron Age* opened an office in Chattanooga. In the 1878 Fourth of July parade, the lead float carried the caption, "Cotton was King," which was followed by another with the legend, "Iron is King Now."[17]

The strong growth of the iron industry soon enticed other manufacturers to the community. Many of these had strong ties to the iron business and located in Chattanooga to gain easy access to cheap pig iron. By the late 1870s, Chattanooga could claim among its businesses two carriage factories, a pipe company, a pump company, a boiler factory, and numerous machine shops.[18] The largest of the new enterprises, the Wasson Car Works, grew to become one of the town's largest employers. With 250 workers, this factory was capable of producing eight railroad freight cars and sixty-four railroad car wheels per day and provided a welcome addition to the local economy. These manufacturers were soon joined by other businesses which had little to do with the iron foundries. For example, a tannery, a cotton textile mill, a sawmill, and even a cigar factory and a distillery soon bolstered the local economy. With the addition of these establishments, Chattanooga acquired the origins of a

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[17]Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country, 1540-1976: From Tomahawks to TVA* (3rd ed., Knoxville, 1977), 298.

[18]*Ibid.*,298.

balanced, diversified economy.[19]

The positive economic climate present in Chattanooga at the time certainly encouraged much of this economic growth, but other factors also played a significant role. For one, the local government sometimes made concessions to factories willing to locate in Chattanooga. The city, for example, offered a ten-year tax exemption to any "manufacturing establishment using steam power."[20] Manufacturers could also expect cooperation from the city government in other matters as well. An examination of city ordinances shows that on many occasions city fathers were quite willing to move, or even close streets to accommodate the needs of a particular establishment. On two occasions in 1873 portions of Fort, Boyce and Carter streets were given to the Wasson Car Works. Later, in 1876, sections of three more streets were ceded to the Roane Iron Company[21]

The city also continued to publicize itself in an effort to attract new industry. City boosters promoted Chattanooga's strong northern element and tried to portray the town as a hospitable environment which welcomed northern money. When an Alabama newspaper ran a blatant anti-northern editorial directed at the owners of the Tennessee Coal and

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[19]*Chattanooga Times*, October 31, 1876.

[20]*Ibid.*, February 28, 1873.

[21]Herbert B. Case, comp. *Charters, Municipal Laws and Ordinances of the City of Chattanooga from 1838-1882* (Chattanooga, 1882), 247-48, 259-60, 233-34.

Iron Company, the *Chattanooga Times* advised these industrialists that they could never "overcome the oppressive weight of the disastrous despotism of political crime and folly, resting like a nightmare on the heart of all of the southern states"; therefore, they should instead "come to Chattanooga." "We are all getting along very comfortably here," the paper claimed; "we welcome everybody who will help us build up the city, and don't try to scare them with nightmare visions engendered of a bad digestion."[22]

New industries added to the city's rapid population growth. In 1870 Chattanooga was still a relatively small town. With a population of only 6,093, it was much smaller than Nashville with almost 26,000 residents or even Knoxville, with 8,682.[23] The town grew rapidly though, and by 1880 had more than doubled in population to 12,892. This made Chattanooga the third largest city in Tennessee, surpassing Knoxville's census of just 9,693.[24] In spite of this rapid growth, Chattanooga maintained the image and the reputation of being a rural river town. An 1875 photograph of Market Street reveals a rather desolate

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[22]*Chattanooga Times*, March 13, 1873.

[23]*Census of Population, 1870* (Washington, 1870), 262-65; John B. Knox, *The People of Tennessee: A Study of Population Trends* (Knoxville, 1949), 43-58.

[24]*Census of Population, 1880* (Washington, 1880), 332-35.

community of dirt streets and wooden sidewalks flanked by churches and dry-goods shops. A brief stay in the city left one unimpressed Ohio visitor with memories of a "one mule street car, a wheezy steam boat, and a rather slow set of people."[25] Perhaps more revealing is the fact that Chattanoogans viewed the same mule drawn carriage with "wonder and amazement."[26]

Even the federal government made note of the town's provincial nature. In an 1880 assessment of the city, a Census Bureau report praised the town's "rapid development." At the same time, however, it observed that Chattanooga was without theatres or public parks and had "no public buildings of any consequence."[27] Yet despite these deficiencies, most Chattanoogans took pride in their city and its growth. They saw the city as "the key to the South" and predicted it would one day be the South's largest inland city.[28] Residents also took pride in its accomplishments. "Chattanooga's sketch is a miniature of the whole South," one editor asserted; "the good Lord, and Time, and ourselves have done wonder in these fifteen years."[29] Visitors to the

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[25]Charles E. McGuffey, ed. *Standard History of Chattanooga, Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1911), 101.

[26]*Chattanooga Times*, March 3, 1895.

[27]*Report on the Social Statistics of Cities, Southern States* (Washington, 1887), 137-38.

[28]*Chattanooga Times*, February 27, 1873.

[29]*Ibid.*, December 14, 1879.

town often agreed with this perception. One writer from Gadsen, Alabama proclaimed, "a glimpse of this embryo city convinced us that Chattanooga is destined to be *the* trade center for this region," and in the future "the progress of the city will be accelerated beyond calculation."[30]

Such rapid growth could not be accomplished without residents encountering some problems. At times the population of the town grew faster than the city's capacity to cope with it. One difficulty endured by many in the 1870s was a lack of adequate housing. Those of means, of course, had no difficulty securing good homes. Northern industrialists like John T. Wilder, Hiram Chamberlain, and Henry Clay Evans built imposing residences on Cameron Hill overlooking the city.[31] For working-class families, however, the search for affordable shelter was often frustrating. "There is still a great want of dwellings . . . to accommodate small families and small finances," the *Times* lamented in 1873. The shortage became so great that some employers resorted to building their own housing for their workers.[32] Working-class neighborhoods, such as "Puddler's Row," which housed workers from the rolling mill, became

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[30]*Ibid.*, April 11, 1872.

[31]John Wilson, *Chattanooga's Story* (Chattanooga, 1980), 179.

[32]*Chattanooga Times*, March 28, 1873.

common near the major industries in town.[33]

As if housing problems were not enough, hard work, long hours and low wages all served to make life for most laborers even worse. By 1880 the average local skilled worker earned only $2.23 per day. Unskilled workers made, on average, just a dollar per day. Although Chattanooga workers generally earned more than other iron workers in the state, their daily pay was below the national average of $2.59 and far less than the $3.15 paid in Pittsburgh mills.[34] Even worse were times when these men made nothing at all. When the demand for iron was low, most mills shut down either partially or completely until prices or demand rose again. On average, iron mills in Chattanooga were closed three months out of the year, leaving these workers to fend for themselves. Perhaps because of such poor pay, some families sent children out to work as well. Although child labor was not as common in Chattanooga as in many other southern communities, it did exist. In 1880 the census reported eighty-five boys under age sixteen working in the local ironworks and one-fourth of the workers at the Chattanooga Plow Company.[35]

Long hours also characterized life for local wage-

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[33]U.S. Bureau of Census, Tenth Census of Tennessee: 1880, Manuscript Schedules.

[34]*Census of Manufacturing, 1880* (Washington, 1880), 766-67.

[35]*Ibid.*, 766, 366.

earners. The average adult iron worker in Chattanooga could expect to work about sixty-seven hours per week, with few holidays and no modern benefits.[36] Such conditions were characteristic of industrial labor in general at that time, and workers in other industries could expect similar conditions and wages. Chattanooga machine shop workers, for example, had an average annual wage of just $292 and the average local lumber worker made a mere $221 per year.[37]

The lives of workers became even more difficult during the Panic of 1873. This economic crisis, brought about by reckless railroad speculation, devastated the national economy for more than five years. Thousands of businesses failed, over half of the nation's railroads fell into receivership, and iron furnaces across the country closed down.[38] The panic hit Chattanooga especially hard, since most local industries were young and quite speculative. Investors and creditors quickly withdrew support for local industries, and numerous firms closed their doors. Difficulties forced the Roane Iron Works and the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad, both major employers, to cease

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[36]*Ibid.*, 761-67.

[37]*Ibid.*, 366.

[38]Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, 1988), 512-514; For more information on the Panic of 1873 see E. Ray McCartney, "The Crisis of 1873" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1935) and Charles P. Kindleberger, *Manias, Panics, and Crashes: A History of Financial Crises* (New York, 1978).

operations. Other businesses, like the Vulcan Iron Company, went completely bankrupt and were sold at chancery.[39] "We have had more than a Panic" the *Times* proclaimed, "it has been a sweeping irresistible financial storm." Unemployment soared, and as winter approached the city took the unprecedented step of providing relief for the poor. Jobless men were put to work on city streets until the panic subsided, and the city was able to sustain this segment of the population.[40]

Perhaps because of these harsh conditions, industrial workers in post-war Chattanooga lived rough and sometimes violent lives. Drinking, gambling, and fighting were not uncommon. Saloons were plentiful in Chattanooga and many stayed open around the clock, often in open defiance of the law. By 1878 Chattanooga, a town of less than ten thousand residents, had thirty-three saloons, outnumbering churches two to one and schools by a ratio of almost six to one.[41] Local distilleries and breweries also helped ensure an affordable supply of spirits for the city. At one point, one local brewer became so bold as to offer a special "family beer" which he described as "exhilarating and health producing."[42] Many times violence went hand-in-hand with

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[39]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 240.

[40]*Chattanooga Times*, November 12, 1873.

[41] *Chattanooga City Directory* (1878), 92.

[42]*Chattanooga Times*, August 12, 1894.

alcohol consumption and saloons were often the scene of violent confrontations between workers.[43]

Even working class recreation was sometimes violent. In January of 1879, for example, the *Times* reported on a much attended wrestling match between Will "the Butcher" Rider and Bill Pritchett held in "John Kleeson's slaughter pen." Afterwards, spectators were then treated to another staged fight between "Ike Sanders' Newfoundland and John Kleeson's Bulldog." Following this bizarre double billing, won deservedly by the Newfoundland and "the Butcher," the *Times* reported smugly that "the crowd enjoyed the sport and returned to town in the best of humor."[44]

Blood sports were not the only vice in Chattanooga, and other illicit diversions continued to thrive. Particularly disturbing to many residents was the continued proliferation of prostitution. The city had been a haven for prostitutes during the war and afterwards many of these women simply stayed on, establishing residences in the predominantly black neighborhood around Florence and Helen Streets. "Gradually," one long-time resident observed, "those white sporting women began to move into that district by first renting property and then buying a little piece of property, and putting up a little shanty of their own, until they have

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[43]*Ibid.*, November 4, 1879.

[44]*Ibid.*, January 24, 1879.

quite a settlement of sporting persons."[45] One such woman was Alice Cooper. By the 1870s, she had graduated from camp follower to madam and was rapidly making a name for herself as the "wickedest of her sex in Chattanooga."[46]

By the end of that decade Cooper and others like her had successfully established the Florence and Helen area as Chattanooga's *de facto* "red light" district. They seem to have had little trouble attracting customers. The boom-town atmosphere, along with Chattanooga's position as a transportation hub, provided these women with an ample supply of male patrons and the brothel owners with a steady stream of prospective employees. Police were constantly battling madams and their agents for recruiting young women. These recruits were almost always simple country girls who were new in town, with little money and even less understanding of municipal vice. One such girl, for example, was approached in the train station by a madam who "tried to entice her to go to Soddy with her." There, she informed the girl, "she could have lots of fun with the miners" along with "all the money and fine clothes she wanted."[47]

Chattanooga's rowdiness in the late nineteenth century

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[45]James B. Jones, "Municipal Vice: The Management of Prostitution in Tennessee's Urban Experience. Part II: The Examples of Chattanooga and Knoxville, 1838-1917," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 50 (1991): 110.

[46]*Chattanooga Times*, November 29, 1893.

[47]*Ibid.*, October 8, 1893.

was matched only by its diversity.[48] Chattanooga boasted a population drawn from across the country and around the world. Like other American cities in the late nineteenth century, Chattanooga had a fair share of European immigrants. Many of these individuals were brought in to work in the iron mills, but others came simply looking for opportunity. Some were no doubt brought to the city by the railroads, which made "special efforts" to attract "skilled, industrious, and sincere immigrants" to Chattanooga.[49] In 1880 foreign-born residents comprised 5.6 percent of the city's population, but made up almost eighteen percent of the town's voters.[50] The largest number of these immigrants came from Germany.[51] So many Germans lived in Chattanooga that the city soon had a pair of ethnic newspapers, *Der Deutsche Pioneer* and the *Chattanooga Volkfreund*. Even the

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[48]The topic of rowdiness and violence in other boom towns is addressed in Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns* (Lincoln, 1968) and David W. Rose, "Prostitution and the Sporting Life: Aspects of Working Class Culture and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Wheeling," *Upper Ohio Valley Historical Review* 16 (1987): 7-31.

[49]*Chattanooga Times*, December 31, 1876.

[50]Other southern cities had similar ethnic communities. In 1880, for example, foreign immigrants comprised seven percent of Nashville's residents, about four percent of Atlanta's citizens and 5.5 percent of Knoxville's population. *Census of Population, 1880* (Washington, 1880), 447-56; *Chattanooga City Directory* (1878), 97.

[51]*Chattanooga City Directory* (1878), 97.

Times occasionally ran announcements in German.[52] Local Germans also held church services in their native language and organized several clubs which staged concerts, plays, and "sociable hops" for the community. In addition to serving social functions, these clubs, churches and newspapers also gave the city's Germans a political voice, which they sometimes used to gain patronage or other political favors.[53]

The largest group of newcomers to the region did not come from Europe, however, but from the North. The immigration of northerners into Chattanooga continued unabated during the 1870s and the town's northern-born voting population swelled to about twenty-three percent.[54] During the early 1870s the "carpetbaggers" sent word home of their success and thereby enticed a second wave of Northern emigration to the city. Among this latter group were men like Newell Sanders and Dwight Preston Montague. Sanders, a native of Indiana, came to Chattanooga in 1878 on the advice of John T. Wilder. Just twenty-eight years old, he arrived with seven hundred dollars and, on Wilder's suggestion,

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[52]Henry M. Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga" (2 vols., unpublished typescript: Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, 1916) 2: 162; *Chattanooga Times* January 30, 1893, November 3, 1874.

[53]*Chattanooga Times*, September 23, 1877.

[54] *Chattanooga City Directory* (1878), 97.

began making plows in a stable behind his house.[55] Montague came in 1875 after his graduation from Cornell University to join his brother, T.G. Montague, a local banker. Countless others followed a similar route south so that by 1880, the Census Bureau reported the population was "about equally divided between settlers from the northern and southern states."[56]

Chattanooga soon became a virtual extension of Ohio and Indiana. Local papers often carried as much news and gossip from these states as they did Chattanooga information. Frequently they ran advertisements from northern boarding schools and businesses. The primarily northern First Methodist Episcopal Church prospered and built an imposing, stained glass, stone edifice on McCallie Avenue. Northern expatriates even organized an "Indiana Club" to help bring fellow Hoosiers to Chattanooga.[57] It is little wonder that an old resident of the town told a visiting journalist, "Nine-tenths of Chattanooga has been owned by the northern people for years; men from Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New York have borne its burdens and made the fight. This is really a Yankee city set down on Dixie."[58]

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[55]Wilson, *Chattanooga's Story*, 171; Zella Armstrong, *History of Hamilton County and Chattanooga, Tennessee* (2 vols., Chattanooga, 1931), 1: 387-88.

[56]*Social Statistics of Cities*, 136.

[57]*Chattanooga Times*, March 17, 1886.

[58]*Ibid.*, January 30, 1887.

Many immigrants came to Chattanooga because of the large northern element there or because they felt it was a southern city where they would be welcomed. As noted by other historians, Chattanooga leaders liked to portray the city as "neutral ground" where all were welcome regardless of birthplace or past affiliations. General Wilder, with some exaggeration, once told a group of visiting northern journalists, "Chattanooga is not a Southern city or a Northern city. One's politics, religion or section is not called into question here. This is the freest town on the map. All join together here for the general good and strive, to a man, for the upbuilding of the city."[59]

Yet it seems inconceivable that such bitter enemies, men who had literally tried to kill one another a few years earlier, could now live and work together in peace and harmony. Although Chattanooga officially proclaimed itself to be free of regional animosity, beneath the surface sectional hostility and resentment remained and occasionally surfaced. In May of 1877, for example, a Confederate memorial was dedicated in the city amid much conciliatory hoopla. A grand parade was held in honor of the Rebels, and northern veterans paid tribute to their fallen foes.[60] Other residents, however, proved less respectful of the Confederate dead and the monument soon became a frequent

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[59]*Ibid.*, January 11, 1884.

[60]Govan and Livingood, *Chattanooga Country*, 307.

target of vandals. Dismayed southern veterans announced that both a wall and a fence had to be built around the memorial to protect it. General Wilder, fearing the revival of old animosities, stepped in and assumed responsibility for the project. Wilder personally paid for repairs to the memorial and, along with other northern industrialists, built the protective fence and wall. In doing so they eased tensions and no doubt endeared themselves to many local southerners.[61]

Even in social circumstances southerners and northerners seemed to have difficulty getting along. When Ellen McCallie's cousin moved to Chattanooga from her native Mississippi, she found her new neighbors to be less than friendly. "Cousin Mary Boyle has a beautiful home now," McCallie observed, "but she has moved into a freezing neighborhood. They are all Northern people."[62] Local children also expressed sectional animosity, perhaps learned from their parents. Grace McCallie, age fifteen, complained to her older sister about how her northern classmates said "harsh or mean things about the South." Once, Grace reported, "May Baer said that southern people were so bitter

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[61]*Chattanooga Times*, February 10, 1878. For more information on Confederate memorials and their role in the post-war South see Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens, 1980).

[62]Timothy P. Ezzell, "The McCallie Letters: Portrait of a Chattanooga Family in the 1880s and 1890s" (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1988), 156.

and mean and wished that she lived up North"; the writer added, "I said I wished so too." Interestingly, Grace asserted that Annie Wilder, John T. Wilder's daughter, was "the nicest republican in school."[63] General Wilder instilled in his children his belief in reconciliation, and no doubt saw in their future, the free and prosperous city he envisioned.

One group in Chattanooga seemed to have little place in Wilder's dream. Black Chattanoogans on the whole enjoyed little of the prosperity the town had to offer. Although a few fortunate blacks moved into good-paying jobs, most still worked for low wages as common day-laborers. Most white employers still believed that blacks were incapable of, or undeserving of, good-paying jobs. Hiram Chamberlain of the Roane Iron Company emphasized this position clearly when he declared, "We find that there is little in the mechanical department for colored men to do or that they can do."[64] Others felt that blacks simply need to evolve more before taking on skilled labor. As late as 1887 the *Times* opined that "The negro, kept at the rudest of labor for generations, may, under freedom and with education, become mechanical in his tastes and tendencies, but he is not so now."[65]

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[63]*Ibid.*, 44.

[64]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 221.

[65]*Chattanooga Times*, February 12, 1887.

The chief problem with blacks, according to the *Times*, was a lack of maturity. To many white Chattanoogans, blacks lacked the development and education to make responsible decisions. At one point the *Times* even criticized the city's impoverished blacks for not investing in local industries. "Chattanooga has the best set of niggers in the country" the paper quoted a "Cincinnati Israelite" as saying. "They work and make money and spend it all on cheap goods--the kind I sell. No investment in mines or mills or furnaces for them." Blacks were also depicted as a burden for local taxpayers. "They spend it as fast as they make it, and let the whites pay for their poor and schools." The *Times* finally concluded that the black population was "a detriment," but "only because there are about four thousand too many of them" which served to "keep away an equal or greater number of whites."[66]

Unwanted and underpaid, most local blacks led difficult and desperate lives. One city official summed it up thus: "It is bad living, hard work, and poor pay."[67] Housing was almost always substandard. Although a few lucky blacks managed to secure company-owned homes, most were relegated to the fringes of the city where they lived among the factories and in the floodplain. Even there they were not always safe. During the 1870s, for example, most black

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[66]*Ibid.*, March 16, 1885.

[67]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 222.

families were forced out of the Fort Wood community of "Tade Town" when the original Confederate owners reasserted their property rights. Rebel property holders even forced Howard School to move. Chattanooga's only black bank failed soon afterwards, and any material progress made by the freedmen since emancipation seemed lost.[68]

Local blacks not only had to contend with low wages and poor schools, but also with the very real threat of violence. As elsewhere in the South, violence and threats of violence were often used to intimidate blacks. In 1873 black residents were warned by an anonymous Republican that they "had neither the discipline nor the numbers to successfully antagonize the white men of the city" and that they would eventually learn this "if they live long enough."[69] Occasionally such threats erupted into real violence, such as in 1878 when a white gang attacked a black minister, beat him, and threw him down a well.[70] In at least one case in the 1870s, racial violence resulted in murder.

Chattanooga's first lynching took place on the night of October 7, 1873. The victim was a man named Eldridge Merrill, described by the *Times* as someone who "had borne a good character sobriety and industry" and "was not known to

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[68]C. Stuart McGehee, "E.O. Tade, Freedmen's Education, and the Failure of Reconstruction in Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 43 (1984): 385-387.

[69] McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 228.

[70]*Chattanooga Times*, March 14, 1878.

have an enemy here or elsewhere." Merrill was most likely targeted for attack, because he was "cohabitating with a low white woman commonly known as 'Dink' Norris." On the night of Merrill's murder, a group of unknown white men approached him at the shanty he shared with Norris. They induced Merrill to go to one of the local saloons with them, where "he was plied with drugged whiskey." From there, they took him to a nearby farm and hanged him from a corn crib. Later that night the perpetrators paid another visit on Dink Norris, this time to take her to the crime scene and show her the body of her dead lover.[71] The following day the *Times* reported the gruesome details of the lynching and added a note of dark irony: "There is a house of ill fame within two hundred yards of the scene of the tragedy, and night before last it appeared to be a field night at this crib, as well as a sad night for Merrill at the corn crib."[72]

As in most southern lynchings, the men who murdered Eldridge Merrill were never found or prosecuted. Dink Norris refused to identify the men who came for her that night. She claimed she did not know the unmasked killers, but added that "had she known them she would dare not tell their names, because they would be certain to kill her if she

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[71]*Chattanooga Times*, October 9, 12, 1873.

[72]*Ibid.*, October 9, 1873.

did."[73] The city made a conscious effort to try to forget the incident as soon as possible. No mention was ever made in the local press about an investigation; and after the coroner's inquest, the incident was scarcely mentioned at all. One explanation for this lack of attention was offered outside of Chattanooga, in the *Knoxville Chronicle*. In a report of the incident, the *Chronicle* accused local leaders of trying to suppress news of the lynching in order to avoid scaring off a group of "Indiana men now in the city seeking iron property." Although the Chattanooga press denied these accusations, they also discounted any racial motives in the murder, stating there was no "kukluxery" involved in the killing. Thus, in Chattanooga, economic development took precedence over justice.[74]

Blacks in Chattanooga could also expect to suffer more than whites on account of disease. Reports show that black neighborhoods had twice the mortality rate of those inhabited by local whites.[75] Blacks suffered especially during 1873, when Chattanooga was struck by its first major epidemic. Asiatic cholera came to Chattanooga in July of that year and instantly sent a panic through the town. The

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[73]*Ibid.*, October 12, 1873.

[74]*Knoxville Chronicle*, quoted in the *Chattanooga Times*, October 14, 1873.

[75]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 221. Similar conditions also existed in Nashville, where black mortality rates were consistently double those of the white population. Doyle, *Nashville in the New South*, 84.

cholera was probably introduced to the city by the railroad, for the disease's first victims were railroad workers. Within a few days the affliction spread and affected most parts of the city. City officials blamed the rapid progress of the disease on the sale of fruits and vegetables of poor quality. One writer referred to the epidemic as "watermelon cholera" and stated that a case was not reported where the victim had not eaten the fruit. City officials tried to stop the spread of the disease by prohibiting the sale of fruits and vegetables, but not before alerting local merchants of the ban.[76]

Grocers, in an attempt to cut their losses, dumped their existing stock of produce on the market at cut-rate prices before the ban took effect. As a result, "every negro had a watermelon or head of cabbage" and the disease spread faster than ever, especially among the town's poor blacks.[77] In a space of just twenty-five days the disease killed eighty-nine recorded victims. Sixty-one of the victims, over two-thirds of the total, were black. City officials attributed the high death toll to the poor living conditions of the blacks and the inadequate health care they received. Their needless suffering was criticized by the *Times*, which stated that such "did not speak well for Christian

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[76]*Chattanooga City Directory* (1878), 102-03.

[77]*Ibid.*

charity."[78]

Most Chattanoogans were more concerned with the economic, rather than the moral repercussions of the epidemic. Residents had long believed that the climate and topography of their community protected it from dangerous diseases and for years local boosters had promoted the city as a place free from disease. When word of the cholera epidemic got out, many in town feared that Chattanooga would gain a reputation as an unhealthy place and therefore its remarkable growth would be slowed. News reports tended to reinforce these apprehensions. When the *Atlanta Constitution* reported on the sickness, the *Times* complained of the article's impact on the city. "People in Atlanta," it lamented, "were actually afraid to see one of our citizens."[79] In response to this, and to prevent further damage to the city's reputation, the paper then set out to suppress further discussion of the cholera epidemic.

Those who wrote about or discussed the disease publicly were attacked and vilified in the paper as a "natural born lot of dashed fools that utterly lack knowledge and the sense that attains and retains it." The *Times* also referred to the accused "croakers" as "a mitigated lot of nuisances individually and a stupendous lot collectively." It was especially critical of fellow newspapers which it accused of

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[78]*Chattanooga Times*, July 15, 1873.

[79]*Ibid.*, July 27, 1873.

scaring "timid folk" with their "mean selfishness, love of sensation, [and] moral and physical cowardice." Such men, the *Times* insisted, "had not a substratum of manhood to build on" and would do best if they "would take something and die" or "take a rope and end their narrow, contemptible, selfish lives."[80]

In 1878 disease once again threatened Chattanooga's future. The yellow fever epidemic of that year was a tragic event which killed thousands across the South. It began in late spring in New Orleans, where it was most likely brought by refugees from Cuba's Ten Years' War. The disease killed thousands in New Orleans before making its way up the Mississippi Valley. Over five thousand victims died in Memphis, approximately one-fourth of the twenty thousand southerners who succumbed to the fever; another hundred thousand fell ill.[81]

Most Chattanoogans, however, were not alarmed by the disease's progress. Their city, after all, had never experienced an outbreak of the fever. No one knew the true cause of the disease, but it was generally believed that the city's high elevation and cool evenings somehow made it

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[80]*Ibid.*, July 9, 1873.

[81]John H. Ellis, *Yellow Fever and Public Health in the New South* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1992), 38- 59.

immune to the illness.[82] Feeling so blessed, residents became enthusiastic supporters of relief efforts for stricken communities. Even in the fall of 1878, on the very eve of the Chattanooga outbreak, the *Times* boasted of the three thousand dollars raised to help the disease-plagued cities of Vicksburg and Memphis.[83]

Chattanooga also generously welcomed visitors from stricken communities. Because of the city's reputation as a safe haven from yellow fever, numerous refugees came into town in the summer and early fall.[84] No one really took notice when, in late August, one such visitor from Memphis died of yellow fever. Over the next few weeks, resident and refugee alike began to succumb to the disease. Local officials, not wanting to alarm residents or cause undue damage to city commerce, denied any outbreak of yellow fever. Instead they declared that the deaths were due to "malignant malarial fever" or "pernicious, inflammatory bilious fever."[85]

By late September, though, the true nature of the disease could no longer be hidden or ignored. A sense of

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[82]Khaled J. Bloom, *The Mississippi Valley's Great Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878* (Baton Rouge, 1993), 12-25, 190.

[83]*Chattanooga Times*, September 11, 1878.

[84]*Ibid.*

[85]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby Counties of Tennessee* (1887; reprint, Nashville: Charles and Randy Elder, 1974), 887.

panic seized the community and many residents fled the city. "Get out! You who can," urged the *Times*; and thousands heeded this ominous directive. Those who could afford to leave town soon fled to refugee camps or to other cities. Only the poor, the devout, and the devoted stayed and they were advised to move to "high, clean, and well drained ground."[86] By late October, at the height of the epidemic, only 1500 residents were left in Chattanooga. The usually rowdy and bustling community took on the appearance of a ghost town.[87]

Those who remained attempted to help the sick as best they could. They were aided by considerable outside help. Other communities seemed eager to return the assistance given to them by Chattanooga in the past. For example, doctors from neighboring communities came to the town to assist local physicians and Dominican nuns took over the local hospital. Sisters Bernadin and Angela operated under the local priest's instructions that there should be no religious distinctions among the afflicted.[88] The city also received thirty-four thousand dollars in much needed relief

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[86]*Chattanooga Times*, October 4, 1878.

[87]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 98-99.

[88]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby*, 887.

funds from cities as far away as Paris, France.[89] Despite these efforts, however, the death rate continued to be very high. At its worst point, ninety percent of the yellow fever cases proved to be fatal.[90] Faced with such devastation, residents turned to prayer for relief. Local Catholics held a novena and for nine days prayed for the frost which would end the scourge.

By the time the first frost finally arrived in early November, the epidemic had taken a devastating toll. A total of 366 Chattanoogans had died in the epidemic, an especially large number considering that most residents had fled the city. Unlike the earlier cholera epidemic, the majority of the fatalities in 1878 were white. Included among the dead was the town's mayor, Thomas J. Carlile, who became one of Chattanooga's first civic heroes.[91]

Equally damaging to the city was the plague's economic impact. At one point the city spent a thousand dollars a day just on relief. Yet this was nothing compared to the commercial and industrial losses brought on by the disaster. One official estimate placed losses as high as a half

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[89]*Chattanooga Times*, October 4, 1878, December 8, 1892. The December 8, 1892 edition of the *Chattanooga Times* was a special souvenir issue which discussed Chattanooga and its history at length.

[90]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 98-99.

[91]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby*, 887.

million dollars.[92] This figure seems particularly high when one considers that the total valuation of the city at the time was less than four million dollars and total tax revenue for the city was just over forty-two thousand dollars.[93]

Chattanooga's reputation also suffered during the epidemic. No longer seen as a refuge from disease, the city was now viewed with fear and apprehension, especially in the rural communities surrounding it. Residents of neighboring towns acted with great apprehension towards Chattanoogans. Handbills sent out by town merchants were picked up with fire tongs and newspapers were read at arms length, then burned. Townspeople were sometimes turned away at gunpoint. One elderly woman even found herself abandoned in a sealed and locked room by her son-in-law, presumably from fear of disease. Even local elections were marked by fear. When the time came to nominate candidates for city and county offices, rural delegates refused to attend any meeting in town. The conventions had to be held in the countryside, and even then city delegates were segregated from the rest of the assembly by a "safety zone" of "several hundred feet."[94]

The 1878 epidemic devastated communities across the

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[92]Govan and Livingood, *Chattanooga Country*, 324.

[93]*Chattanooga City Directory* (1878), 97.

[94]Govan and Livingood, *Chattanooga Country*, 323; *Chattanooga Times*, October 5, 1878.

South and the future of many cities seemed uncertain. The economy of Memphis, for example, waned as the number of manufacturing jobs fell by thirty percent. By decade's end Memphis had the lowest rate of growth of any major city in Tennessee, at just three percent.[95] Yet in the midst of this adversity, Chattanooga managed to survive. People's faith in Chattanooga and its future was so great that, in spite of its tarnished image, almost everyone returned to town after the first frost. The city was initially slow to rebuild but was helped along substantially by a brief boom in iron prices. Iron which sold for as low as ten dollars per ton in 1878 sold for as high as twenty-five dollars per ton in 1879. This economic impetus helped the city recover rapidly and Chattanooga actually grew by about a thousand residents in 1879.[96] Within a year of the disaster Chattanooga was once again a boom town and its incredible recovery led many to believe it was unstoppable. The Yankee dream of a southern Pittsburgh had survived the worst and seemed on the verge of becoming very real. Yet other challenges continued to face the community and residents soon learned that governing a city was no easier than building one.

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[95]Bloom, *Epidemic of 1878*, 229-32.

[96]*Chattanooga Times*, November 8, 1892.

Chapter 3

"Fireworks and Flapdoodle": Municipal Government in the 1870s

During the 1870s as northern entrepreneurs transformed Chattanooga into a viable industrial city, they also faced the challenge of creating an effective, yet cooperative city government. Maintaining political hegemony was very important to these industrialists. They had not risked their youth and capital building the city, only to have it wrested away from them by other interests. Government, such men believed, was one way of protecting their enterprises. At the same time, city politics also afforded these men an opportunity to promote their interests. Local legislation and city services became useful tools in their quest for economic development. Yet Chattanooga's leaders soon found that running a city was considerably more complicated than operating a business. The needs of the governed did not always meet with the desires of the governing class and many times in the decade conflict arose over important local issues. As the decade wore on, northern elites slowly lost their grip on the city as events and forces began to take Chattanooga out of their hands.

In many ways city government of the 1870s still resembled the government of the 1850s. The 1869 city charter

made only minimal changes in local government. Structurally the prewar and postwar governments were essentially the same. Chattanooga was still governed by a mayor and a board of eight aldermen. The mayor was elected by the city at large, but held little real power. He presided over meetings of the aldermen and supervised city departments but had no authority over them and could not hire or fire city employees. Instead, these powers were reserved for the Board of Aldermen. This body, composed of two aldermen from each of the city's four wards, controlled all aspects of local government. In addition to the duties mentioned, the Board of Aldermen also passed all local ordinances, collected and allocated all city revenues, and managed virtually every municipal department.[1] This powerful body remained virtually unchanged and unchallenged during the 1870s. The only change of note came in 1872, when city fathers added a fifth ward to accommodate the growing community.[2]

Although the city government changed little since before the war, the parties vying for power within it changed considerably. Municipal politics grew more complicated with the development of three distinct political groups. At the forefront of these was the Democratic party.

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[1]*Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892. The December 8, 1892 edition of the *Chattanooga Times* was a special souvenir issue which discussed Chattanooga and its history at length.

[2]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby Counties of Tennessee* (1887; reprint, Nashville: Charles and Randy Elder), 859-60.

Although regional cities such as Nashville and Knoxville sometimes elected Republican candidates, the Democratic party remained the dominant force in southern urban politics. Throughout the Deep South, in cities like Birmingham, Atlanta, and Memphis, Democrats went virtually unchallenged.[3] Chattanooga proved to be no exception to this trend and maintained a substantial number of Democratic voters during the 1870s. Yet southern Democrats were not always a cohesive group. Disagreements over the issues often led to factions within the party, especially at the local level. In Nashville and Birmingham, for example, the temperance question divided local Democrats.[4] During the 1870s Chattanooga's Democrats, divided by regional and racial issues, split into two competing groups: Bourbons and Mugwumps.

Many of Chattanooga's Democrats were so-called "Bourbon" Democrats. These Bourbons were conservative southerners, devoted to white supremacy and hostile to the influence of strong northern interests. Their goal was to

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[3]For information concerning late nineenth-century politics in these cities see the following: Harold E. Davis, *Henry Grady's New South: Atlanta, A Brave and Beautiful City* (Tuscaloosa, 1990), 55-94; Don H. Doyle, *Nashville in the New South: 1880-1930* (Knoxville, 1985), 121-42; Carl V. Harris, *Political Power in Birmingham: 1871-1921* (Knoxville, 1977); Kathleen C. Berkeley, *"Like a Plague of Locusts": From an Antebellum Town to a New South City, Memphis, Tennessee, 1850-1880* (New York, 1991), 211-241.

[4]Doyle, *Nashville in the New South*, 131-35; Harris, *Political Power in Birmingham*, 189-96.

"redeem" the South in the eyes of the nation, rescue it from carpetbagger domination, and restore the proper social and racial order. As such, these Chattanoogans tended to resent the presence of blacks and northerners in local government. They were often allied with the state Democratic machine and worked closely with state politicians to restore power across the state to native southerners. At the forefront of these men locally was Judge Hugh M. Whiteside, a relic of antebellum Chattanooga and one of a handful of prewar Chattanoogans to rise to postwar prominence. Throughout his public career, Whiteside would be closely tied to Bourbon politicians in the state government and would often lead their efforts to increase Bourbon power in Chattanooga.[5]

In addition to the Bourbons, a second and more distinctive group was composed of northern Democrats, along with a few southern liberals. These Democrats referred to themselves as "Mugwumps," a term usually associated with reform-minded Republicans. Though probably originally intended as an insult, Mugwumps soon accepted this name with pride. One of the town's leading Mugwump residents was John E. MacGowan, editor of the *Chattanooga Times*. Of the label, he later wrote: "The Democrat or Republican who will not surrender conscience, judgement or intelligence, all sense of right and honor when the machine demands such abasement,

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[5]For more information on postwar state politics see Roger L. Hart, *Redeemers, Bourbons, and Populists: Tennessee, 1870-1896* (Baton Rouge, 1975).

is a Mugwump." He declared, "So what was, and is intended as a stigma and a mark of contempt comes to be a badge of honor and certificate of the most useful citizenship."[6]

Mugwumps differed from the Bourbon Democrats in that they tended to be quite moderate on many issues. Though they generally endorsed the concept of party unity, on certain issues they could be fiercely independent in their thinking and voting. For one, they seldom raised or supported sectional issues. Naturally, since the group was largely composed of northern Democrats, the Mugwumps were much more receptive to the city's Yankee element. Mugwumps accepted and even encouraged northern investment in Chattanooga.

Mugwumps could also be more moderate when it came to the race question. Though few of these men would have acknowledged blacks as equals, they did recognize blacks' citizenship and expressed a willingness to live in cooperation with them. "The talk of segregation is nonsense" the *Times* insisted in 1873: "The people don't desire it, no matter how ardently it may be advocated by the politicians." The paper further argued, "Instead of bettering the races, it [segregation] would seriously injure the whites and probably ruin the negroes."[7] On another occasion the *Times* attacked race laws in neighboring Alabama, thus: "Class legislation, legislation in favor of races or colors, is as

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[6]*Chattanooga Times*, April 3, 1887.

[7]*Ibid.*, July 31, 1873.

inconsistent with a pure and honest republic as aristocracy protected by law." The unnamed author concluded with this prediction: "The spirit of justice has not yet taken full possession of our people. Yet the era of good will, peace, harmony, and good government is coming. And those who cry aloud for class legislation will be saved from their own theories in spite of themselves." As for Bourbons, he speculated, "They will become pretty fair Democrats (We use the word in its broadest sense) about two hundred fifty years hence, should they live so long."[8]

Clearly these were not Democrats from a typical southern city. Yet Chattanooga's political landscape was made even more distinct by the presence of another political force, the Republican party. As in Nashville, Chattanooga's Republicans remained an active and powerful political force long after Reconstruction.[9] In part this was due to the large number of northern immigrants and freedmen in the city, but the persistence of the local Republican party was also due to changes within the organization. During Reconstruction, many local Republicans realized that the punitive measures undertaken against former Confederates by radical politicians were detrimental to the economic development of the region. Most local Republicans had long-term economic interests in the community, and they sought

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[8]*Ibid.*, August 14, 1873.

[9]Doyle, *Nashville in the New South*, 136-137.

reconciliation with their former enemies as a means of protecting their investments. In doing so, most Chattanooga Republicans broke with the Radicals during Reconstruction, and instead adopted a moderate, conciliatory approach to the South. Their moderate policies created a level of acceptance in the community, and allowed them to coexist with southerners in a sometimes hostile environment.[10] As one party supporter noted, "now that the war is over, [we] desire to have peace and an honest and friendly Union, in fact as well as in name."[11]

Yet despite their moderate rhetoric, Republicans found few converts among the local white population. Their main white supporters continued to be northern immigrants along with a handful of local scalawags. Though the party claimed some of the most influential men in the city, it still represented a fraction of the entire population. By 1878 northern whites comprised just over twenty percent of the voting population.[12] In coming years, as Chattanooga grew and more of the population was drawn from the immediate region, the proportion of white northern voters decreased even more. As a result, Republican leaders had to rely

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[10]Charles Stuart McGehee, "Wake of the Flood, A Southern City in the Civil War, Chattanooga, 1838-1873" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1985), 183-98.

[11]Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country, 1540-1976: From Tomahawks to TVA* (3rd ed., Knoxville, 1977) 285.

[12]*Chattanooga City Directory* (1878), 96.

increasingly on black voters to achieve and maintain political power. Freedmen became an essential part of Republican politics, for without them no one associated with the party stood a chance of winning a local election.

Fortunately for local Republicans, Chattanooga's demographics and city government were ideally suited for their needs. Throughout the late nineteenth century, the rate of black population growth was consistent with white population increases, and blacks usually comprised about forty percent of the total population. By 1878 Chattanooga, with a total population of 11,488, had 3,947 black citizens.[13] Just as important to local politicians was the way in which the black population was distributed in the city's wards. The ward boundaries, as defined by the city charter of 1851, remained for the most part intact through the 1870s. These boundaries, first drawn when Chattanooga was a small river town, extended from the center of town in four directions, effectively dividing the city into fourths.[14] When a fifth ward was added to the city in 1872, it was more or less drawn alongside the existing wards (see

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[13]*Chattanooga City Directory* (1878), 96; Chattanooga's black population was comparable to those of other regional cities. In 1880, for example, almost thirty-eight percent of Nashville, thirty-two percent of Knoxville, and forty-four percent of Atlanta was black. *Census of Population, 1880* (Washington, 1880), 447-56.

[14]*Chattanooga City Directory* (1870), 25.

Figure 3.1).[15]

Since the black population tended to live in marginal and low-lying areas surrounding the entire town, each ward had a substantial black population (see Table 3.1). The fifth ward, the city's newest and most rural district, had the lowest proportion of blacks at twenty-seven percent. Other wards had a greater percentage of black residents, including the fourth ward, which was almost half black. Perhaps more significant was the number of eligible black voters in each ward. These numbers also tended to be quite high, especially in the first and fourth wards where blacks made up over forty percent of the voting population.

Chattanooga's large black population, combined with the broad distribution of blacks among the city's five wards, enabled white Republican politicians to win offices with just a fraction of the total white vote. Relying on black voters, these former northerners could usually prevail in city-wide or ward elections. Not surprisingly, carpetbaggers continued to dominate local politics throughout the 1870s. Democrats won the mayoral election just three times during the decade. In 1873, in the midst of the economic panic and on the heels of the cholera epidemic, the city elected Dr. Philander Sims, a popular local physician, over Hiram S.

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[15]*Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892, *Chattanooga City Directory* (1880) 17.

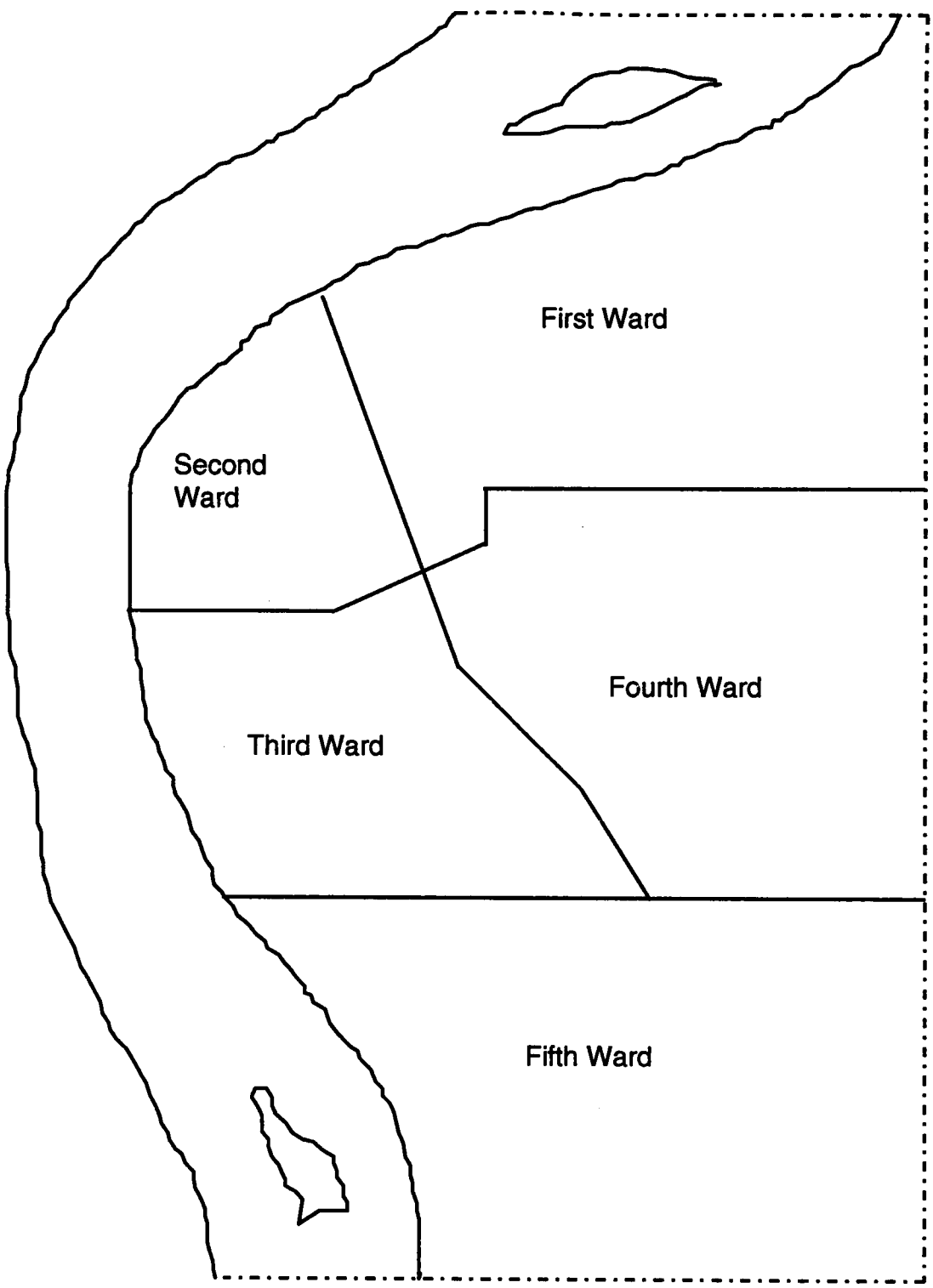

Figure 3.1. Chattanooga Ward Boundaries, 1880.

City Limits - - - - - - - - Ward Lines ————

Source: *Chattanooga City Directory* (1880), 17.

Chamberlain, a relative newcomer to town.[16] Two years later, in 1875, the Democrats succeeded again by electing Tomlinson Fort, a very popular local resident.[17]

Table 3.1

Blacks as a Percentage of Ward Population
Chattanooga, 1876

	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
Total Ward Population	2035	1434	2111	2038	1776
Number of Black Residents	882	429	768	947	477
Percentage of Black Residents	43%	30%	36%	46%	27%
Total Voting Population	469	514	585	488	434
Number of Black Voters	193	130	202	224	118
Percentage of Black Voters	41%	25%	35%	46%	27%

Source: *Chattanooga City Directory* (1878), 96. The voting population is determined by the number of adult males in each ward.

Democrats fared better in the 1878 city election, held in the immediate aftermath of the yellow fever epidemic. With much of the city either dead or seeking refuge

[16]*Chattanooga Times*, November 21, 1873.

[17]*Ibid.*, November 23, 1875.

elsewhere, Democrats elected both a mayor, Jesse T. Hill, and a majority of the powerful Board of Aldermen. For a year, Democrats thus gained control over the city's government. Yet this was an unusual election, taking place at an exceptional time and the results did not reflect a significant shift in party loyalties. Though Democrats enjoyed success in the wake of disaster, they remained a minority in city politics.[18]

Although white Republicans maintained their political hegemony in the city in the 1870s, black Republican candidates were not as successful. Despite the fact that blacks made up a substantial portion of all the wards, in no ward did they comprise a majority of voters or residents. Thus, though blacks could often ensure an election for a white candidate, they lacked enough votes to elect a black candidate on their own. Black candidates therefore could only be elected with the consent and support of the white dominated Republican party. As such, Republicans of both races developed something of a mutually beneficial political relationship. Blacks would continue to support white Republicans in city elections, and in return the white Republican leaders would nominate and support a handful of black candidates. According to this arrangement, blacks were never elected to city-wide offices, but were regularly elected to the Board of Aldermen. This was especially true

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[18]*Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, November 24, 1878.

in the fourth ward, which became a black stronghold in city politics with a virtual "black seat" on the Board of Aldermen.[19]

Black aldermen, when elected, seemed to have had little influence on public policy, however. The city government was dominated by white Republicans and it tended to reflect their concerns and interests. Republican rule in the city was, for the most part, characterized by two guiding principles: fiscal conservatism and a strong desire to protect and promote business interests. The first of these principles was a necessity in post-war Chattanooga, for the war destroyed the local economy and emptied the city's coffers. The dislocation of many residents also served to disrupt the city's dwindling tax base severely. In addition, the city also found itself strapped in the years following the war with nearly $100,000 in losses associated with the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad. As a result, revenue shortages were a constant problem for postwar administrations.[20]

These financial difficulties became even more acute in the late 1860s, after the flood of 1867 struck the city. The flood created a need for labor and supplies which far exceeded available funds in the city treasury. In order to

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[19]Nancy J. Potts, "Unfulfilled Expectations: The Erosion of Black Political Power in Chattanooga, 1865-1911," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 49 (1990): 112-13.

[20]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 45-47, 210-14.

meet these demands, as well as other financial obligations, the city began to issue its own currency, called "scrip."[21] By 1869 scrip was the official medium of exchange of the city government. In that year the Board of Aldermen passed a city ordinance requiring that virtually all city expenditures, including all labor employed in public works, be paid in scrip. In an attempt to maintain the value of the currency, the city government also required that city taxes, except for the school tax, also be paid in city scrip.[22]

For about three years the city managed to stay financially afloat by relying on scrip for city expenses and by printing new scrip when revenues fell short. During this time scrip managed to maintain its value and remained roughly on par with the dollar. During the Panic of 1873, however, the value of scrip dropped sharply to less than half its face value. Scrip depreciated to an average value of forty to fifty cents to the dollar, but sometimes dipped as low as twenty-five cents in value.[23]

The decline of scrip values placed even more hardship on city finances. Since the city required all taxes be paid in scrip, taxes collected were, in reality, only worth about half their assessed value. At the same time, the city had to

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[21]*Chattanooga Times*, November 14, 1875.

[22]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox and Shelby*, 837.

[23]*Chattanooga Times*, January 27, 1895.

pay city workers and city expenses in scrip at highly inflated prices. City laborers, for example, who would normally work for one dollar per day, had to be paid two dollars in city scrip. Even then the money was practically worthless, since most local merchants refused to accept it. Workers often found that their wages could buy neither food nor clothing in local stores.[24] City officials often had to pay a huge discount when purchasing supplies locally with scrip, sometimes paying as much as forty dollars in scrip for a ten-dollar purchase. In many cases, city fathers simply had to make such purchases out of pocket. The Board of Aldermen, for example, sometimes had to take up a collection among themselves prior to public meetings simply to purchase coal to heat their chambers.[25]

The city's scrip problems were compounded by the presence of a "ring" of scrip speculators. This so-called ring would buy scrip at a fraction of its face value from local laborers and merchants throughout the year. The ring would hold the scrip until city taxes were due, then sell it back to the public at roughly ninety cents on the dollar. The citizen, required by law to pay taxes in scrip, had no choice but to pay these inflated prices for the normally

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[24]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox and Shelby*, 837.

[25]*Chattanooga Times*, January 27, 1895.

worthless scrip.[26] The scrip ring became a source of great concern to city officials. For one, since the speculators were virtually the only people in town who would accept scrip, they were able to manipulate the price of scrip and keep its value low. At the same time they also caused considerable mistrust and resentment of city officials. Many prominent residents were involved in the scrip ring and many local politicians, including a former mayor, were tied to the speculation by the press. As a result, ordinary Chattanoogans became convinced that scrip was created and maintained by local politicians simply to line their own pockets.[27]

These feelings of resentment and mistrust soon began to manifest themselves politically. Scrip became a major political issue in the city, especially among the working class. In 1874 German voters demanded an end to scrip use, insisting that it robbed "the laborer and the city employee of his just, hard-earned wages, the profits of which are intended to wander only into the pockets of a few capitalists."[28] Another resident condemned those "who wish to pay labor in the street in rags worth forty or fifty

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[26]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox and Shelby*, 837-38.

[27]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 182-83.

[28]*Chattanooga Times*, November 11, 1874.

cents on the dollar."[29] Such anger was probably the deciding factor in the 1875 city election when Tomilinson Fort, a Democrat and an outspoken opponent of scrip, was elected mayor.[30] The following year, city attorney H.B. Case ruled that the issuance of scrip was both illegal and unconstitutional. The Board of Aldermen immediately returned the city's finances to a cash basis, but the town's problems with scrip continued. Some $280,000 in scrip remained in the hands of angry speculators, and for the remainder of the decade the city would spend considerable time and money trying to buy back the outstanding notes.[31]

The scrip debacle placed a further strain on city finances and left little money for other expenditures. As a result, city services and municipal improvements were all but unheard of in the 1870s. Of particular concern to most Chattanoogans was the lack of adequate streets. Less than nine percent of the city's streets had any sort of paving and citizens constantly bemoaned the condition of the town's dirt thoroughfares.[32] This proved especially true after a

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[29]*Ibid.*, November 17, 1874.

[30]*Ibid.*, November 16, 23, 1875.

[31]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox and Shelby*, 838.

[32]Other southern cities also possessed poor streets. In 1880, for example, just seventeen percent of Memphis' streets were paved and only three percent of Atlanta's roads were improved. *Report on the Social Statistics of Cities, Southern States* (Washington, 1887), 137, 143-44, 157-62.

heavy rain. One resident complained: "after every shower the whole town is a mud puddle, waiting for the wind and sun to dry it up and make going about walking, not wading."[33] Another griped that Market Street was "a hopeless quagmire, relieved only by the small ponds on its surface."[34] Conditions were even worse on side streets, which the *Times* contended were no better than "back woods bridle paths."[35]

City streets also suffered from a dangerous lack of decent lighting. This, in turn, led to an increase in street crime. "As to street lights," one editor wrote in 1871, "we know of no other city in the Union where the tax payers have submitted so long to groping their way through the streets at night, at the great risk to life and limb and often to the delicate attention of the garroters."[36]

Despite the public complaints, the city was unable, or unwilling, to appropriate sufficient funds for street improvements. Of city engineer Robert M. Hooke, the *Times* noted, "Mr. Hooke cannot make a coon skin cover an ox; no more can he build a street with ridiculously inadequate means."[37] The city did occasionally attempt repairs, but they were generally half-hearted and inexpensive. On one

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[33]*Chattanooga Times*, March 28, 1873.

[34]*Ibid.*, April 9, 1873.

[35]*Ibid.*, February 28, 1874.

[36]*The Southern Press*, June 24, 1871.

[37]*Chattanooga Times*, December 4, 1873.

occasion, for example, city officials decided to dump gravel on the streets as a cheap alternative to paving. The results were less than effective. The gravel was soon reduced to "pulverized trash" which "blinded, choked, and sickened" pedestrians with "a dust composed of a most villainous mixture of decayed vegetable matter, animal excrements, and powdered limestone."[38]

This same pattern of neglect could also be found in other city departments. Perhaps most dangerous were areas of sewage and sanitation. Throughout the 1870s Chattanooga had virtually no means of dealing safely with sewage and other wastes. In 1880 only about five percent of the homes in Chattanooga had modern toilets. Instead, nearly all residents relied on poorly regulated privies for waste disposal.[39] At the same time, many residents still relied on wells for their drinking water. As late as 1885, some ten thousand residents still used wells for their water supply.[40] Given the size of most urban lots, the privy was often not far from the well and polluted drinking water was probably a factor in the city's poor public health. Only

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[38]*Ibid.*, April 9, 1873.

[39]In this respect Chattanooga lagged far behind other regional cities. In the same year, for example, a third of the homes in Atlanta and three-fourths of those in Memphis had modern water closets connected to closed sewers. *Social Statistics of Cities*, 139, 149, 160-62.

[40]Henry M. Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga" (2 vols., unpublished typescript: Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, 1916) 2: 105.

after the yellow fever epidemic of 1878 did the city construct a closed sewer system. Even then it did so reluctantly, with many local officials still advocating the use of cheaper open sewers.[41]

The city's streets were also a source of public health problems. Liquid household wastes, including "waste water from sleeping rooms," were routinely run into the gutters of residential streets. Such wastes often collected in these gutters, as the city had no system for flushing refuse from city streets.[42] Compounding this problem were the presence of cattle and hogs on the same streets. Livestock often roamed at will in the city, creating health and safety hazards. One writer stated that "swine have the town"[43] and another complained that "the cows are allowed to wallow where they will."[44] The city finally took action and banned hogs from the city in 1879, but the laws were rarely enforced.[45] Complaints about animals continued for several years, and livestock would not be effectively banished from the city until 1897.[46]

Periodic flooding also continued to be a threat to

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[41]*Chattanooga Times*, November 8, 1892.

[42]*Social Statistics of Cities*, 139.

[43]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga", 2: 100.

[44]*Chattanooga Times*, March 28, 1873.

[45]*Ibid*, March 1, 1879.

[46]*Ibid.*, March 3, 1897.

public health and safety, as well as to the local economy. Chattanooga, still feeling the effects of the 1867 flood, was struck by another major deluge in March 1875. That year the river rose and again inundated low-lying parts of the city. Especially hard hit were industrial sites near the river. In some cases mills and factories simply floated away. Other factories doused their fires, removed their machinery, and abandoned their buildings.[47] Republican leaders, greatly alarmed at the economic consequences of the flood, immediately proposed grandiose schemes for flood control. John T. Wilder, whose rolling mill then contained four feet of water, proposed a levee be built around the city. Such a structure, he theorized, could be built with convict labor at a cost of only sixty-thousand dollars. Other Chattanoogans advocated an even more extreme solution and proposed that the entire city be raised several feet, as was done in Chicago.[48]

Yet Chattanooga was not Chicago and it could do little to protect itself from periodic flooding. Most means of protection were simply too expensive for such a small city. Wilder's sixty- thousand-dollar levee, experts noted, would, in reality, probably cost between two hundred-fifty and five hundred thousand dollars.[49] Elevating the city, as some

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[47]*Ibid.*, March 2, 1875.

[48]*Ibid.*, March 4, 1875.

[49]*Ibid.*, March 5,6 1875.

advocated, would cost over half a million dollars. City leaders simply resigned themselves to the risk of flooding. City engineer Robert M. Hooke lamented, "considering the meager income of the city and its limited population, it is highly probable that nothing, intended to protect the city from floods, will be done soon."[50]

City officials enjoyed more success at creating a public school system in Chattanooga. The city's first public schools were established by an act of the state legislature in 1867 and were administered by E.O. Tade of the Freedmen's Bureau. Tade brought considerable enthusiasm to his job as superintendent of schools, but unfortunately he had little else to work with. Education was not a priority in the immediate postwar years, and funding was poor. Furthermore, Tade reported, appropriations for schools were often diverted for "any and every other purpose other than schools."[51] As a result, funding was only about one dollar per student, and schools were only in session for one month of the year.[52]

Over time conditions improved for most students in the public school system. School expenditures also improved,

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[50]*Ibid.*, March 3, 1875.

[51]C. Stuart McGehee, "E.O. Tade, Freedmen's Education, and the Failure of Reconstruction in Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 43(1984): 383.

[52]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox and Shelby*, 842.

thanks to an 1872 law allowing a local school tax.[53] By 1875 school funding doubled to two dollars per student and by the end of the decade schools stayed in session over four months per year.[54] Yet despite these modest improvements, Chattanooga lagged far behind other regional cities in educational support. In 1879, for example, local funding amounted to just $2.60 per student. At the same time, Knoxville spent $9.05 per student and Memphis allocated $13.15 per child.[55]

Not surprisingly, parents often complained about the quality of their children's education. Chattanooga's German community showed particular interest in the local schools. These immigrants saw public schools as the "bulwark of common liberty," but they lamented the methods employed by nineteenth-century teachers. There was "too much cramming," they complained, "and too little effort to teach the children to think." Some students seemed to agree with this perception. One student privately found her teacher to be the very "image of death."[56] Another asked: "How often do we find scholars studying algebra and Latin who know nothing of

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[53]*Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892.

[54]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox and Shelby*, 842.

[55]*Ibid.*, 842-43, 882.

[56]Timothy P. Ezzell, "The McCallie Letters: Portrait of a Chattanooga Family in the 1880s and 1890s" (M.A. Thesis, University of Tennessee, 1988), 35.

arithmetic and English?"[57]

Still others in Chattanooga believed that the public schools went too far and thus openly opposed them altogether. One such resident wrote the *Times* attacking the construction of public high schools. "To tax the people for their support is unjust," he declared, adding that too many schools made the system "cumbersome and inefficient." Such institutions, he reasoned, were also unnecessary: "A boy well drilled in grammar school studies is well fitted for all the ordinary pursuits of life." In addition, the author found that public schools "besides being unnecessary, are in some ways highly injurious." Such institutions "were apt to imbibe the wrong views of life" and instill in children "ruinous ambition" when they would do best "to learn trades and become producers."[58]

Though only a minority of Chattanoogans were unwilling to promote public education, many more showed reluctance to support black scholarship fully. Black schools were consistently underfunded and understaffed and the education of black children was always considered secondary to that of whites. Though the city administered two black schools with over one thousand students, the Board of Education regularly allocated less money to them than to white schools. At one point, the Board refused to purchase even fuel for black

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[57]*Chattanooga Times*, March 2, 1875.

[58]*Ibid.*

schools, and E.O. Tade watched helplessly as enthusiastic black students "shivered as they studied." Black educators faced other problems as well. In 1870, for example, the students and faculty of Howard School were evicted and forced to move when an ex-Rebel laid claim to the land it was built on.[59]

Not long afterwards, in 1873, E.O. Tade resigned his post in disgust and left Chattanooga permanently. Though "hated, shunned, and despised" by many local whites, Tade was black Chattanooga's greatest advocate, and his absence left local blacks and local black schools at the mercy of generally unsympathetic white leaders.[60] By 1878 the "Once fine building" of Howard School was "sadly in need of repair." The school, the *Weekly Commercial* reported, was "a disgrace to the community" and "its influence on children is anything but good."[61]

Local Republican leaders were, no doubt, uninterested in the fate of black schools. Education for blacks, or whites for that matter, was never a priority among Chattanooga's carpetbaggers. These men tended to emphasize

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[59]McGehee, "E.O. Tade," 385-386; For more information on black education in the postwar South see Ronald K. Goodenow and Arthur O. White, ed., *Education and the Rise of the New South* (Boston, 1981) and William Preston Vaughn, *Schools for All: The Blacks and Public Education in the South, 1865-77* (Lexington, 1974).

[60]McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 229.

[61]*Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, May 19, 1878.

the economic development of the city over city services; and local government usually paid more attention to the needs of business and industries than to those of ordinary citizens. One Republican explained that Chattanooga was simply "looking after her more solid and substantial interests" while paying "little attention to the ornamented part of her growth." "Filling up a few mud holes," he reasoned, "is a work that can be looked after some other time."[62]

During the Republican administrations of the 1870s, the protection of business interests became a priority in Chattanooga's city government. Businessmen found the city government especially useful in attracting new businesses and railroads. Railroads were essential to a city's survival in the late nineteenth century. A new rail line often brought jobs and industries to a city. It also helped existing manufacturers by opening new markets and lowering freight rates. With such clear benefits, rail lines were highly prized by developing cities and competition for railroads was often fierce.

Chattanooga business leaders were quick to use city government to help attract new rail lines and city fathers were always willing to accommodate the railroads. The most visible example of this cooperation between city government and a rail line came in the 1870s with the construction of the Cincinnati Southern Railroad. Chattanooga competed with

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[62]*Chattanooga Daily Herald*, March 22, 1872.

Knoxville to become the southern terminus of the line and offered numerous incentives to the builders. Some of these came from private sources in the city. John T. Wilder, for example, donated land in both Chattanooga and Rockwood to the project.[63] City fathers also subsidized the line and authorized one hundred thousand dollars in bonds to aid in its construction. Not long afterward, the *Times* noted that the bond issue was "universally regarded as the best investment the city could make."[64] In this case the investment paid off. Chattanooga was chosen as the railroad's terminus and its completion in 1879 sparked a major boom in the local economy.[65]

The Board of Aldermen also subsidized new industries by offering tax exemptions. Beginning in 1871, any new industry using steam power, for example, was exempt from city taxes for ten years.[66] At the time, it was a popular and effective means of attracting new industries to Chattanooga. "We have already begun to reap the benefits of the liberal policy of encouragement to manufacturing enterprises," the *Times*

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[63]William Howard Moore, *Company Town: A History of Rockwood and the Roane Iron Company* (Kingston, 1989), 20.

[64]*Chattanooga Times*, July 12, 1873.

[65]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2:107; For more information on the Cincinnati Southern Railroad see Maury Klein, *History of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad* (New York, 1972) and Burke Davis, *The Southern Railway: Road of the Innovators* (Chapel Hill, 1985).

[66]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox and Shelby*, 839; *Chattanooga Times*, February 28, 1873.

boasted in 1873, adding "the present level of manufactures here is nothing to what we may expect to see if the liberal policy is persisted in for ten years." The policy was deemed so effective that those who opposed it, the author insisted, "must be regarded as an enemy to the prosperity of the city."[67]

By the end of the decade, however, attitudes towards tax exemptions changed. Many residents began to view tax exemptions not as a legitimate means of attracting manufacturers but as way for local industrialists to avoid their tax obligations. As the city became more strapped for cash and as demand for municipal services and improvements rose, some Chattanoogans began to view exemptions as self-serving legislation enacted by Republican aldermen to aid northern-owned businesses. State officials agreed, and state courts subsequently found exemptions to be "in violation of the constitution and laws of the state."[68] Yet Republicans continued to press for tax exemptions and the policy became a volatile and divisive local issue. In the 1877 mayoral race, in which the exemption question played a major role, the Republican candidate accused his opponent of stirring sectional animosities and, as a consequence, driving up insurance rates at Roane Iron and other "northern"

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[67]*Chattanooga Times* June 25, 1873.

[68]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox and Shelby*, 839.

companies.[69]

Yet tax exemptions were not the only way local Republicans and their businesses benefitted from public service. Critics also charged that city fathers helped themselves and their allies through the construction of city improvements. Particularly aggravating to many residents was the manner in which street repairs were carried out. "Eighth street that leads to the home of an alderman has had some work done on it," the *Times* reported, "No other cross street has been treated so kindly. Why?"[70] The *Times* even accused aldermen of diverting school funds to get streets near their homes and businesses repaired.[71] The German community expressed similar complaints, and claimed that all too often street work benefitted only "certain city fathers or prominent individuals."[72] Influential industries were also accused of receiving preferential treatment in getting street repairs; and aldermen were reportedly controlled by "powerful lobby interests" which dictated the location of street improvements.[73]

Evidence of favoritism could also be found in the awarding of contracts for various city services. Probably

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[69]*Chattanooga Times*, November 13, 1877.

[70]Ibid., August 6, 1873.

[71]*Ibid.*, February 28, 1874.

[72]*Ibid.*, November 11, 1874.

[73]*Ibid.*, February 28, 1874.

the most blatant and controversial example of this involved the establishment of a city market house in the early 1870s. The scandal began in August of 1872 when the Board of Aldermen voted to establish a city market for the sale of produce. Thomas J. Carlile, a Republican alderman and future mayor, introduced the measure and further recommended that the contract for the market be awarded to his personal friend and business associate, former mayor Henry Clay Evans. The Board agreed and passed an ordinance stating that no fruits or vegetables could be sold in the city except in the city market house, located in a warehouse owned by Evans. There, vendors paid rents directly to Evans, who was then responsible for the operation and upkeep of the market.[74]

This resolution, allegedly written in Evans' own handwriting, granted him a monopoly over produce sales in the city. It also proved to be quite profitable, yielding Evans about three hundred dollars a month in rents. Within a few weeks, however, Evans began to experience problems with the market house. The measure soon proved to be both unpopular and unenforceable. Grocers, farmers, and peddlers, accustomed to selling produce on the streets for free, resented the new restrictions placed on their livelihood. Other residents disliked the monopoly granted Evans, and

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[74]*Ibid.*, November 18, 1874; *Chattanooga Daily Herald*, August 27, 1872.

feared "the hold he had upon the city." In protest, many vendors returned to selling their goods on the streets while others threatened to challenge the new law in court.[75]

Fearing financial losses, Evans called for a new contract for the market house just seven months after the first agreement. The city government agreed and advised a special committee on the market house to make an offer, "not to exceed one thousand dollars per year," for lease on the building.[76] Yet despite these recommendations, Evans secured a five-year lease with the Board of Aldermen at fifteen hundred dollars per year. In addition, the city also agreed to pay the market master, pay for all building repairs, and exempt the market structure from all city taxes. Evans was thus able to limit his losses and perhaps turn a profit off of a potentially losing venture. The city, however, was not as fortunate. The monopoly granted the market house was widely ignored and rarely enforced and the building remained virtually devoid of commerce. The *Times* estimated that the city lost as much as two thousand dollars per year on the market house and the building became a glaring example of Republican corruption and cronyism to many Chattanoogans.[77] In 1877, with rents insufficient to pay even the market

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[75]*Chattanooga Times*, November 18, 1874; *Chattanooga Daily Herald*, October 2, 1872.

[76]*Chattanooga Times*, March 2, 1873.

[77]*Ibid.*, November 18, 1874.

master and the poorly maintained structure "liable to tumble down" at any moment, the city abandoned the market house and repealed the market ordinance.[78]

By the close of the 1870s, corruption and favoritism became associated with Republican politics in other ways as well. For most Chattanoogans, the biggest problem with Republican rule was the use, and perceived misuse, of patronage. Throughout the decade, patronage became an essential part of local Republican politics. This by itself was not unusual, for patronage was an important component of nineteenth-century politics and most residents were willing to tolerate it to a certain degree. Chattanoogans became alarmed in the late 1870s, however, when local Republicans began to channel increasing amounts of patronage to black supporters. As Republicans had to rely more and more on black votes to maintain power, they also found they had to distribute more patronage to blacks to ensure their support. Black voters, conscious of their increasing power, were quick to demand their share of the spoils. In the latter part of the decade, blacks served in virtually all aspects of city government. Black officers usually claimed at least two, and sometimes as many as four positions on the city's ten-man police force. Blacks also served with the fire department and in 1879 the city formed a fire company

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[78]Herbert B. Case, comp. *Charters, Municipal Laws and Ordinances of the City of Chattanooga from 1838-1882* (Chattanooga, 1882), 199-200.

staffed entirely by black officers. Black patrons were also named jailer, justice of the peace, constable, and sexton. Black candidates won elected offices as well and black Republicans were especially well represented on the Board of Aldermen. Throughout the decade, blacks could usually claim one or two positions on this powerful body, and by 1880 held three of the Board's ten seats.[79]

The growing presence of blacks in city government disturbed many local residents. Blacks, they felt, paid the least in taxes, yet they seemed to be reaping disproportionately high benefits. Particularly alarming was the increasing number of blacks on the police force. Though other towns in the state employed black municipal workers, Chattanooga appears to have been the only major city in the state with black policemen.[80] By 1880 almost half of the city's ten-man police force was black. The prospect of black men enforcing the law over whites angered many southerners. One Democrat proclaimed that the city was being run by "a very radical, unscrupulous class of white men and subservient negroes" who were "mostly vicious in their

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[79]*Chattanooga City Directory* (1878), 121-23; *Chattanooga City Directory* (1880), 24-27; *Chattanooga City Directory* (1871), 24; Potts, "Unfulfilled Expectations," 113.

[80] Joseph H. Cartwright, *The Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880s* (Knoxville, 1976), 119-48.

political tendencies."[81]

The blatant politicization of the police force disturbed many Chattanoogans. Policemen frequently campaigned openly for their patrons on the Board of Aldermen. "Every man now on the force," the *Times* complained in 1873, "was a most active and vigilant electioneer in the late canvass, and on election day some of them made themselves particularly conspicuous as drummers for their favorite candidates, to the utter neglect of their official duties."[82]

In addition, residents found that policemen were often poorly trained and unprofessional. Officers often made arrests without proper warrants or authorization. Such excessive and unwarranted arrests were encouraged by a bonus system which paid officers a nominal fee for each arrest made.[83] The *Weekly Commercial* estimated in 1879 that seventy percent of all arrests in the city were made illegally and with "an utter disregard to the rights and privileges of citizens." The paper also accused officers of ignoring public safety, stating that police were too quick to fire at fleeing suspects, even those suspected of minor offenses,

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[81]Potts, "Unfulfilled Expectations," 113; Cartwright, *Triumph of Jim Crow*, 147-49.

[82]*Chattanooga Times*, December 4, 1873.

[83]Case, *Charters, Municipal Laws and Ordinances*, 175-76.

and often on busy streets.[84]

The same spirit of neglect could be found in other city offices as well. The worst and most sensational example of public corruption occurred with the "body-snatching" scandal of 1879. It all began when A.B. Jackson, along with his son B.F. Jackson, came into the town's express office and attempted to mail a large crate labelled "cottonseed" to Atlanta. The clerk refused to ship the box, however, because the value of the seed was deemed less than the shipping charges. At the time, no one suspected any wrongdoing. A.B. Jackson was a popular black politician and was most recently a Republican candidate for alderman in city elections. He also possessed a fairly high standing in the community. It was said that he was "loud in his religious proclamations" and was "always among the first in church." The elder Jackson was also well-known for helping Chattanooga's poor and would frequently solicit money for funeral expenses whenever there was a death in a needy family. "For years," the *Times* reported, "he attended every funeral in the fifth ward."[85]

Railroad officials became suspicious, however, when Jackson returned later that day and attempted to ship the same crate, this time labelled "fish." Opening the parcel, they were shocked to find the nude body of a white woman,

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[84]*Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, October 12, 1879.

[85]*Chattanooga Times*, November 29, 30, 1879.

Tennessee Keith, packed in sawdust. Keith, a local indigent, had died of natural causes a few days earlier, and was supposedly buried in a funeral arranged by A.B. Jackson and paid for by charitable contributions. Upon investigation, police uncovered a ring involving Jackson, his son, and Newton Carroll, the black sexton at the cemetery and a city employee. For some time, investigators revealed, the culprits had been raising money to bury paupers, holding mock funerals over empty graves, then shipping the corpses out of state for dissection by physicians and medical students. The cadavers were usually packed in crates marked "fish" or "furs" in order to account for any suspicious odors in transit. Authorities estimated that as many as fifty such corpses were sold by the so-called "body-snatchers" over a three-year period, each yielding the culprits about twenty-five dollars.[86]

Needless to say, these revelations caused "a great excitement" in the community. The "greatest indignation" was proclaimed against the conspirators and "no sympathy for the culprits could be heard."[87] The incident also continued to weaken the public's trust in city officers. Black officeholders were particularly suspect. As early as 1874 the *Times* proclaimed that there were "no colored men in this city fitted for office" and most white residents seemed to

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[86]*Ibid.*

[87]*Ibid.*

agree.[88] Even the Republican *Commercial* found problems with black patronage. Though the paper acknowledged "the right of competent colored men to hold office," it also found that "colored men who would do honor to their race and act efficiently for the interests of their city" were not among those usually nominated.[89] To many residents, black patronage became the most visible symbol of a corrupt, inefficient, and unresponsive city government.

Scandals and controversies surrounding patronage, city improvements, and the police department brought about increasing disillusionment with Republican rule. Calls for change emanated from many segments of the local population. Chattanooga's Germans were among the first to demand reform. At an 1874 rally, some two hundred of the city's Germans drew up a platform requesting better schools, "impartial laws," and an end to favoritism in the allocation of street repairs. The document also sought police reform. Policemen, they felt, should have "intelligence, honesty, sobriety, and good character" and they demanded an end to the present system which was "an encouragement to corruption."[90]

Chattanooga's workingmen voiced similar concerns and called for city improvements. The *Southern Press*, a short-

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[88]*Ibid.*, July 31, 1874.

[89]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial* quoted in the *Chattanooga Times*, August 5, 1874.

[90]*Ibid.*, November 11, 1874.

lived local newspaper, issued a statement on their behalf in 1871. "We are a city of no mean dimensions" with "a large bustling population of mechanics, laborers, and operatives of various kinds . . . and it is time for our city government and influential citizens to look after the welfare of this mass of overtaxed muscle and brains." Foremost among their demands was a desire for some type of public recreation. "It may be thought by some of the wealthy that they have no interest in providing recreations and amusements for the poor, but they are mistaken. It is an economy to do so." Specifically, they requested a public park, "ample in size" with "easy access." "It should be a people's park," the statement read, "where the poor as well as the rich may enjoy themselves as each may see proper." The author also demanded the installation of street lights, as well as public drinking fountains where "the thirsty stranger as well as our own poor could supply themselves without cost."[91]

Still others expressed bewilderment with the senseless nature of local politics. The *Times* summed it up in 1873, writing "They [the people] prefer to see something done and are sick and tired of being fed on promises." The same editorial reflected the sense of disillusionment felt among many voters: "If the political conventions are to be managed with all their paraphernalia of fireworks and flapdoodle; if

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[91]*Southern Press*, June 24, 1871.

the canvass is to be conducted and the voters hauled up to the polls by their paid servants, why, some of the people think they had as well withdraw efforts to elect a city government in the future, and leave the whole job to the board and its retainers."[92]

Public frustration was frequently directed at the Board of Aldermen. One editor mockingly suggested that the city's aldermen be replaced with wooden replicas made from "old saw logs." "They would be fully as serviceable as any we have had since the war," the author joked, "and much less expensive." The writer then closed with a plea for better government: "We want no more wooden men. Wooden men may do nothing wrong, but neither do they do anything right. We want men of action."[93]

Eventually these residents, and other like them, aligned themselves with the city's Mugwump Democrats. There, alongside northern Democrats and southern moderates, they campaigned for the establishment of good government in Chattanooga. Yet despite their growing numbers, the Mugwumps had little impact on city politics. Although they endorsed moderate candidates from both parties, few were ever elected and reforms were never implemented. Chattanooga's Mugwumps had neither the strength and resources of local Republicans nor the organization and state backing of Bourbon Democrats.

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[92]*Chattanooga Times*, December 4, 1873.

[93]*Ibid.*, November 4, 1871.

Worst of all, they lacked voice and leadership. If local Mugwumps were to succeed and reform city government, they had to have a spokesman to unite them and send their message to the people. In 1878 they found such a leader, in the unlikely person of a shy but ambitious nineteen-year-old Jewish printer.

Chapter 4

"An Honest, Fearless Press:"
Adolph S. Ochs and the Rise of the *Chattanooga Times*

At a 1923 dinner held in honor of Adolph S. Ochs, one of the speakers, with considerable hyperbole, compared Ochs' arrival in Chattanooga many years earlier with that of Moses in the promised land. "I have no doubt," the orator proclaimed, "that as Mr. Ochs looked out over that valley he saw in it his vision covered with a city of happy people."[1] In reality, Ochs' first impressions of the town were probably much more modest. Chattanooga in 1877 was far from being the proverbial Zion and as he looked across the valley he no doubt saw more mud and soot than milk and honey.

Still, whether he realized it or not, Ochs' destiny was tied to that of the land before him; and when he left it nearly twenty years later, Chattanooga was a vastly different place. Much of the change and growth of the city in the 1880s and 1890s could be attributed to the work of Adolph Ochs. As a publisher, Ochs became a tireless promoter of Chattanooga and its interests; and as a political leader, he was largely responsible for the creation of a modern, efficient city government. Yet all of this was unknown at

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[1]"Speech of Senator James B. Frazier," October 30, 1923, typescript, Adolph S. Ochs Papers, *New York Times* Archives.

the time of his arrival in Chattanooga in the spring of 1877 at age nineteen, a hundred miles from his family, with little more than a trunk of clothes, a piccolo, and the promise of work.[2]

The path which brought Ochs to Chattanooga had been difficult and characteristic of the age in which he grew up. Adolph Simon Ochs was born in Cincinnati in March of 1858, the oldest child of Julius and Bertha Ochs. A native of Bavaria, Julius Ochs had come to America in 1845 to escape a tedious bookbinding apprenticeship. Never one meant for the trades, Julius was an intellectual, an aesthete and a consummate Bohemian. He spoke seven languages, was a gifted musician, a Judaic scholar, and a fine amateur actor.[3] Yet despite his many talents, he could not make a decent living in America. He soon drifted through a series of unsuccessful careers and by the early 1850s was working as a peddler and musician in the Deep South. There, during a brief stay in Natchez, Mississippi, he met Bertha Levy.[4]

In many ways, Bertha Levy was the ideal mate for her husband. Like Julius, she was a strong-willed, free-thinking Bavarian Jew. In 1848, at the age of sixteen, she went to America, fleeing persecution for her support of the

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[2]Gerald W. Johnson, *An Honorable Titan: A Biographical Study of Adolph S. Ochs* (Westport, 1970), 45.

[3]Gay Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power* (New York, 1969), 81-82.

[4]*Ibid.*, 82-83.

unsuccessful 1848 German revolution. She met Ochs in 1851 and four years later they married. By all accounts theirs was a loving, productive, but sometimes contentious union. Together they enjoyed thirty-three years of marriage and raised six children. They also shared many common interests, including a deep love of their Jewish faith. Yet in spite of their similarities, they disagreed completely on the greatest issue of their day--slavery.[5]

Julius, always the liberal, abhorred slavery. Bertha, perhaps because of her time in Natchez, was a staunch defender of the institution.[6] When war came in 1861, Julius joined the Union army to help destroy slavery and preserve the Union. Bertha, by this time living in Cincinnati, remained an outspoken supporter of the South. Often suspected of being a southern spy, Bertha's loyalties caused considerable problems for the young family. When Bertha was caught attempting to smuggle quinine to Rebels across the Ohio River in her son George's baby carriage, her husband began to fear for her safety. A short time later, the family

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[5]Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 83.

[6]Julius and Bertha Ochs carried their sectional rivalry literally to their graves. When Julius Ochs died in 1888 he was buried, at his request, enshrouded in an American flag. Not to be outdone, Bertha Ochs, upon her death in 1908, had a Confederate flag placed in her coffin. William M. Schuyler, ed., *The Life and Letters of George Washington Ochs-Oakes* (Privately published, 1931), 4.

left Ohio and in 1864 settled in Knoxville, Tennessee.[7]

In Knoxville, Julius once again struck out in business and failed. Thus by the early seventies the family faced financial ruin. To help out through hard times, the oldest son, Adolph, took a job as a newsboy with the *Knoxville Chronicle*. In 1872 Adolph began working for the paper full-time, first as an office boy, then as a printer's apprentice. Ochs excelled at printing and composition and completed his four-year apprenticeship in half the normal time. By 1875 Ochs was the fastest and most accurate typesetter on the *Chronicle* and his skills were in high demand. Soon afterwards Adolph left Knoxville to take a job with a larger and more prestigious paper, the *Louisville Courier-Journal*.[8]

The young man, however, grew homesick in Louisville and returned to Knoxville in 1877 to take a job with the fledgling *Knoxville Tribune*.[9] There Ochs befriended two other *Tribune* employees: Frank Paul, the paper's business manager, and John E. MacGowan, a reporter. Together the three men possessed considerable newspaper experience. Paul had worked with various papers across Tennessee since the 1860s and MacGowan was a veteran editor and reporter from

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[7]Susan Gilbert Barnes, "The Ochs Family in Knoxville, Tennessee" (M.S. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1980), 23-31.

[8]*Ibid.*, 62-73.

[9]*Ibid.*, 73.

Chattanooga.[10]

At about the same time Ochs began work at the *Tribune* another local paper, the *Knoxville Age*, ceased publication. Ochs immediately developed a scheme to capitalize on the *Age*'s failure and begin his own publication. He enlisted the help of MacGowan and together they resolved to buy the printing plant of the defunct *Age*, ship it to the boom town of Chattanooga, and establish their own newspaper there. Frank Paul, however, learned of these plans and carried out the scheme before Ochs and MacGowan could act. Ochs was "disappointed and indignant," but soon forgave Paul who pathetically justified his actions, saying this was his last chance in life. Paul, for his part, felt guilty, and offered Ochs a "great salary" of $75 per month to join him as a general utility man.[11] Ochs, whose family's possessions had just been sold at public auction, gladly accepted the position and soon left Knoxville permanently.[12]

Thus Adolph S. Ochs arrived in Chattanooga on April 1, 1877 with the promise of work on Paul's *Chattanooga Dispatch*.[13] He was soon joined by John E. MacGowan, who

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[10]Adolph S. Ochs to Charles D. McGuffey, June 15, 1903, Ochs Papers.

[11]*Ibid.*

[12]Barnes, "Ochs Family in Knoxville," 56-57.

[13]*Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892. This was a special commemorative issue of the newspaper which included a history of the *Times* written by George W. Ochs.

served as editor. But the *Dispatch* was a failure from the start. "Frank Paul," Ochs later conceded, "was his own worst enemy" whose business inadequacies were exacerbated by his addiction to "excessive drinking" and "the opium habit." At one point Ochs became so frustrated with Paul he quit, only to return when the drunken owner, "with tears in his eyes and in a whining voice," pleaded that "no business could survive without an Irishman or a Jew." Ochs' presence could not save the *Dispatch* though, and within a year Paul abandoned the business, leaving Ochs to pay some of the paper's debts.[14]

Broke and unemployed, Ochs almost returned to Knoxville but, according to family legend, he could not afford the fare and was too embarrassed to ask his equally impoverished father for a loan. He took odd printing jobs, and in February of 1878 won a fifty-dollar contract from the Board of Aldermen to conduct a census of the town and create a city directory.[15] The project proved to be an opportunity worth far more, since it introduced Ochs to virtually every person in Chattanooga. It also exposed him to the city's business community, for while taking the census and selling advertising, Ochs met virtually every lawyer, banker, politician, and industrialist in town. In the process, he

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[14]Adolph S. Ochs to Charles D. McGuffey, June 15, 1903, Ochs Papers.

[15]*Chattanooga Times*, February 6, 1878.

formed business relationships that would serve him well over the next twenty years.[16]

That June, Ochs got word that another local newspaper, the *Chattanooga Times*, was on the verge of collapse. The *Times* was the city's oldest paper, having been established in 1869, but had enjoyed little sustained success. It had been through half a dozen owners in its brief history, and by 1878 was little more than a poorly printed tabloid with a daily circulation of just 250.[17] Its owner, S.A. Cunningham, tried to boost sales with lurid, sensational stories, but to no avail.[18] By the summer of 1878 the *Times* carried a fifteen-hundred dollar debt and its income could no longer cover printing costs. Faced with financial ruin, Cunningham decided to sell the business and called for a meeting with Adolph Ochs.[19]

Cunningham offered the *Times* to Ochs for eight hundred dollars cash, plus assumption of the debt. Ochs, eager to buy any paper--even a failing one--readily agreed. He had no money, however, and could only borrow three hundred dollars from the banks. Hence Ochs renegotiated to buy controlling interest in the paper for $250 cash and assumption of the debt. He did so with the understanding that he would

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[16]Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 85-86.

[17]Johnson, *Honorable Titan*, 47-48.

[18]*Chattanooga Times*, September 19, 1877.

[19]Johnson, *Honorable Titan*, 48.

purchase the remaining interest in the paper in two years at a price set by arbitrators. Two years later Ochs would pay fifty-five hundred dollars for Cunningham's remaining share of the *Times*.[20]

Ochs had just fifty dollars of borrowed money left after securing control of the *Times*. Twelve-and-a-half dollars of that went to notary and legal fees in connection with the purchase. Another twenty-five dollars went to the Associated Press for continuance of the news service. Thus, Adolph Ochs began his publishing career with just $12.50 in working capital.[21]

Ochs printed his first issue of the *Times* on July 2, 1878 and along with the usual news and gossip that day was a grandiose declaration of principles by the new publisher. Among his pronouncements, Ochs decreed that the *Times* was "foremost" a organ of the city's "business, commercial, and productive" interests and would "move in line with the Conservative Democracy of the South." He further announced that under his direction, the paper would be "primarily devoted to the material, educational, and moral growth of our progressive city."[22]

Ochs then made a curious statement regarding the paper's political direction. Rather than ally the *Times* with

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[20]*Ibid.*, 50-51.

[21]*Ibid.*, 52.

[22]*Chattanooga Times*, July 2, 1878.

any one party or faction, he announced he would make "no 'appeals'" for patronage except for that of "the intelligent citizen." At the time, this declaration was probably more of a business decision than a testament of journalistic integrity. Chattanooga was a modest city with many competing factions. A publication which swore undying loyalty to a single political group would no doubt have a very limited circulation. By broadening the *Times'* appeal, Ochs also hoped to boost the paper's sales.[23]

This is not to say the *Times* was apolitical or entirely objective, for Ochs was a devoted Mugwump and frequently endorsed reform candidates. At the same time, however, he provided fair coverage of his opponents and he frequently printed letters critical of the *Times*. Above all he strove to maintain his paper's independence and its editorial integrity. On occasion this policy placed the publisher in uncomfortable situations. Once, for example, in 1884, a Captain J.A. Turley offered to purchase 500 copies of the *Times*, provided the paper said nothing "against railroad commissions or either Tennessee commissioners." Ochs returned the order with a terse reply: "We can not . . . make a contract of any kind contingent on our editorial expressions." He went on to explain "there has never been an issue of the Times in which the editor was not free to express himself as he thought the public interest required.

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[23]*Ibid.*

No consideration whatsoever could induce us to manage the paper otherwise."[24]

Ochs' commitment to fair journalism was strengthened by his devout religious beliefs. Julius and Bertha Ochs were followers of Reform Judaism, a movement which swept across America's Hebrew community in the early nineteenth century.[25] Unlike traditional or Orthodox Jews, followers of the Reform movement rejected the concept of a Jewish nation abiding by strict religious codes. Instead they advocated assimilation within the state and an adherence to constitutional law. Reform Jews also expressed a strong desire for cultural integration. As such, they dressed in western clothing, ate non-kosher food, and attended religious services quite similar to those of their Christian neighbors.[26]

Reform Jews also adopted a liberal theology which emphasized enlightenment and education. Reform leaders declared Judaism to be "a progressive religion, ever striving to be in accord with the postulates of reason." As such, the traditional messianic concept was transformed by Reform rabbis from a redemption of Jews into a "universal hope" for "a Kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all

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[24]Adolph S. Ochs to J.A. Turley, October 4, 1884, Ochs Papers.

[25]Barnes, "Ochs Family in Knoxville," 44.

[26]Joseph L. Blau, *Modern Varieties of Judaism* (New York, 1966), 39-59.

men." Religious tolerance was also encouraged and the movement's rabbinate stressed the "sanctity and sincerity" of other faiths and the importance of interfaith cooperation.[27]

Adolph Ochs learned these principles from his father, who served as a lay rabbi in both Knoxville and Chattanooga.[28] Julius Ochs taught both his congregation and his children a liberal doctrine associated with the Reform movement. For him, social reform and religion were inseparable. As with many Reform Jews, he rejected the concept of a "personal messiah." Instead Julius Ochs believed the Messiah would be a golden age of understanding, brought forth by "education and the spread of intelligence, reason, and enlightenment."[29]

Julius Ochs also held a strong belief in the inherent goodness of man. Therefore he stressed the importance of good citizenship. An idealistic veteran and "a vigorous American," Julius believed that patriotism was especially important for Jews.[30] National loyalty encouraged acceptance

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[27]*Ibid.*

[28]Faced with a shortage of ordained rabbis, early Reform congregations often elected their own lay clergymen. Though these individuals generally lacked formal training, they were usually well versed in the scriptures and were allowed to lead congregations in the absence of a professional rabbinate. "Adolph S. Ochs as Remembered by H. Goodman, Jr.," typescript, Ochs Papers.

[29]*Chattanooga Times*, March 3, 1878.

[30]Schuyler, ed., *Life and Letters*, 389.

and fostered the assimilation desired by Reform Jews. Such lessons were not lost on Ochs' children. Years later, Adolph commented, "A good Jew is a good citizen. A good citizen is always respected."[31]

Given these beliefs, it is little wonder that Adolph Ochs was drawn towards a style of publishing which stressed political and social reform. Journalism allowed him to fulfill all of his religious, social, and civic obligations and through it he found "a satisfaction . . . that is not afforded to men in every other calling." By educating and informing the public he paved the way for the coming messianic age. In striving for social reforms he attempted to elevate man from sin. Finally, as he exposed corruption and pressed for good government, he improved his nation and displayed his patriotism. To Ochs the chance to run the *Times* represented more than a business opportunity. In many ways he viewed it as a moral endeavor and in later years he would credit his success to the "high and honorable purpose" to which he was called.[32]

Perhaps because of strong personal beliefs, Ochs undertook the task of resurrecting the *Times* with considerable enthusiasm. One of his first moves was to hire his former colleague, John E. MacGowan, as editor. MacGowan

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[31]Adolph S. Ochs to Oscar S. Levy, December 25, 1892, Ochs Papers.

[32]*Ibid.*

was well acquainted with Chattanooga and was a natural choice for the job. He had come to the city in late 1860s, a combat veteran of the Union army. He probably arrived with the intention of working as a lawyer, but by 1871 he was listed in the city directory as a "manufacturer of laths [*sic*]."[33] In 1872 he became publisher of a short-lived local daily, the *Chattanooga Evening Mail*.[34] Four years later he listed himself as editor of the *Chattanooga Times*, working for one of its many early owners.[35] A short time later he moved to Knoxville to work as a reporter for the *Tribune*. There he first met Adolph Ochs. It was an association that would last well into the next century.

In many ways, Ochs and MacGowan were unlikely partners. At first appearance the men could scarcely have seemed more different. Ochs was just twenty years old when he took possession of the *Times*. Small in stature, dapper in dress, and clean shaven, save for a small, well-groomed moustache, Ochs was a handsome, and certainly non-threatening, young man.[36] MacGowan, on the other hand, at forty-seven, was more

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[33]Charles Stuart McGehee, "Wake of the Flood, A Southern City in the Civil War, Chattanooga, 1838-1873" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1985), 255; *Chattanooga City Directory* (1871), 121.

[34]*Chattanooga Evening Mail*, December 8, 1872.

[35]*Chattanooga City Directory* (1877), 60.

[36]Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 86; Johnson, *Honorable Titan*, 26.

than twice Ochs' age.[37] The editor was a rugged and fearsome soldier, with
piercing eyes and a long gray beard. The contrast between the two men was not lost on the community, and they soon became the subject of local humor. Colonel MacGowan, with his whiskers, earned the nickname "Billy-goat MacGowan" and his employer became known as "the Kid." Together they published the "Kid organ" and their political opinions were collectively called "Kid Democracy."[38]

The two men also differed greatly in terms of their personalities. Ochs was shy, modest, and meticulous. His timidity seemed to stem from a deep sense of personal insecurity. In large part this was due to social factors, for as a Jew in a southern town he was part of a distinct religious minority. He also suffered from a limited education which often made him uncomfortable in conversation or public speaking.[39] As a result, he usually avoided the public spotlight, preferring instead to promote the *Times* or some cause over himself. Although he was hopelessly optimistic about his future, he was also unsure of his own success and he often sought validation of it from others. He craved recognition from family and friends and thrived on

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[37]Susan W. Dryfoos, *Iphigene, My Life and The New York Times: The Memoirs of Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger* (New York, 1987), 8.

[38]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, September 20, 1885.

[39]Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 84-85.

their praise.[40]

In contrast, MacGowan was confident, outspoken and aggressive. A survivor of the Civil War, there was little in Chattanooga that MacGowan feared and he encouraged controversy and confrontation. Such assertiveness challenged Ochs' notions of fairness and sometimes alarmed the publisher and his family. Once, in the 1890s, for example, George Ochs complained to his brother, "There is no sense abusing our adversaries," but added, "It seems almost impossible to manage Colonel in this respect. He does not seem to think he can argue a point unless he abuses the other side."[41] The Colonel's style could also be dangerous and on one occasion the target of a MacGowan editorial walked into the *Times* office intending to kill its publisher and editor for calling him a "jackleg lawyer."[42]

Yet this insult seems mild compared to the attacks MacGowan reserved for rival publications. Of those, he held the Knoxville *Chronicle* in special contempt. The *Chronicle* was an outspoken Republican organ and a descendant of the infamous Parson Brownlow's radical *Knoxville Whig*.[43] As

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[40]"Recollections of Adolph S. Ochs from Mrs. Jay Goodman," typescript, Ochs Papers.

[41]George W. Ochs to Adolph S. Ochs, July 14, 1896, Ochs Papers.

[42]"E.Y. Chapin's Visit to A.S. Ochs with Intention of Shooting Him," typescript, Ochs Papers.

[43]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby Counties of Tennessee* (1887; reprint, Nashville, 1974), 872.

such, it was the antithesis of the Mugwump *Times* and the two papers frequently exchanged editorial salvos. In one such attack, MacGowan said of the *Chronicle*: "This filthy dishrag actually paints the rose of blackguardism and gilds the refined gold of Billingsgate." His worst pronouncements, however, were directed at the *Chronicle*'s editor: "The obscene little thing which edits (?) [*sic*] this rag has reached the pinnacle of his ambition--to be the most repulsive thing in human form." MacGowan then added, "a swine who had to be near this pestilential object would deserve the keenest sympathy."[44]

Although the Colonel could be quite malicious towards his enemies, he demonstrated constant respect for his young employer and the two men soon formed a close partnership. MacGowan became a mentor to the young publisher and Ochs would later refer to him as "my generous foster-father, my greatest helpmate, advisor, and counselor."[45] The Colonel may have also influenced Ochs' political beliefs. MacGowan was an established Mugwump in Chattanooga and a long-time friend of reform. During his previous tenure as editor of the *Times* he had maintained the paper's Mugwump affiliation. He seems to have continued to promote his liberal beliefs at the *Chattanooga Dispatch*, as the single surviving issue

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[44]*Chattanooga Times*, March 10, 1880.

[45]Adolph S. Ochs to John E. MacGowan, August 4, 1897, Ochs Papers.

contains a lengthy exposé on poverty in the city.[46]

Together, Ochs and MacGowan began to revive the struggling newspaper. Ochs, quoting James Witcomb Riley, later referred to these years as "the time 'we used to be so happy and so p'or.'"[47] By all indications, Ochs' financial condition in those early months was quite precarious. At times he was so poor that he resorted to wearing borrowed clothing when making important calls.[48] What little income Ochs enjoyed no doubt went towards keeping the embattled *Times* afloat, yet the paper still suffered from a lack of capital. This in itself was not unusual, for many other businesses in town experienced similar problems. Chattanooga was still a fairly small town, with few banks and a limited amount of available credit. To compensate for this, local merchants and businessmen improvised their own system of credit by exchanging checks with one another.[49]

Ochs soon became a master of the art of check kiting and frequently exchanged notes with other businessmen to

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[46]*Chattanooga Dispatch*, August 5, 1877.

[47]Adolph S. Ochs to Maynard D. Follin, November 11, 1926, Ochs Papers.

[48]"Recollections of Adolph S. Ochs from Mrs. Jay Goodman," *ibid.*

[49]Adolph S. Ochs to Maynard D. Follin, November 11, 1926, *ibid.*

meet payrolls and pay debts.[50] By 1880 Ochs had a list of some twenty-five merchants with whom he could exchange checks. Alongside their names he listed the amount he could secure from them, from one hundred to five hundred dollars, and the time they would hold his check before cashing it, which ranged from one to thirty days. By using such sources of credit, Ochs stated he "was able to keep a few hundred dollars afloat, when it was not convenient to secure a loan from a bank or elsewhere."[51]

Chattanooga businessmen not only suffered from a lack of credit, they also endured shortages of cash. The nation's inelastic money supply sometimes made currency scarce, even in growing towns. In lieu of cash, many local merchants came to rely on barter as a preferred medium of exchange. Adolph Ochs, for example, frequently accepted goods or services as payment for advertising when currency was not available. At times he even paid his employees with such collections, and *Times* workers often found themselves paid in groceries and dry goods.[52]

Such ingenuity helped keep the *Times* solvent during the summer of 1878. Interest in a local chancellor's race

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[50]"Recollections of Adolph S. Ochs from Mrs. Jay Goodman," *ibid.*; "Z.C. Patten on Adolph S. Ochs," typescript, *ibid.*

[51]Adolph S. Ochs to Maynard D. Follin, November 11, 1926, *ibid.*

[52]Johnson, *Honorable Titan*, 62-63.

also aided the paper's early fortunes. The election, however, placed the young publisher in an uncomfortable position. Both candidates were Democrats and Ochs feared alienating potential subscribers by endorsing one contestant over the other. In the end, he endorsed neither candidate but instead gave equal space in the paper to the managers of both campaigns. The ensuing intraparty row was a sensation among local readers and provided much needed revenue for the struggling enterprise. In addition, the impartiality displayed by Ochs boosted his status and earned the *Times* a reputation as "an honest, fearless press."[53]

By far the greatest challenge Ochs faced in his early days as publisher was with the yellow fever epidemic of 1878. Away on business when the disease struck and unable to return to the city, Ochs was forced to rely on MacGowan to continue publication of the paper. In the midst of the crisis, the Colonel soon proved his worth. Having witnessed death many times in his life, MacGowan was unfazed by the sickness; and as others around him panicked, he viewed the scene with dark humor. He joked, "Eleven deaths yesterday and more coming. Trot out your next funeral." In the midst of the plague he even made a grim solicitation and announced "people under the influence of Bronze John have no rest in the morning until they read the *Times*."[54]

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[53]*Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892.

[54]*Ibid.*, October 9, 12, 1878.

MacGowan stayed at his post throughout the epidemic and the *Times* never missed an issue. Though sometimes reduced to a single page, the paper continued to inform the people of Chattanooga. In addition, MacGowan sent copies across the country and thus attracted much-needed relief funds. The Colonel's service and bravery were not soon forgotten, and he earned the *Times* a loyal following among the city's residents.[55] The paper soon recovered losses experienced during the plague and by the following June reported earnings of over forty-nine hundred dollars for the fiscal year 1878-79.[56]

In 1879 the *Times* acquired numerous subscribers and advertisers and developed a secure financial footing. Emboldened by this, Ochs and MacGowan began to take a more active role in city politics. Throughout the year they advocated numerous reforms, including improved sanitation and the abolition of the convict-lease system.[57] That autumn they played their first active role in city elections. Sensing public frustration with partisan politics, the *Times* offered a novel alternative. Rather than endorse either party, the paper suggested the creation of a non-partisan coalition. This so-called "Citizens' Movement" would include

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[55]*Ibid.*, December 8, 1892.

[56]"Business of the *Chattanooga Times* Under the Management of Adolph S. Ochs, 1878-1899," typescript, Ochs Papers.

[57]*Chattanooga Times*, March 6, 1879; November 19, 1879.

reform-minded candidates from both camps who pledged to run "without regard to party."[58]

The Citizens' Movement offered a simple solution to Chattanooga's political woes and the idea rapidly gained support among voters. A meeting was called to nominate a Citizens' ticket and as many as four hundred residents attended the assembly which followed. Though the convention was dominated by Mugwump reformers, other factions were well represented. Bourbon Democrats and Republican supporters arrived in force, determined to shout down reformers and break up the movement. Also present were a handful of local Greenbackers who reportedly attended "out of general cussedness." The ensuing melee was, according to one witness, "a burlesque too rich to imagine." Party hacks and enlightened reformers struggled to outscream each other and, at times, brawled openly on the caucus floor. Even the city's mayor, Jesse T. Hill, got into the act, leaping to the rostrum and making a "somewhat excited speech" which denounced the movement as "a direct assault on his administration."[59]

The Mugwump contingent prevailed, however, and adopted a platform advocating better sanitation, improved schools, and improvements in city government. Among specific reforms, they proposed open bidding for public contracts,

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[58]*Ibid.*, November 20, 1879.

[59]*Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, October 12, 1879.

consolidation of municipal offices, elimination of salaries for the mayor and aldermen, and laws restricting business between aldermen and the city. The movement soon gained supporters from both parties, and even attracted a small number of black Republicans.[60]

Though the Citizens' Movement created a political uproar, it enjoyed only modest success at the polls. The group did elect a reform-minded mayor, H.F. Temple, but won only three of ten seats on the powerful Board of Aldermen. Loyal Republicans retained five seats on the Board and Bourbon Democrats held the remaining two.[61] By working with Republicans from the Citizens' group or with Bourbon aldermen, the Republicans were able to maintain their control of the Board and were soon dispensing patronage in spite of the reformers. In fact, Republicans actually began to increase the use of patronage in following years as a means of maintaining party loyalty. One of the first moves of the new Board was to raise the salaries of many city workers and even the Republican *Commercial* admitted that the aldermen made no effort "to economize or reform."[62]

Thus, although the *Times* would later claim the movement as a victory for the taxpayers, it was, in reality, a complete flop. Yet the failure of the Citizens' ticket did

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[60]*Chattanooga Times*, November 14, 1879.

[61]*Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, November 28, 1879.

[62]*Ibid.*, December 14, 1879.

not diminish the people's hope for non-partisan politics and Chattanooga's reformers may have inspired similar movements elsewhere. In 1882, for example, Nashville businessmen formed a "Citizens' Reform Association" which advocated the abolition of "the semi-political ward system" in favor of "a government run on business principles." The following year this group successfully challenged an intransigent Republican regime with a bipartisan, biracial coalition.[63]

Similarly, Birmingham voters formed a "Citizens' League" in 1892 designed to reform local government. Lasting from 1892 until 1896, this non-partisan, bi-racial coalition supported the "business administration" of government while denouncing "partisan patronage" and "fraud on the ballot."[64]

In neither case, however, were citizens' coalitions able to maintain a sustained presence in local politics, and few survived more than a few years. Ironically, the reformers' ethics proved to be their undoing. By rejecting superfluous patronage, citizens' leagues denied themselves any means of maintaining a lasting constituency. This proved especially true among black supporters who tended to expect rewards for their votes and often deserted in frustration

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[63]Don H. Doyle, *Nashville in the New South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville, 1985), 137-39.

[64]Carl V. Harris, *Political Power in Birmingham, 1871-1921* (Knoxville, 1977), 67-70.

after the first or second reform administration.[65]

Yet despite the failure of Chattanooga's Citizens' Movement, the political clout of Ochs and the *Times* continued to grow. The paper pressed hard for city improvements, especially a modern sewer system. Such construction was urgently necessary, the publisher believed, to prevent a repeat of the 1878 epidemic, an event he feared the city might not survive. "Let sanitary work begin *now* [*sic*]", the *Times* demanded "and be kept steadily going." If not, it warned, "the town and its mud will dry up together."[66]

Ochs also pushed for improved transportation facilities. Long a champion of better roads and rail service, he next set his sights on improving river traffic. The *Times* lobbied forcefully for more reliable navigation and Ochs soon rose to the leadership of a regional river improvement movement. In early 1880 he organized a river convention in Huntsville, Alabama to promote regional river interests. The conference was attended by 150 representatives from across the Tennessee Valley who discussed river policy and drafted resolutions requesting federal assistance. The delegates also elected Ochs secretary of the meeting, and the event propelled him to a

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[65]Doyle, *Nashville in the New South,* 139; Harris, *Political Power,* 68-70.

[66]*Chattanooga Times,* January 15, 1880.

position of regional importance.[67]

While Ochs was establishing his reputation politically, his family was making its presence known socially. Always the dutiful son, Adolph sent for his family in Knoxville as soon as possible and they arrived in December of 1878 to share in his success. He then installed them in a huge, rambling home in a respectable neighborhood at the base of Cameron Hill. There they lived in a collective and sometimes awkward environment.[68] Yet the family not only lived together, they also worked side by side; and Adolph transformed his business into a family enterprise which would later be called "a towering totem of nepotism."[69] Julius Ochs became treasurer of the business, George functioned as a reporter, and youngest brother Milton went to work in the paper's office.[70]

Such a large family was difficult to miss and the Ochses soon became a fixture on the local scene. Julius took the lead and was especially active in the community, joining a local Masonic lodge and the town's G.A.R. post. Still the liberal, he was devoted to philanthropic work and assisted in numerous charitable and welfare causes. For example, he

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[67]*Ibid.*, January 10, 1880.

[68]Johnson, *Honorable Titan*, 62, 67-68; John Wilson, *Chattanooga's Story* (Chattanooga: 1980), 274.

[69]Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 81.

[70]Johnson, *Honorable Titan*, 62; Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power*, 81, 88.

helped organize the town's first public hospital and even established the state's first Humane Society.[71] His children were also welcomed by the city, and George Ochs soon became a familiar sight patrolling the streets with his reporter's notebook.[72]

Judging from his private diary, Adolph Ochs also enjoyed an active social life. For the first week of 1882, for example, he recorded "Went New Years [*sic*] calling with Dr. Charles Wright, Henry Ewing, and L.H. Gilmon. Started at 2:30 and 'wound up' at the Stanton House at 1 o'clock at night." "I had," he boasted, "a most enjoyable day." The following night he reported going out again, this time with presumably better company: "Went out over very muddy roads . . . to bring in Miss Lula to attend a performance of Richard III."[73]

The Ochs family made their greatest impact on Chattanooga's Jews. Julius Ochs, who had served as lay rabbi for the Chattanooga and Knoxville congregations for a number of years, assumed leadership of the fledgling community.[74] Upon his arrival, he formally organized the group and established them as the Mitzpah congregation. In the early

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[71]Schuyler, ed., *Life and Letters*, 382-83.

[72]Timothy P. Ezzell, "The McCallie Letters: Portrait of a Chattanooga Family in the 1880s and 1890s" (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1988), 29.

[73]Ochs Diary, January 2, 3, 1882, Ochs Papers.

[74]Schuyler, *Life and Letters*, 382.

years they held services in a rented hall, but in 1882, with Adolph's financial assistance, the congregation erected the city's first synagogue.[75] The building, "neatly and plainly constructed," was dedicated by Dr. Isaac M. Wise, a leader in American Reform Judaism and Adolph's future father-in-law.[76]

This modest edifice soon became the center of a thriving and proud community, serving both its spiritual and social needs. In addition to housing religious services and providing a Hebrew cemetery, the synagogue also sponsored numerous social and charitable organizations, including a Hebrew Benevolent Society, a Hebrew Young Men's Literary Society, and a fraternal organization, the Concordia Club.[77] The latter provided numerous recreational activities for the congregation, including an annual masquerade ball which Adolph Ochs attended as "a court gentleman."[78]

Surprisingly, local Jews seldom encountered blatant

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[75]Works Progress Administration, "Inventory of the Church and Synagogue Archives of Tennessee, Jewish Congregations, Tennessee Historical Records Survey" (typescript, Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, 1941), 7.

[76]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox and Shelby*, 853; Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective* (New York, 1984), 13-19; Johnson, *Honorable Titan*, 72-75.

[77]Wilson, *Chattanooga's Story*, 192.

[78]*Chattanooga Times*, January 15, 1878, February 17, 1878.

anti-Semitism and years later, members of the Ochs family downplayed the presence of any religious prejudice. In a 1930 interview, George Ochs recalled, "In the South I, personally, never encountered anti-semitism." "Anti-Jewish feelings," he added, "were entirely unknown at that time."[79] Although this was no doubt an exaggeration, the city was generally tolerant towards Jews and their faith. Jews were active members of the community and paricipated in many local organizations. The Ochses, for example, were active members of virtually every civic and commercial group in the community; and Julius Ochs, an active Mason, was even elected chaplain of the city's G.A.R. post.[80] The elder Ochs, in fact, was so respected as a Biblical scholar that local Christians sometimes attended Jewish services just to hear his sermons.[81] There is also some evidence of marriage between elite Jewish and Christian families. Milton Ochs, for example, married a daughter of William D. Van Dyke, a prominent local attorney; and Thomas Crutchfield, a member of a wealthy and established family, married a daughter of D.B. Loveman, a distinguished Jewish merchant.[82]

Several factors might help explain this high level of tolerance in an otherwise racist society. One would

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[79]Schuyler, *Life and Letters*, 388-89.

[80]*Ibid.*, 382.

[81]*Chattanooga Times*, March 3, 1878.

[82]Wilson, *Chattanooga's Story*, 310, 263-64.

certainly be the type of Judaism practiced in Chattanooga. These were, after all, Reform Jews, whose faith was predicated on a strong belief in assimilation. The customs, appearance, and even the religious services of these Jews differed little from those of their Christian counterparts. Little wonder that most Chattanoogans viewed Jews not as a race, but simply as an alternative religious sect.

This explanation was certainly preferred by the Ochs family, who tended to blame anti-Semitism on traditional Jews who refused to assimilate. Ochs complained in 1892, "I have no patience with the often repeated assertion that there is a prejudice in this country as in Europe against the Jew." "Not so," he continued, "the prejudices exist against Jews who are unfit by their own conduct to associate with people of culture and refinement." He then went on to describe the plight of the American Jew. "All Jewish people," he lamented, "are classed alike until their merits, their genius, their culture, their refinement, or some other commendable trait of character . . . mark them as not of the common mind.[83]

Non-behavioral factors also played a role in Chattanooga's acceptance of Jews. The small number of Jews certainly played a role in the city's tolerance. With just a handful of families, Chattanooga's Jewish community posed no

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[83]Adolph S. Ochs to Oscar Levy, December 25, 1892, Ochs Papers.

threat to the dominant culture and thus generated little, if any resentment.[84]

On Christmas Day, 1879, at the very close of the decade, John E. MacGowan took a long look back at the history of Chattanooga since the war. As he compared the growing city on the eve of 1880 with the grubby depot of 1865, he boasted, "The Good Lord, and time, and ourselves have done wonders in these fifteen years."[85] As Adolph Ochs read these words in the columns of his newspaper, he must have nodded in agreement and seen in his city's transformation a bit of himself. For, in 1865, Adolph Ochs was a bit like Chattanooga--a struggling child in a troubled home. Yet, by the early 1880s Ochs had found acceptance and success in his adopted city. Both his community and his enterprise, the *Chattanooga Times*, were rapidly growing in both wealth and influence and his long-suffering family had at last found security. At the dawn of a new decade he, like his city, had boundless hope for the future, and as looked about his town on that cold, Christian holiday, he no doubt saw great things ahead.

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[84]Schuyler, *Life and Letters*, 388.

[85]*Chattanooga Times*, December 25, 1879.

Chapter 5

Bummers, Blacks and Bourbons: Municipal Politics, 1880-1885

During the early 1880s divisions among Chattanooga's Democrats grew, leading one observer to remark "there seems to be two Democratic parties here."[1] Always a diverse group, the party was an amalgamation of northerners and southerners who increasingly polarized into contentious Mugwump and Bourbon factions. As political unity waned, Mugwumps failed repeatedly in city elections, while Bourbons schemed unsuccessfully to wrest power away from the dominant Republican party. White Republicans, on the other hand, suffered from no such divisions. A homogeneous cluster of northerners and Union army veterans, they remained solid throughout the first half of the decade. Increasingly, however, Republican leaders faced dissension among black supporters. Freedmen, now educated in the ways of local politics, began demanding a greater share of the municipal spoils, and in doing so, forced unflattering concessions from an uneasy white elite.

The 1879 city election was especially unsettling for Chattanooga's Republican elite. Although they had prevailed in most ward elections and retained their hold on city

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[1]*Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, November 5, 1882.

government, they lost the city-wide mayor's race to a Mugwump Democrat. Worse still for them was the fact that among the Mugwumps' supporters was a handful of black Republicans. Aware that black voters were the key to political hegemony, Republicans acted quickly to buttress party loyalty among the city's freedmen. Using the powerful Board of Aldermen, Republicans dispensed patronage liberally among the city's blacks. By the following fall, virtually all minor positions in city government were held by blacks, a practice which the *Chattanooga Times* complained was "too flagrant and too notorious to have been overlooked by any observant citizen."[2]

Despite Mugwump objections, Republicans continued to use patronage to ensure black support. In October 1880, just prior to the nominating convention for the fall election, Republican aldermen added two blacks to the city's ten-man police force, thus bringing to four the total number of black officers. The *Times'* John MacGowan quickly denounced the appointments as "an unworthy and partisan motive." "The colored population of this city is considerably less than one-third of the whole" he maintained, "yet nearly one-half of the peace officers and all of the municipal servants appointed by the Board of Aldermen are drawn from this class." Such appointments, he contended, were made "simply to keep the negroes solid for the Republican ticket, and

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[2]*Chattanooga Times*, October 28, 29, 1880.

without the slightest reference to the fitness of the men to the place."[3]

MacGowan's objections to black officers were both political and racial. Though he admitted that one of the men in question was "an officer above the average in efficiency and deportment," the others, he asserted, were unfit for duty. MacGowan announced, "We have no objection to the negro in any station he is fit to fill," but added, "Not one in five hundred of them is at all capable of discharging the delicate and onerous duties of a peace officer." "Very few of them," he concluded, "have the judgement and discretion required for such a place." In addition, an officer was required to be "a man of superior coolness, courage, independence, and honesty," qualities MacGowan presumably found lacking in most black candidates.[4]

MacGowan also worried how a freedman's status might affect his effectiveness as an officer. "A peace officer," he explained, "has to deal with the very worst element in society," namely the "depraved white people who raise disturbances on the streets, promote brawls in saloons, and generally misbehave themselves." Such miscreants, MacGowan feared, might "regard the attempt of a colored man to exercise authority over them as abundant excuse for a fresh and violent outbreak." "This being true," he reasoned, "it

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[3]*Ibid.*, October 28, 1880.

[4]*Ibid.*

follows that a colored policeman, unless he is a very superior man, will shirk his duty, when an inferior white man would act without hesitation."[5]

In the end, MacGowan surmised that blacks would be better off free from the burdens of civic responsibility. The Colonel argued: "It is no kindness to a race just emerging from the ignorance of heathenism and slavery, to teach its most sprightly and intelligent class that office is the chief end of the American citizen." "We think we know the peculiarities of the negro character tolerably well," he opined, "and our observation leads us to conclude that the quickest way to ruin a promising man of that race is to confer on him a petty office." Such positions, he contended, make "a worthless devil of the average white man, nine cases in ten," and thus, invariably, "the negro is utterly and irretrievably spoiled by the badge of authority."[6]

Republicans, however, were unmoved by MacGowan's opposition, and their attempts to appease black supporters soon paid off. In the 1880 city elections a Republican caucus nominated an all-white ticket led by John A. Hart, the party's mayoral contender. The lack of black candidates, however, proved to be a sore spot among the city's freedmen. One such voter complained, "Seven-eighths of the voters of the Republicans of this city have hair like I, but not a

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[5]*Ibid.*, October 29, 1880.

[6]*Ibid.*

single colored man was nominated." Another took the floor at a Republican rally to declare that "his people wanted and expected some offices, as it was by their votes the white man got his." He then advised his white listeners: "Stick to the black man, and he will stick to you."[7]

Democrats were quick to capitalize on the breach in the Republican ranks. Democratic politicians openly wooed black voters, calling them "an integral part of the constituency" with "rights that should be respected." M.J. O'Brian, the Democratic candidate for mayor, remarked that "the four hundred white Republicans in the city rule over the one thousand negroes with an unsparing hand." To the city's freedmen he declared, "They [the Republicans] profess to be your champion," then asked "Have they carried out this profession?"[8]

Many blacks, eager to reprimand white Republicans, heeded the Democratic call and bolted from the party of Lincoln. They did so, however, not out of enthusiasm for Democratic candidates, but rather as a means of demonstrating their political clout. As one black voter put it: "The very moment the colored people say they will be men instead of monkeys, they will get dollars instead of nickels."[9]

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[7]*Ibid.*, November 18, 1880.

[8]*Ibid.*, November 17, 19, 1880.

[9]*Ibid.*, November 18, 1880.

The split in the black vote resulted in an unusually close election. John A. Hart, the Republican candidate for mayor, won his race by just 117 votes, an amazingly small margin considering the fact that O'Brian, his opponent, was a novice politician who was chosen by Democrats only after the party's first three choices declined the nomination (see Table 5.1).[10] Hart did, however, win in four of the five wards, with O'Brian taking only the traditionally Democratic Fifth Ward.

Democrats fared better, however, in ward races, winning three of five seats on the Board of Aldermen. Besides winning in the working-class Fifth Ward, Democratic candidates also prevailed narrowly in the First and Third wards, districts which voted for Hart in the mayoral race. The Third Ward result was particularly surprising, as this neighborhood contained both the homes of black ironworkers and the Cameron Hill residences of northern industrialists. Republicans won seats only in the Second Ward and the largely black Fourth Ward, but still maintained a majority with six seats on the ten-man board (see Table 5.2).[11]

O'Brian was still trying to lure black voters the following November, when he was again the Democratic candidate for mayor. He declared: "If the colored voters stood by the Democrats half as faithfully as they did by the

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[10]*Ibid.*, November 14, 1880.

[11]*Ibid.*, November 19, 1880.

Table 5.1

1880 Mayoral Election

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
Hart (R)	1,244	246	250	282	291	175
O'Brian (D)	1,127	214	195	252	211	255

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, November 19, 1880.

Table 5.2

1880 Ward Elections

Ward	Candidate	Vote
1	G.H. Jarnigan (D)	232
1	C.H. Richmond (R)	223
2	J.C. Vance (R)	234
2	Z.C. Patten (D)	208
3	J.J. Sullivan (D)	249
3	A.P. Thompson (R)	237
4	E.M. Wight (R)	296
4	C. Marshall (D)	113
5	A. Tepenaw (D)	234
5	C.C. Howard (R)	196

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, November 19, 1880.

Republicans, we would show them ten times the attention." He then accused Republicans of denying blacks "their just rights." "You have five colored voters to one white Republican voter," he explained, and then asked "how are the offices divided?" O'Brian insisted that freedmen should "demand" fair treatment.[12]

Using such tactics, local Democrats may have drawn off a handful of black voters. Of far more value to the party's candidates, however, was continued discontent with the city's police department. Some residents grew more upset with the department's racial composition as Republican aldermen increased the number of black policemen on the ten-man force to five.[13] Yet other citizens were more concerned with the qualifications of the city's officers than with their race. John MacGowan found that "fully half" of the town's "night force" was comprised of "men who shirk, loaf and can not be induced to do their duty."[14]

The ineffectiveness of the police force was made more clear by a crime wave which struck the city in 1881. The *Times* reported an increase in "thieving, burglary, highway robbery [and] horse stealing" which were often "accompanied with efforts to murder the victims of plunder."[15] Much of

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[12]*Ibid.*, November 17, 1881.

[13]*Ibid.*

[14]*Ibid.*, October 6, 1881.

[15]*Ibid.*

the crime was blamed on a growing population of unemployed men, drawn to the city by its numerous rail lines and its growing reputation as a boom town. In October the *Times* warned, "the city is fearfully infested with tramps, who are coming down from the North in swarms."[16] Some crime was also attributed to Chattanooga's geographic position. The city's proximity to Georgia and Alabama made it a popular haven for criminals fleeing justice in those states.[17]

An examination of the Republican *Weekly Commercial* confirms reports of growing lawlessness. In the fall of 1881, the paper reported that the city was "infested" with "night marauders" and "sneak theives." The *Commercial*'s editor further complained that local criminals were becoming "altogether too bold" and suggested that "a few of them be welcomed with cold lead."[18]

Crime thus became an issue among voters in the 1881 campaign. O'Brian seized on the issue in debates and accused Republicans of ignoring the increase in robberies as they manipulated the police force "simply to advance party ends." On this issue, the Democratic candidate found a strong ally in the *Chattanooga Times*. Lawlessness, the paper cautioned,

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[16]*Chattanooga Times*, October 27, 1881; Henry M. Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga" (2 vols., typescript, Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, 1916), 2: 102.

[17]*Ibid.*, November 14, 1880.

[18]*Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, October 2, September 25, 1881.

"threatens to become chronic unless heroic treatment is applied." "We must improve our police force," John MacGowan contended, "by weeding out the incompetents, cowards, loafers, and generally worthless members." He then declared: "Bounce these worthless bummers, Messrs Aldermen, or we shall see to it that the people are fully informed to the end that you and your bummers shall be bounced together."[19]

Republicans, for their part, concentrated on winning back the loyalty of black voters. In the 1881 city convention the party nominated a pair of black ward candidates, William C. Hodge, a popular and respected minister, and John E. "Jumbo" Patten, a Third Ward politico. Republicans also defended their use of patronage, especially with regard to the police force. Henry Clay Evans, the mayoral candidate, expressed confidence in the force and blamed increasing crime on a "bad system" engendered by Democratic aldermen.[20]

Calling the local Republican administration a "disgrace to any self respecting and enlightened people," the *Times* led a spirited campaign against the incumbent party. In the ensuing elections, however, Democrats lost the mayor's race to Henry Clay Evans. Evans' margin of victory seems to indicate that Republican overtures were successful in returning black voters to their fold. The Democratic party

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[19]*Chattanooga Times*, October 6, 1881.

[20]*Ibid.*, November 16, 1881.

did much better in ward races, though, winning seats in the First, Third and Fifth wards for the second consecutive year (for election results, see Tables 5.3 and 5.4). As in 1880 Democrats prevailed in the First and Third wards even though the majority of voters in these districts preferred the Republican candidate for mayor. The party's victory in the racially-mixed Third Ward was most likely due to a preference among white voters for the popular Hugh Whiteside over his black opponent, John E. Patten.[21]

These wins gave Democrats a majority, with seven of the ten seats on the Board of Aldermen.[22] Yet Democrats still lacked the eight seats necessary to form a quorum and Republicans, reluctant to give up their control of patronage, began boycotting board meetings.[23] One vote short of a quorum and unable to conduct city business, Democrats turned to William C. Hodge, a black Republican alderman. To gain Hodge's cooperation, Democrats appointed four black policemen, as well as a black jailer and sexton. In return, Hodge attended Board meetings and gave Democrats the eighth alderman necessary for a quorum.[24] Hodge, however, pressed for more black patronage and through the year Democrats continued to fill vacancies on the police force with

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[21]*Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, November 20, 1881.

[22]*Chattanooga Times*, October 7, 1881.

[23]*Ibid.*, December 21, 1881.

[24]*Ibid.*, December 23, 29, 1881.

Table 5.3

1881 Mayoral Election

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
Evans (R)	1,523	266	341	372	361	183
O'Brian (D)	1,003	219	140	185	175	284

Source: *Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, November 20, 1881.

Table 5.4

1881 Ward Elections

Ward	Candidate	Vote
1	J.H. Bankston (D)	256
1	J. Wassman (R)	227
2	W.L. Dugger (R)	268
2	Z.C. Patten (D)	215
3	H. Whiteside (D)	275
3	J.E. Patten (R)	267
4	W.C. Hodge (R)	308
4	J.F. Shipp (D)	220
5	J.W. Thornton (D)	304
5	G.W. Wheland (R)	167

Source: *Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, November 20, 1881.

freedmen until the department was "nearly all colored."[25]

Hodge's manipulation of the board was viewed as an outrage by Bourbon Democrats. To them it seemed as though white aldermen were kowtowing to the demands of a black parvenu. The following September, Hugh Whiteside, a Bourbon alderman, proposed amendments to the city charter which would increase the number of city wards from five to eight. Not surprisingly, the proposed new ward boundaries would also curtail black political power. Republican aldermen, unwilling to risk a vote on Whiteside's plan, bolted the meeting and for a time effectively killed any attempt at redistricting the city.[26]

Having failed to amend the city's charter, Bourbon Democrats next attempted to gain control of the Board in the 1882 elections. They received considerable assistance with the establishment of a Bourbon newspaper, the *Chattanooga Daily Democrat*. Called an "organ of devilment" by the *Times*, the *Democrat* was an outspoken critic of the city's Republicans. Openly racist, the publication referred to blacks as "apes," "baboons," "ourangoutangs [*sic*]," and reportedly "abused them in all the slang of the slums." The *Democrat* also attacked the town's northern population. Both Ochs and MacGowan were forced to defend their Ohio birth and

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[25]*Chattanooga Times*, December 25, 1882; *Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, November 19, 1882.

[26]*Chattanooga Times*, September 6, 1882.

the *Times* condemned "the ruffianism which abuses our chief manufactory and our leading moneyed interests."[27]

The inflammatory rhetoric of the *Democrat* raised racial tensions in the city and a violent confrontation seemed likely. The paper even seemed to encourage a riot by hinting, "it is easy to get a mob up in Chattanooga."[28] On the night of November 14, following a political meeting, a group of black Republicans built a bonfire to promote the upcoming election. Saturated with "whiskey and beer," the crowd degenerated into "a mob of half-drunken negroes" and soon both the rally and the fire were growing out of control. When a fire company arrived to extinguish the growing blaze, it was pelted with stones by the mob who "did not intend to be run over" by "a Democratic company." Only when police arrived was the danger quelled. The incident sent a wave of fear through the community.[29]

Many citizens, anticipating the worst, armed themselves, and the *Times* lamented, "For the first time since the war we are in danger of being disgraced by mob scenes in our streets."[30] Others attempted to diffuse the tension and urged patience among the city's blacks. John

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[27]*Ibid.*, November 15, 16, 17, 1882.

[28]*Chattanooga Daily Democrat*, quoted in the *Chattanooga Times*, November 17, 1882.

[29]*Chattanooga Times*, November 15, 1882.

[30]*Ibid.*, November 18, 1882.

MacGowan pleaded, "we have always been for concord and good will between men of all races," and then added, "we cherish no race prejudices." MacGowan further suggested that "even colored people might be superior to those who ill-treat and blackguard them." He concluded with a stern warning to Bourbons, predicting that it was "both brutal and suicidal" for them to "misuse the negro."[31]

The latter part of MacGowan's statement turned out to be true, for the Bourbon campaign resulted in political self-destruction. By viciously attacking both blacks and northerners, Bourbon Democrats alienated much of the local electorate. Blacks and moderate Democrats, fearful of a Bourbon victory, voted overwhelmingly for Republican candidates in the 1882 city elections. It was the greatest Republican victory since Reconstruction, with the party winning the mayor's race and all but one seat on the Board of Aldermen. Republicans won by record margins with each of the party's successful ward candidates earning majorities of well over one hundred votes. In the First Ward alone, the Republican candidate for alderman garnered a remarkable 67 percent of the vote and in the Third Ward, usually the scene of close races, the party's candidate earned a majority of over 15 percent. Though mayoral candidates benefitted from population growth, Henry Clay Evans, again the Republican candidate, won a second term in office, easily beating his

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[31]*Ibid.*, November 16, 1882.

challenger, J.F. Shipp, by over 600 votes. As in the ward races, Evans prevailed in all but the working-class Fifth Ward, winning handily in each of the other four districts (for election results, see Tables 5.5 and 5.6).[32]

Both sides were quick to acknowledge the role played by the Bourbon press in the Republican landslide. Republican leaders jokingly and unanimously passed a resolution thanking "the editors and proprietors of the Chattanooga Daily Democrat" for the "distinguished assistance they have rendered the Republican party in the city canvass and election."[33] Likewise, John MacGowan attributed the election results to "race prejudice engendered by an incendiary journal" which drove black voters "with a whoop for the party they naturally or unnaturally belong with."[34]

What disturbed MacGowan most, however, was not the political defeat but the reckless and irresponsible nature of the Bourbon attack: "A riot before the election, which the bourbon [*sic*] faction tried its best to bring about, would have hurt the city ten times worse than a government composed entirely of negroes could." The editor then credited "the honor of the colored voters" for the failure of "these incendiary events." "Like provocation to an equal

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[32]*Chattanooga Times*, November 17, 1882; *Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, November 19, 1882.

[33]*Chattanooga Times*, November 17, 1882; *Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, November 19, 1882.

[34]*Chattanooga Times*, December 25, 1882.

Table 5.5

1882 Ward Elections

Ward	Candidate	Vote
1	A.J. Gahagan (R)	373
1	W. Nixon (D)	120
2	T. Miller (R)	316
2	C. Rape (D)	205
3	C. Snyder (R)	459
3	H.A. McQuade (D)	244
4	C.H. Peabody (R)	364
4	C.W. Marsh (D)	177
5	A. Tepenaw (D)	301
5	C.C. Howard (R)	291

Source: *Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, November 19, 1882.

Table 5.6

1882 Mayoral Election

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
Evans (R)	1,809	367	334	471	359	278
Shipp (D)	1,188	261	190	230	183	324

Source: *Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, November 19, 1882.

number of white men," he contended, "would have resulted in serious collisions and bloodshed."[35]

The new Board wasted no time in repaying the freedmen for their loyal support, for among the aldermen's first acts was the appointment of seven black policemen to an expanded twelve-man force. The move provoked immediate criticism from the Mugwump press, and MacGowan immediately denounced the act as "a disgrace to the intelligence of the members of the City Council."[36] Calling the new officers "colored ward bummers," he charged that they were "certain to lack common sense and ordinary discretion." The editor then pledged to combat corruption in the new administration and proclaimed the *Times* would "raise its voice a stave higher now when the new Board out-Herods Herod in its defiance of public feeling and neglect of the public interests."[37]

Colonel MacGowan next lashed out at Bourbon supporters for their role in creating the new Republican administration: "Less violence and folly among the Bourbon lunatics would have assured more conservative conduct on the part of the city government." As for those southern Democrats now "howling" over the police force, he mused: "The incendiary who kindles a fire is none the less criminal

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[35]*Ibid.*, December 25, 1882.

[36]*Ibid.*, December 20, 1882.

[37]*Ibid.*, December 21, 1882.

because he happens to be the first to raise the alarm."[38]

In the end, however, MacGowan recognized the power of the black vote and he bemoaned the fact that "no party can carry Chattanooga without toadying to the negro."[39] Unable to abolish black patronage, Mugwumps began efforts to control it and in early 1883 the *Times* began promoting efforts to reform city government. Specifically, the paper began to press for a non-partisan Board of Public Works. Such a plan would take the power of patronage from "wasteful" and "dishonest" aldermen and place it in the hands of sensible and responsible businessmen.[40]

This proposal found little support, however, among Bourbon Democrats who sought to purge the city government entirely of blacks and northerners. Instead, they developed a radical scheme to seize the city government from the Republicans and place it under the control of fellow southern conservatives.

The Bourbon plan had its genesis in the plague-ridden city of Memphis. Having endured multiple yellow fever epidemics in the late 1870s, Memphis was on the verge of political and economic collapse by the early 1880s. Many, in fact, felt the city would never recover and a few observers

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[38]*Ibid.*, December 25, 1882.

[39]*Ibid.*

[40]*Ibid.*, January 2, 1883.

advocated abandoning the town altogether.[41] In the wake of these catastrophes, Memphis soon found itself on the brink of bankruptcy and unable to provide even basic city services. In desperation, townspeople petitioned the state to repeal the city's charter in January, 1879. This essentially dissolved the city government and transferred control of the metropolis to state authorities. No longer a city, Memphis became a "taxing district" which was administered from Nashville.[42]

The people of Memphis undertook this plan as an emergency response to multiple disasters and saw it as a method of maintaining order until their city could recover. In it, however, Chattanooga's Bourbons discovered a means of freeing their community from Republican rule. If they could repeal Chattanooga's charter, they would place control of city in the hands of the state government. Tennessee's governor, a like-minded conservative Democrat, would then appoint local Bourbons as administrators of the new taxing district. The Bourbon faction could then rule the city virtually by decree and without interference from Republicans, blacks or Mugwumps.

Rumors of this municipal *coup d'etat* appeared in early

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[41]Khaled J. Bloom, *The Mississippi Valley's Great Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878* (Baton Rouge, 1993), 229-32.

[42]Joseph H. Cartwright, *The Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880s* (Knoxville, 1976), 137-39.

January, when the *Times* reported that "leading businessmen" were considering a "simpler and cheaper form of government" similar to the taxing district found in Memphis.[43] Such stories were soon quelled, however, and nothing more was heard until March 17, when the *Times* revealed the Bourbon plot. "Definite action has now been taken," the paper announced, "to abolish our present city charter and establish a taxing district." This movement, allegedly initiated by several "substantial citizens," provoked an immediate uproar in the city. "A clap of thunder in the clear blue sky," the *Times* observed, "could not have caused a greater consternation among the unsuspecting"[44]

Within hours of the initial announcement a Bourbon delegation departed Chattanooga for Nashville. Once there, it presented a petition to the state legislature requesting repeal of Chattanooga's city charter. This document, supposedly signed by "leading business men" and "members of both political parties," asserted that such an annulment was necessary to save the town from a wasteful and corrupt Republican administration. Among the abuses mentioned were high taxes, "squandered" revenues, and a general neglect of streets and city services.[45]

At the same time Bourbon delegates also circulated a

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[43]*Chattanooga Times*, January 2, 1883.

[44]*Ibid.*, March 17, 18, 1883.

[45]*Ibid.*, March 18, 1883.

"manifesto" among legislators which revealed many of their racial and political motives. They complained: "The white Republicans are willing to make any concession to the negroes in order to retain power." "To this end," they lamented, "they [Republicans] have policed the city with negroes almost entirely, rewarding those who have shown themselves to be most malicious towards the Democrats and whites." In addition, they also revealed that "the few whites holding office" had "no sympathy with our people."[46]

As evidence of the "degrading abuses" committed by black office-holders, the Bourbons cited a recent incident in a public school. According to the circular the Reverend Allen Nickerson, a black school board member, had recently paid an unannounced visit to a local white school. Once there, he reportedly ordered the teacher to "line the children up before him" for questioning. He then allegedly interrogated the "young white lady teacher" on her methods of instruction and examined the textbooks, which were said to be "grossly partisan" and of "the most ultra radical type." "If these things are not checked," the Bourbons warned, "we will soon have negro teachers over our children." The manifesto then concluded with a plea to the legislators: "We ask you, in the name of common justice, to

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[46]*Chattanooga Times*, March 25, 1883; *Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, March 25, 1883.

destroy this unholy alliance of unscrupulous men."[47]

The *Chattanooga Times*, caught off-guard by the surprise announcement, was strangely silent in the initial days of the charter crises. As the true nature of the Bourbon plan became clear, however, the paper's editor responded with his usual pugnacity: "The proposed bill is an absurd jumble; contrary to good sense; subversive to the popular will; and certain to injure any city it might be applied to." Though MacGowan admitted "the abundant occasion for reform in our municipal machinery," he insisted "the millennium will not be ushered in by placing our affairs under a junta of politicians and speculators through the arbitrary power of the governor."[48]

Bourbon pleas, however, found sympathetic ears in the state legislature. A resolution was drafted which found quick approval in the House and seemed likely to pass in the Senate.[49] Adolph Ochs, believing the proposed bill would undermine popular government, committed the full power of his press to defeat the repeal movement.[50] MacGowan, spoiling for a fight, assumed leadership of the anti-Bourbon

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[47]*Chattanooga Times*, March 26, 1883; *Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, March 25, 1883; Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 130.

[48]*Chattanooga Times*, March 20, 1883.

[49]*House Journal of the Forty-Third General Assembly of the State of Tennessee* (Nashville, 1883), 775, 794.

[50] Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 130-31.

crusade and warned citizens of the "political radicalism" which would send "the city and the country with it headlong to hades." The repeal bill, he argued, would be akin to "swapping the devil for a witch, or far worse" for "it would merely be swapping out one set of political strikers for another, whose appetites are ravenous, being long barred away from the crib."[51]

The *Times* then methodically attacked the Bourbon grievances. Addressing the contention that Republicans had carelessly appointed blacks to city offices and the police force, the *Times* pointed out that many of the Bourbon Democrats had themselves recommended blacks for patronage following the 1881 election. "We think it rather small of them," MacGowan observed, "to now turn on, and rend Sambo, their late confrere and official companion."[52]

The paper next examined the purported incident involving the black school commissioner. Citing numerous sources, the *Times* revealed that Nickerson did not go to the school unannounced, but had arrived at the request and in the company of two white commissioners. Witnesses stated he stayed for only fifteen minutes and did little more than look at the various classrooms. The school's principal, in fact, recalled that neither she, nor any teacher, "heard him

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[51]*Chattanooga Times*, March 25, 1883.

[52]*Ibid.*

utter one sentence."[53]

In a further rebuke to the Bourbon assertions, Nickerson resigned from the school board. In a letter addressed to Mayor Evans and dated March 25, the minister defended his actions as commissioner. Stating that he had "devoted the best years of my life to the improvement of my people in morals and education," Nickerson insisted he visited the white school "to gain such information as would enable me to be of more service" to his community. Despite this fact, he tendered his resignation so that "another who will not invoke such opposition will be elected in my place."[54]

In a final blow to the repeal scheme, the *Times* published, complete with signatures, the original Bourbon petition. The document revealed itself to represent far fewer than the "majority of property-owners" claimed by its proponents. In fact, just forty-one of the city's eighteen hundred property taxpayers signed the complaint. The paper further disclosed that most signers paid no municipal taxes and that together they owned less than five percent of all personal property in the city. Ample indications of fraud were also uncovered. Many signatures appeared to be signed with the same pen and by the same hand, while others

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[53]*Ibid.*, March 27, 1883.

[54]Allen Nickerson to Henry Clay Evans, March 25, 1883, Adolph S. Ochs Papers, *New York Times* Archives.

belonged to non-residents and mere boys.[55]

On the day after these disclosures a delegation of city officials, including Mayor Henry Clay Evans, travelled to Nashville. Once there the men placed a copy of the previous day's *Chattanooga Times* on the desk of every state senator. They also issued their own circular, which defended the Republican administration and refuted Bourbon allegations of corruption. The Republican delegation's presence in the Senate increased tensions, and a bitter debate thus ensued between supporters and opponents of the repeal.[56] At one point in the proceedings D.L. Snodgrass, a member of Chattanooga's Bourbon delegation, made an impassioned speech in favor of the repeal. Addressing the senators, he condemned the city's use of black officers: "If any of you gentlemen will come over to Chattanooga and get on a little bender, we will furnish a nigger to arrest you, a nigger to lock you up, and a nigger to take care of you after you get in jail." Snodgrass then pointed dramatically to Colonel Halbert B. Case, Chattanooga's Republican state senator, and declared: "Pass this bill and it will end the occupation of that gentleman and he and all his northern yankee friends in Chattanooga will leave the state."[57]

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[55]*Chattanooga Times*, March 25, 26, 1883.

[56]*Ibid.*, March 27, 1883.

[57]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby Counties of Tennessee* (1887; reprint, Nashville, 1974), 895.

Snodgrass' tirade did little to convince the senators of the necessity of the charter repeal. If anything, it drove them away from the Bourbon plan. Many senators were put off by the crude nature of the Bourbon attack and expressed a weariness with all the "niggerisms" being "drummed" into their ears.[58] Still others, no doubt, wanted no part of such a poorly executed political fraud. As word of the *Times'* revelations spread through the state, support for the repeal bill melted away.[59]

Fearful of losing, Bourbon delegates met with Republican legislators and drafted a "compromise bill," designed to reform, rather than replace, the existing city government.[60] The compromise was instantly praised by moderate Democrats; and Chattanooga's Republicans, having now lost Mugwump support, reluctantly accepted the plan.[61] The compromise bill passed the legislature in late March and immediately struck at the heart of the existing ward system. The number of aldermen was reduced from ten to six, one from each of the five wards and one representing the city at large. The mayor's term of office was extended to two years and, in a move intended to prevent successful black

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[58]*Chattanooga Times*, March 27, 1883.

[59]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby*, 295-96.

[60]*Senate Journal of the Forty-Third General Assembly of the State of Tennessee* (Nashville, 1883), 655, 731.

[61]*Chattanooga Times*, March 28, 31, 1883.

candidacies, all aldermen, regardless of their ward, were now to be elected by the entire electorate of the city. Aldermen would continue to serve two-year terms, but, in order to facilitate yearly elections, the initial holders of the fourth, fifth and at large seats would serve only one year. The bill also required the registration of all voters, and, in a provision designed to keep poor, and presumably black, candidates from even running, all aldermen now had to post a ten-thousand-dollar bond before taking office.[62]

The compromise also effectively excluded blacks from the police department by creating a three-man police commission. This body, appointed for three-year terms by the governor, was granted complete control and authority over the force. This eliminated, in the minds of Democrats, the most odious element of Republican rule, but the proposed reforms did little to improve the quality of local law enforcement. Policemen remained, for the most part, poorly trained political hacks and corruption and malfeasance continued to plague the department.[63]

Though the compromise was universally hailed by Democrats, Republicans condemned the legislation as "the worst government Chattanooga has ever seen."[64] The city's

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[62]*Chattanooga Times*, March 28, 1883; Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 131.

[63]*Chattanooga Times*, March 28, 1883.

[64]*Chattanooga Weekly Commercial*, April 1, 1883.

blacks were especially outraged, and their anger was reflected during the 1883 city elections. Black voters vowed they would support no Republicans associated with the compromise and insisted on the right to choose candidates for some city offices. One black leader, John E. "Jumbo" Patten, declared that blacks would "not submit to one alderman and will probably demand two." He also suggested that his followers would vote Democratic if pro-compromise Republicans were nominated.[65]

Faced with such threats, white Republicans made extraordinary concessions to the city's blacks. A black caucus was allowed to hand-pick two of the party's candidates for alderman, including William C. Hodge, a freedman. Blacks also chose the mayoral candidate, Charles Snyder, a white alderman and vocal opponent of the charter compromise. Though these steps secured black support, they also alienated moderate Republicans, many of whom threatened to bolt the party rather than submit to black demands. Democrats were also shocked by this blatant display of black political power. MacGowan deemed the Republican actions "a disgrace" and tagged Snyder "pet of the negroes." He further warned voters that nothing "could so injure the credit and good name of Chattanooga as to have it go abroad that our Mayor and Aldermen are the puppets of ignorant unscrupulous

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[65]*Chattanooga Times*, October 2, 1883.

negroes, led and aided by bad white men."[66]

Despite these protests, Republican concessions to blacks paid off handsomely. In city-wide elections, Republicans won every seat on the new six-man Board (see Table 5.7). In each case Republican candidates amassed comfortable majorities, usually winning by over one hundred votes. Republican Newell Sanders even captured the working-class Fifth Ward seat, prevailing by 171 votes. Democrats did manage to elect the venerable Hugh L. Whiteside as mayor, but he won by just nine votes over Snyder, a young and inexperienced politician (see Table 5.8). The first Democratic mayor since 1879, Whiteside owed his narrow victory, in part, to a desire for stability on the part of some voters. Many feared Snyder might challenge the compromise bill and, in doing so, reignite political and racial animosity. Whiteside, however, defended the status quo and with his victory the *Times* predicted, "the agitation over the charter will cease" and "the city will have peace and quiet for two years."[67]

The success enjoyed by Republicans stunned local Democrats, most of whom had assumed that charter reforms would eliminate, or at least curtail, black power. Yet it was the Democrats who suffered most from the charter changes. Though about four hundred voters were lost to the

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[66]*Ibid.*, October 2, 4, 6, 1883.

[67]*Ibid.*, October 9, 10, 1883.

Table 5.7
1883 Ward Elections

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
			Alderman At Large			
Henderson (R)	1,324	274	218	310	320	202
Dickenson (D)	1,241	316	206	259	195	274
			First Ward			
Schwartz (R)	1,415	298	236	336	339	206
Bryan (D)	1,158	293	191	225	174	275
			Second Ward			
Dyer (R)	1,381	287	231	334	325	204
Ragsdale (D)	1,182	291	199	232	187	273
			Third Ward			
Evans (R)	1,453	317	250	347	330	209
Butler (D)	1,126	269	182	220	182	273
			Fourth Ward			
Hodge (R)	1,333	279	218	317	322	197
Hope (D)	1,239	306	207	244	203	279
			Fifth Ward			
Sanders (R)	1,383	294	220	330	330	209
Hughes (D)	1,212	296	213	238	193	272

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 10, 1883.

Table 5.8

1883 Mayoral Election

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
Snyder (R)	1,275	168	213	296	304	194
Whiteside (D)	1,284	315	207	270	209	283

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 10, 1883.

registration provisions of the charter amendments, the vast majority of the disfranchised were working-class whites, the heart of the Bourbon constituency. In the Fifth Ward alone, Democrats lost over one hundred of these voters. Blacks, however, were registered with "system and exactness" by the well-oiled Republican machine and their numbers were thus affected little by the compromise.[68]

Local Republicans experienced more problems in the 1884 city elections. That year, as per the 1883 compromise, voters chose new aldermen for the fourth, fifth and at-large seats. County elections were also held that fall, and Chattanoogans were to elect a new state representative. At their county convention Republicans, still seeking to placate black voters, nominated a black candidate for the state legislature. The nomination of a black man for a state

[68]*Ibid,* October 10, 1883.

office left many white Republicans dumbfounded. Angry and embarrassed, some supporters bolted the party while others refused to vote for black candidates.[69] These defections, helped by a low voter turnout, cost Republicans the Fourth Ward seat when the party's black candidate, J.J. Brown, was defeated by a Democrat, Creed Bates. Republicans succeeded, however, in retaining control of the other contested seats, including the Democratic Fifth Ward (see Table 5.9). Ironically, the charter amendments which enabled Democrats to take the Republicans' stronghold had cost them their own. Democrats soon further realized that, had the Republicans run a white candidate for the Fourth Ward seat, they might have lost that race as well. Defeated and disgusted, Bourbon Democrats gave up on the 1883 charter amendments and once again petitioned the legislature for assistance.[70]

In early 1885 a leading Chattanooga Bourbon, Webster J. Colburn, launched another drive to change the city's charter radically. In a petition to the legislature he suggested amendments which would place control of city government in the hands of a board of public works, a board of school commissioners, and a board of police commissioners.[71] All commissioners were to be appointed by Tennessee's Bourbon

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[69]*Ibid.*, October 12, 13, 1884.

[70]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby*, 896; *Chattanooga Times*, October 15, 1884.

[71]*Chattanooga Times*, February 15, 1885.

governor, William B. Bate, a man who, according to John MacGowan, knew "about as much about the wants and wishes of the people as does the infant emperor of China."[72]

Table 5.9
1884 Ward Elections

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
			Alderman At Large			
Williams (R)	1,470	323	251	331	316	249
Bankston (D)	1,091	214	164	211	204	298
			Fourth Ward			
Brown (R)	1,187	241	183	256	271	188
Bates (D)	1,390	286	230	263	247	364
			Fifth Ward			
Sanders (R)	1,271	277	211	288	284	211
Hill (D)	1,171	246	195	226	204	300

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 15, 1884.

Once again Republicans and Mugwumps joined forces to combat the proposed changes and, as in 1883, the *Times* led the attack. Claiming the Colburn plan was "cooked in a back office," MacGowan considered it "an effort to disfranchise the large, liberal and progressive element of the city, which is an immense majority, and place it under the

[72]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby*, 896; *Chattanooga Times*, April 4, 1883.

management of reactionary Bourbons, who are in a minority so small they can only hope to get any local spoils by favor of the legislature and governor." The editor then attacked the notion that Bourbon control was the only solution to the city's woes: "It does not follow . . . That if we dread, deprecate, and ward off bummer rule based on the votes of ignorant black men, that as an alternative we must be willing to accept the bosship of Bourbon bunglers of the Bate breed."[73]

MacGowan then questioned the short-sighted racial policies of the "bigoted Bourbons." Blacks, he reminded them, were essential to the region's survival: "They cultivate and harvest our cotton and food crops; they build and largely operate our railroads, furnaces, mills, and factories; they furnish the labor which produces ninety percent of the raw materials raised in the section." In short, he proclaimed, "the presence of the race is a necessity to the South."[74]

Though MacGowan admitted that blacks were "entirely unfit to rule" due to their "inherent disabilities," he defended their rights as citizens and expressed hope for their future. The Colonel predicted that as blacks "acquire property and grow in knowledge of their interests and duties" they would divide politically along traditional

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[73]*Chattanooga Times*, February 17, 18,19, 1885.

[74]*Ibid.*, February 19, 1885.

party lines. He then warned Bourbons of the dangers of alienating this potential mass of voters. The black voter, he insisted, "must not be abandoned to the uses of scamps, who sail under the colors of the Republican party for piratical purposes." Instead, the "conservative and thoughtful Democrat" should be the black's "real friend" and confer on him "the dignity and honor of citizenship."[75]

Faced with the effective and persuasive opposition of the *Times*, the legislature again sought a compromise and thus proposed a new bill which placed appointive powers in the hands of the mayor, rather than the governor. When this bill failed to pass, it was amended further to make its implementation subject to approval by the residents of Chattanooga.[76] Knowing such a referendum would probably be lost, the bill's Bourbon supporters refused to bring the matter before the voters and the city's charter was, for a time, again secure.[77]

The 1885 charter battle marked the beginning of a volatile year in city government and this incident was soon followed by two equally bitter political crises, the first of which involved the municipal police department. Though the recently-created Police Commission had eliminated blacks

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[75]*Ibid.*

[76]*Ibid.*, April 5, 1885.

[77]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby*, 896.

from the police force, it made no effort to improve the effectiveness of the department. Policemen continued to be political appointees, albeit white ones, with little or no commitment to law enforcement beyond that required for their own job security. With crime, particularly burglary and robbery, on the increase, many residents grew increasingly disillusioned with the force. At times it seemed the officers were no better than the criminals they apprehended. Policemen, for example, sometimes carried illegally concealed weapons and on one occasion officers actually burglarized an establishment after raiding it.[78]

Perhaps most frustrating to Chattanoogans was the selective enforcement of the law by local authorities. Minor infractions by ordinary citizens were regularly pursued while other, more serious violations, particularly those involving alcohol and vice, were often ignored. At times this contradiction seemed almost ridiculous. In one case, for example, police arrested a barber for shaving a customer on Sunday while, within sight of the offense, brothels and saloons operated in open violation of the law.[79]

At the heart of this seeming hypocrisy were persistent problems with municipal finances. City fathers, wishing to keep property taxes low to promote growth and maintain political popularity, had come to rely heavily on fines as a

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[78]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 105.

[79]*Chattanooga Times*, July 25, 1883.

source of revenue. They soon found fines against vice to be especially lucrative. Thus, in the early 1880s, Chattanooga's leaders made a conscious decision to regulate, rather than abolish, prostitution in the city. This regulation was achieved through periodic raids carried out by the police and subsequent fines imposed by municipal courts. Such assessments served as *de facto* licenses for brothels which were allowed to remain open as long as they posed no threat to public order.[80] A similar arrangement also existed for saloons which, despite so-called "Sunday laws" regulating hours of operation, often remained open around the clock every day of the year.[81]

For the first half of the decade, this system served the city well. Persons accused of violations were taken by police to a city court. Their case would then be tried by a local prosecutor before a municipal judge and any fines collected went straight to the city's coffers. In early 1885, however, policemen discovered an obscure provision in the state law stating that an officer taking an offender before a state magistrate, such as a justice of the peace, served as prosecutor and witness and was thus paid a modest

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[80]James B. Jones, "Municipal Vice: The Management of Prostitution in Tennessee's Urban Experience. Part II: The Examples of Chattanooga and Knoxville, 1838-1917," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 50 (1991): 110.

[81]John H. Cantrell, "Recollections of Fifty years of the Liquor Traffic in Tennessee" (typescript, 1927, Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library), 13.

fee, often collected from the defendant, for his services. In effect, this fee served as a bounty paid to officers for each arrest made and as a result, Chattanooga policemen soon began enforcing the law with uncharacteristic zeal.[82]

Court fees soon became an important source of income for the city's policemen. The *Times* reported that in the first half of 1885 the twelve-man police force earned almost sixty-five hundred dollars in compensation. In many cases, these fees were the result of "frivolous" arrests which amounted to little more than harassment of ordinary citizens.[83] In one case, for example, two policemen climbed on a roof and observed a card game in progress. Seeing a potential for bounty, the officers rounded up two more of their colleagues and made an arrest. Charged with gambling, the defendants proclaimed their innocence, but the police persisted until, after eleven days of prosecution, the so-called criminals submitted, paid a fine to the state, and gave the four officers forty-six dollars in "court costs."[84]

Though this system proved to be quite profitable for the police force, it was ruinous to city finances. Fines collected by state magistrates went to the state's coffers, thus denying the city a vital source of income. In the first half of 1885 alone, the city government lost an estimated

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[82]*Chattanooga Times*, February 25, 1885.

[83]*Ibid.*, July 11, 13, 1885.

[84]*Ibid.*, July 14, 1885.

ten thousand dollars in revenues. Faced with a financial crisis, the town's mayor, Hugh Whiteside, demanded an end to the practice. Chattanooga's police chief, James A. Allen, was reluctant to abandon such a lucrative source of personal income, however, and continued the practice despite the mayor's objections.[85]

A public battle of words ensued between the mayor and Chief Allen. Whiteside denounced the chief for accepting "blood tribute from the harlots" and "attempting to utilize the women to make money for himself."[86] He added his belief that Allen was "inable [*sic*] and incompetent" and suffered from "a lack of brains, knowledge and self control." The mayor soon found a strong ally in the *Chattanooga Times*, which demanded Allen's termination in the public interest. The Board of Aldermen unanimously agreed, but was powerless to fire Allen. According to the 1883 charter, the chief could only be dismissed by the Police Commission, which showed little interest in eliminating such a lucrative source of state revenues.[87]

The rhetoric increased after Allen reportedly assaulted a young *Times* reporter. Outraged, the paper printed explosive new charges of police corruption. In one incident, the paper accused two officers of forcing a black couple to

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[85]*Ibid.*, July 2, 1885.

[86]James B. Jones, "Municipal Vice," 110.

[87]*Chattanooga Times*, July 8, 9, 11, 1885.

commit adultery at gunpoint "for the amusement of themselves and several others." The *Times* further alleged that Allen had once cancelled a raid on a bawdy house to avoid catching a fellow policeman in *flagrante delicto*.[88]

Responding to these attacks, Allen countered that he was merely trying to enforce the law and accused the mayor of harboring "lewd women and gamblers."[89] The chief also enjoyed a number of supporters, especially in the city's churches. One of Allen's staunchest backers was the Reverend G.C. Rankin, minister of the local Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Also in Allen's camp was Webster J. Colburn, who was recently appointed a police commissioner as a reward for his service to the Bourbon Democrats. Still smarting from his defeat in the most recent charter battle, Colburn viewed the police crisis as an opportunity to strike back at his political enemies, particularly Adolph Ochs and the *Chattanooga Times*.[90]

One Sunday, in the midst of the crisis, the Reverend Rankin delivered a scathing sermon, "for men only," which praised Chief Allen and decried the evils of prostitution. The minister also delivered a copy of the address to the *Times*, which routinely printed the works of local clergymen. Upon reading the work, however, Ochs deemed it obscene and

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[88]*Ibid.*, July 19, 1885.

[89]*Ibid.*, July 2, 1885.

[90]*Ibid.*, July 9, 1885; Jones, "Municipal Vice," 110-12.

refused to print it. Rankin and his followers were indignant and accused the publisher of defending "lewd women" and insulting "a Christian minister."[91] Ochs then turned the matter over to a panel of local ministers, who examined the work in question and also pronounced it inappropriate for the public.[92]

Allen's supporters were unmoved by the panel's findings and Colburn used the incident to levy a vicious attack on Adolph Ochs and John E. MacGowan. In a letter to the *Daily Commercial*, Colburn charged that the "policy" of the *Times* was "dictated by the Jew and executed by the literary bohemian." He characterized the publisher as "a bully" and his editor as "a man utterly corrupt in politics." Their paper, he asserted, was "the pariah of journalism in its neighborhood and state" whose ultimate goal was to "break down [Christian] observances and substitute prostitution with all its horrible attendants, and convert the Sabbath into a day of debauch and riot." Ochs, he charged, would transform the city into "a moral lazaretto" by unleashing "the floodgates of his editorial mud machine" on "any church or individual" who opposed him. Only by understanding "the nature of the beast" could Chattanoogans stop Ochs' "vile course" and save their community from ruin.[93]

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[91]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, July 23, 1885.

[92]*Chattanooga Times*, July 22, 23, 1885.

[93]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, July 21, 1885.

Colburn's tirade did little to resolve the growing debate. Local Jews quickly organized a boycott of the *Daily Commercial*, while Allen's other supporters rushed to distance themselves from the commissioner's anti-Semitic remarks.[94] In the meantime, the police chief took steps which ultimately ended the crisis. Having taken the moral high ground, Allen now had to accede to demands by his religious supporters. Under pressure from local ministers, Allen undertook a campaign to abolish prostitution in the city. Chattanooga's red-light district was effectively shut down and prostitutes were either dispersed or driven from town completely. With the city's brothels out of commission, fines and revenues became a non-issue and the public soon lost interest in the controversy.[95]

Also helping to quell the Whiteside-Allen feud was a racial crisis which soon eclipsed the police controversy. Racial tensions had been building in the city for several years. Chattanooga's black population, angry since the 1883 charter compromise, felt increasingly threatened by the Bourbon attempt to disfranchise them. Many whites, on the other hand, remained uncomfortable with the political power still held by black voters and were frustrated by the Bourbon faction's inability to eliminate it. In early September, 1885, these feelings were compounded by recent

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[94]*Ibid.*, July 23, 1885.

[95]Jones, "Municipal Vice," 110-12.

incidents of racial violence in neighboring counties of North Georgia. White vigilantes, calling themselves "regulators," were terrorizing blacks in several local communities. The attacks were well publicized in the local press and no doubt encouraged thoughts, and fears, of violence in the city.[96]

Within days these tensions erupted violently after an isolated racial incident. On the afternoon of September 6, a white streetcar operator, Polk Mitchell, ejected a black passenger, Charley Williams, from his car for "disorderly conduct" and refusing to pay his fare. The angry passenger returned about an hour later and, before numerous witnesses, fired five shots into the driver's back, killing him instantly. Williams then tried to flee, but was captured within minutes by an armed white mob and transported to the city jail under the guard of Sherriff William C. Pyott.[97]

The mob followed and grew in size and intensity. Pyott, fearing a riot, sent for the militia and wired the governor for permission to use it against the crowd, if necessary. Being a Sunday evening, however, the governor was out of his residence on a social call and as messengers frantically searched Nashville for the chief executive, angry whites surrounded the jail. Determined to prevent further violence, Pyott threatened to fire on the agitators. This dispersed

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[96]*Chattanooga Times*, September 1, 3, 4, 1885.

[97]*Ibid.*, September 7, 1885.

them temporarily, but they soon regrouped around the corner, where they fortified themselves with liquor and laid plans for a new assault on the town's keep.[98]

Leaders of the throng soon learned that, due to a lack of authorization by the governor, the militia's guns were unloaded. Encouraged by this news, the drunken crowd attacked the jail. The militia, powerless to act, was quickly overwhelmed, and the mob, composed mainly of Fifth Ward mechanics, stormed the jailhouse doors. Once inside, they dragged Williams to the structure's third floor and hanged him from an iron beam.[99]

Meanwhile, Chattanooga's black community was also up in arms. As word of the lynching spread across the city, members of the local black militia armed themselves and rushed to stop the murder. They arrived just as the hanging got underway and immediately threatened to kill the party inside the jail unless Williams was released. As the white mob moved to protect the lynchers, shots were fired. A firefight ensued as blacks and whites fought a brief battle for control of the Walnut Street Jail. Four men were shot during the melee, one fatally. Also killed during the riot was Charley Williams, hanged before the black militiamen could save him.[100]

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[98] *Ibid.*

[99] *Ibid.*

[100] *Ibid.*

The riot was the realization of the white South's worst fear--armed, organized black resistance. The following morning panic seized the town amid rumors of racial retribution. Genuine incidents of violence took place as well, as in the case of a black man attacked and beaten by a gang of white vigilantes. The thought of a black uprising was so disturbing to whites that mere news of the Chattanooga riot provoked an attempted lynching in Knoxville.[101]

Bracing for the coming conflict, whites lined up to buy ammunition and by afternoon hardware stores were sold out of the precious commodity. The local press, meanwhile, attempted to diffuse the situation. The *Times* condemned the lynching as a "humiliating spectacle" carried out by "irresponsible roughs" and "transient citizens" and Colonel MacGowan called for prosecution of the conspirators. "They should be speedily taught," he demanded, that "mobocracy is something more serious than a pastime, and the murder of prisoners is merely murder."[102] The Republican *Daily Commercial* also spoke out against the incident and defended the black militiamen. "The colored men at the jail Sunday night acted temperately and prudently" the editor claimed, adding that those who fired on the white mob "did so without motive or object." The paper then attempted to allay white

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[101]*Ibid.*, September 8, 1885.

[102]*Ibid.*, September 7, 1885.

fears, pleading "No property owner need ever fear the inimical of the colored men of this town."[103]

The threat of violence soon subsided, but racial anxieties continued to grow. Blacks were especially angered when authorities failed to prosecute members of the lynch mob. Sheriff Pyott made an attempt to pursue Charley Williams' murderers, but immediately met strong resistance. Though he compiled a list of seventeen suspects, the sheriff failed to obtain a single arrest warrant. Fearing for his own life, Williams' brother refused to sign any complaints and authorities reluctantly dropped the case.[104]

Mounting racial tension soon expressed itself politically. Many whites, including many Republicans, were now more wary than ever of black political power. On September 10, just four days after the lynching, a special election was held to fill the seat of a recently-deceased city magistrate. Republicans suddenly withdrew support for their own black candidate, thus forcing him to run as an independent. He lost by more than two hundred votes in what was an indication of things to come. A short time later, Republican leaders announced they would have "no niggers in theirn [*sic*]" and proposed an all-white slate of candidates in the coming city elections.[105]

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[103]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, September 7, 8, 1885.

[104]*Chattanooga Times*, September 11, 16, 1885.

[105]*Ibid.*, September 11, 14, 1885.

Black voters, incensed by Republican statements, vowed to protect their political interests. One black leader remarked: "The negroes were never so displeased with the Republicans. They are tired of being fed on soft corn and choking on husks." Blacks demanded at least one seat on the next Board of Aldermen. If denied, they promised to take their votes elsewhere. "It would not surprise me," one observer noted, "to see fully half [of black voters] either remain home or vote with the democrats." Another black leader was more vocal in his threats and insisted "if they don't give us our man the Republican party will be barred out of sight in this city."[106]

White Republicans, fearing certain defeat without black support, issued conciliatory statements. Among them was an offer to create a colored fire company and promises to increase black patronage. Some blacks, however, could not be placated with such promises and continued to insist on a spot on the fall ticket. When white party leaders again refused, one group of angry blacks bolted the party and nominated its own independent slate of candidates.[107] Republicans, perhaps fearing defeat, took no chances at their city convention. Seeking a popular and experienced candidate, the party nominated Alonzo G. Sharp, a former

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[106]*Ibid.*, September 17, 1885.

[107]*Ibid.*, September 16, 27.

mayor and a veteran of local politics.[108]

The Democratic city conventions nominated M. H. Clift, an ex-Confederate and prominent local attorney for mayor along with a trio of southerners for ward seats. A growing division in the party's ranks, however, soon quelled Democratic enthusiasm for the election.[109] This time the challenge came from a new source--the temperance movement. Temperance organizations had existed in Chattanooga for well over a decade, but in the 1880s they began to assert themselves politically. In 1885 prohibitionist leaders nominated a full complement of candidates for municipal offices. Armed with "ample funds," these crusaders distributed literature "all over town" and soon began winning converts from the Democratic fold. The *Times* quickly condemned the movement, calling it impractical and its leaders "dishonest or pretend advocates."[110]

As it turned out, the prohibitionists enjoyed only modest success at the polls, winning less than one hundred votes in most races. Yet most of these votes came at the expense of the Democrats, and helped Republicans earn a narrow victory, winning the mayor's race and three seats on the Board of Aldermen (see Tables 5.10 and 5.11). As in

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[108]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, September 26, 1885.

[109]*Chattanooga Times*, September 24, 1885.

[110]*Ibid.*, September 29, 1885.

Table 5.10

1885 Mayoral Election

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
Sharp (R)	1,808	343	284	482	459	210
Clift (D)	1,696	405	255	296	291	449
Dean (T)	100	18	18	26	7	31

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 14, 1885.

Table 5.11
1885 Ward Elections

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
			First Ward			
Schwartz (R)	1,832	348	295	467	458	264
Key (D)	1,657	397	239	307	288	426
Woodworth (T)	103	22	19	24	10	28
			Second Ward			
Dugger (R)	1,942	390	330	471	470	278
Fort (D)	1,563	355	211	299	281	417
Hooper (T)	86	16	14	23	7	26
			Third Ward			
Evans (R)	1,879	370	305	471	462	274
McQuade (D)	1,655	380	240	315	292	428
Hulse (T)	76	15	14	18	6	23

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 14, 1885.

previous city-wide races, Republican candidates won by comfortable margins, prevailing by well over one hundred votes in every race. Though Democrats continued to score victories in individual wards, they still lacked the votes to win a city-wide election. Republicans, despite threats of an independent ticket, kept the support of most blacks and thus retained a majority of city voters.[111] Fraud may have also contributed to the Republican victory. According to the *Times*, as many as two hundred ballots were illegally cast by underaged black voters and non-residents.[112]

The election marked the close of the 1885 political season and brought an end to a difficult and violent year. Yet the political turmoil had little impact on the city's growth and Chattanoogans remained overwhelmingly optimistic. Adolph Ochs expressed such confidence in December, 1885 when he boasted to a relative: "Things are looking quite encouraging here and I am quite sanguine about the future."[113] Even nature seemed to confirm this faith. Throughout the year residents reported seeing "spectral lights" on the river, provoking "interest, speculation, and no little awe." To many it must have seemed as though heaven itself were shining down upon their town, protecting its

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[111]*Ibid.*, November 14, 1885.

[112]*Ibid.*, October 2, 1885.

[113]Adolph S. Ochs to Henry Frank, December 17, 1885, Ochs Papers.

growth and illuminating a future of progress and prosperity.[114]

[114]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 105.

Chapter 6

"Shout for Glory": The Boom of the Eighties

In May, 1882 an eighteen-year-old William Gibbs McAdoo arrived in Chattanooga to begin an apprenticeship in law as a deputy court clerk. As the future statesman became acquainted with the town, he found himself overcome with "a desolate sinking loneliness." In part, McAdoo's feelings stemmed from a normal sense of homesickness, but they also reflected a certain disappointment in his surroundings. At first glance, Chattanooga was a desolate place built of "tawny brick" and "somber dark-colored wood." "The streets," McAdoo later remembered, "were raw gashes cut across the back of the land" and the mud and dust from them created "a reddish look about the whole town." In hindsight, he compared the city to "a burry red-headed man who had fallen into a roadside ditch and, after scrambling out, went along without taking the time to brush himself off."[1]

Yet beneath Chattanooga's bleak exterior, McAdoo soon discovered "a hearty, good-natured gusto." "The people," he found, "were energetic, courteous, and unabashed" and held "tremendous faith" in their community. "As they went about their ways" he observed, "they seemed to say in tone and

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[1]William Gibbs McAdoo, *Crowded Years* (Boston, 1931), 31-32.

gesture: Just watch us make things hum."[2] Such enthusiasm was not unfounded, for in the early 1880s Chattanooga was on the brink of a major economic boom. In the course of the coming decade the city would experience tremendous material and industrial growth. In the process, it would also gain national and international recognition as a town destined for greatness. Such fame attracted new residents and new wealth to the community, but also brought unforeseen risks and changes which, in time, would test the faith of the city's promoters.

The roots of the eighties' boom lay in the economic speculation present in the post-war South. During the 1870s, when men such as John T. Wilder began to exploit successfully the rich iron deposits present in the hills of East Tennessee and North Alabama, observers on both sides of the Atlantic began to take notice of the region's industrial potential. It soon became clear to entrepreneurs in both the United States and in Europe that a great industrial city would be needed to process the region's vast resources. A "Chicago of the South" seemed inevitable and speculators scrambled to establish this new southern metropolis.[3]

By the 1880s many towns in East Tennessee and North Alabama were under development. In some cases, completely

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[2]*Ibid.*, 32.

[3]Herman Frederick Otte, *Industrial Opportunity in the Tennessee Valley of Northwestern Alabama* (New York, 1940), 18-20.

new cities were formed. In addition to the Tennessee city of South Pittsburg, speculators also developed the Alabama communities of Sheffield, New Decatur and Birmingham. Other investors gambled on the growth of existing towns and formed companies to improve the Alabama cities of Florence and Huntsville, as well as Chattanooga.[4]

Early on, two of these cities emerged as the leading contenders in the race for regional urban development: Birmingham and Chattanooga. Birmingham, located in Jefferson County, Alabama, was founded in December, 1871 in an old cornfield "cleared of stumps and trees" but still "full of rabbits." Building the city was the Elyton Land Company, a venture devoted to exploiting nearby mineral resources.[5] From the very beginning these resources were the key to Birmingham's success, for within a few miles of the city's center lay rich deposits of iron ore, coal and limestone--the raw materials needed to make iron and steel. Nowhere else on earth are these three ingredients found in closer proximity; their presence thus gave Birmingham a natural edge over rival communities.[6]

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[4]New Decatur was an industrial town developed alongside the existing city of Decatur, Alabama. For a good overview of the various development schemes in North Alabama see *ibid.*, 14-29.

[5]Marjorie Longenecker White, *The Birmingham District, An Industrial History and Guide* (Birmingham, 1981), 44.

[6]W. David Lewis, *Sloss Furnaces and the Rise of the Birmingham District: An Idustrial Epic* (Tuscaloosa, 1994), 1; For additional information on early Birmingham see:

Yet despite Birmingham's geological advantages, many observers continued to view Chattanooga as the region's future industrial hub. The *Memphis Ledger*, for example, described the city as "a vigorous young Pittsburgh without a rival south of the Ohio as an iron and coal center."[7] Such optimism was based on numerous factors which continued to weigh heavily in Chattanooga's favor. For one, Chattanooga possessed its own natural resource--the Tennessee River, which gave the city water access to much of the Tennessee Valley. The value of the river was enhanced in the 1880s as work progressed on a canal at Muscle Shoals, Alabama. The canal was designed to circumvent rocky shallows in the river which to date had impeded travel. When completed, the canal promised navigation of the entire Tennessee River, and would thus grant Chattanooga uninterrupted water access to the Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri river systems, as well as a water route to the Gulf of Mexico.[8]

Birmingham, on the other hand, was woefully lacking in water resources. The city's only notable water source was a meandering creek considered insufficient to support the needs of both industry and population. Water transportation

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White, *The Birmingham District*, 39-62; Carl V. Harris, *Political Power in Birmingham: 1871-1921* (Knoxville, 1977), 12-38.

[7]*Memphis Ledger*, quoted in *Chattanooga Times*, July 22, 1880.

[8]Joshua N. Winn, *Muscle Shoals Canal: Life with the Canalers* (Huntsville, 1981), 13-26.

was nonexistent. The closest rivers, the Cahaba and the Warrior, lay several miles from the city and both were considered too treacherous for commercial navigation.[9]

Chattanooga also benefitted from superior access to rail transportation. Though Birmingham was constructed adjacent to an existing rail line, Chattanooga was already a thriving railroad hub. The city boasted six lines which provided "the most ample connections with all points in the country."[10] The most recent of these, the Cincinnati Southern, opened in 1880 and gave the town a direct rail connection to the industrial cities of the Midwest. Such confidence was placed in the new line that when it opened, the *Times* proclaimed, "Go ring your bell and fire your gun, shout for Glory, for the 'Boom' has come."[11]

A final advantage was the city's reputation and familiarity. Chattanooga, after all, was already a well-established community when Birmingham was founded. Perhaps more important, as a Civil War battle site, Chattanooga was also well-known in both the United States and in Europe for its strategic importance. The city's visibility was accented further by its role as a popular tourist destination. Since the early days of rail travel, Chattanooga had been a

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[9]Lewis, *Sloss Furnaces*, 8.

[10]*Report on the Social Statistics of Cities, Southern States* (Washington, 1887), 136.

[11]*Chattanooga Times*, March 16, 1880.

popular stop for travellers. As early as the 1850s visitors marvelled at the "natural curiosities" atop Lookout Mountain. These included "the Rock City", Natural Bridge and the allegedly bottomless Lulu Lake.[12] By the 1880s numerous hotels and businesses operated on the mountain, catering exclusively to sightseers.[13]

Tourism increased dramatically in the early 1880s as local promoters began using the region's history as a means of attracting visitors. As the Civil War passed into the realm of nostalgia, former soldiers and curiosity seekers from across the country travelled to Chattanooga to view local battlefields. In 1881 the city hosted the first of many grand reunions of war veterans. The Union Army once again proved to be a boon to the local economy, as residents rushed to feed and accommodate thousands of guests. Local businessmen earned quick profits in these reunions, but they also saw them as opportunities to promote Chattanooga and its many economic advantages. Adolph Ochs, for example, distributed ten thousand free copies of a "special edition" of the *Chattanooga Times* to visitors at the 1881 reunion. Besides discussing local historical sites, Ochs' commemorative publication also surveyed local resources and

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[12]Robert Sparks Walker, *Lookout: The Story of a Mountain* (Kingsport, 1941), 211-21; Robert Manson Myers, ed., *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War*, (New Haven, 1972), 165-67; *Chattanooga Daily Herald*, April 17, 1872.

[13]*Chattanooga Times*, July 1, 1888.

industries. Taken home as souvenirs, these newspapers were thus distributed nationally where they "bore good fruit" for the city.[14]

Also helping promote the city was the Coal, Iron and Manufacturers Association. Established in 1876, this body consisted of fewer than twenty-five members.[15] Among them, however, were some of Chattanooga's wealthiest and most powerful industrialists--John T. Wilder, Henry Clay Evans and Hiram S. Chamberlain. The Association worked tirelessly to develop Chattanooga and its resources. The organization compiled and distributed technical data concerning local industries and hosted meetings of various professional organizations, including the American Association of Mining Engineers and the Charcoal Iron Workers of the United States.[16]

Such conventions brought national attention to local industries in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Chattanooga also gained notoriety at this time by becoming the first steel-producing city in the South. In 1878 the Roane Iron Company began manufacturing the alloy in two ten-ton open

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[14]*Chattanooga Times*, October 4, 1878, December 8, 1892. The December 8, 1892 edition of the *Chattanooga Times* was a special souvenir issue which discussed Chattanooga and its history at length.

[15]Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, "Manual, Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce" (Chattanooga, 1897), 42-43.

[16]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby Counties of Tennessee* (1887; reprint, Nashville, 1974), 884.

hearth acid furnaces. The process was difficult, however, as the Rockwood iron ore normally used by the company had a high phosphorous content and was thus poorly suited for steel production. As a result, manufacturing costs were relatively high, compared to those of northern furnaces. Moreover, as national steel prices dropped dramatically in the early 1880s, the Chattanooga plant became unprofitable and consequently it ceased operations in 1882. Though only 50,000 tons of steel were produced in this furnace, the endeavor was not viewed as a complete failure. Instead, it reflected the "progressive spirit" present in local industry and instilled hope among residents for future prosperity.[17]

Though profitable steel manufacturing did not become a reality in the early 1880s, the local iron industry continued to grow. In 1884 a second major producer, the Citico Furnace Company, began operations. This venture, organized by Hiram S. Chamberlain and D.P. Montague, processed ore from North Alabama and East Tennessee into pig iron for regional consumption. Selling mainly to local industries, Citico Furnace became Chattanooga's most successful iron producer and remained in continuous operation for twenty-seven years.[18]

As local industries grew in the 1880s, so did the

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[17]Morrow Chamberlain, *A Brief History of the Pig Iron Industry of East Tennessee* (Chattanooga, 1942), 8.

[18]*Ibid.*, *Pig Iron Industry*, 20-21.

town's population. In the first half of the decade Chattanooga experienced a tremendous increase in population, with the number of residents increasing from just under thirteen thousand in 1880 to over thirty thousand in 1886.[19] Yet despite this impressive growth, real estate prices remained relatively low. Though the value of some lots had increased tenfold over the past decade, land prices, for the most part, remained lower than those of comparable cities.[20] The depressed land values resulted largely from a shortage of local capital. As one resident explained: "What money we had we needed in our manufactures. We could not invest in land and so real estate lagged in value far below its natural pace."[21]

This fact did not go unnoticed for long. Observers, witnessing the city's economic progress, "suddenly realized that land prices were fully one hundred percent lower than at cities of much smaller size and with no such possibilities."[22] Around mid-decade outsiders began to invest heavily in Chattanooga real estate, quietly procuring land and structures in and around the city. Residents soon

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[19]*Chattanooga Times*, July 1, 1888.

[20]Henry M. Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga" (2 vols., unpublished typescript, Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, 1916), 2:103; *Chattanooga Times*, July 1, 1888.

[21]*New York Times*, January 27, 1887.

[22]*Chattanooga Times*, July 1, 1888.

took notice and began trading in local property themselves. Thus began the great Chattanooga land boom which lasted from 1886 until 1887. Initially the trading was orderly and subdued. Throughout 1885 the value of real estate sales in the city averaged about seventy thousand dollars per month (see Figure 6.1).[23]

In 1886, however, land prices increased radically and the boom grew more volatile. In part, rising land values were due to improvements at the Roane Iron Company. In that year the iron maker announced plans to resume steel production and began installation of a five-ton Bessemer converter, the first such unit in the South.[24] Construction of this new facility appeared to place Chattanooga ahead of Birmingham in the race for industrial supremacy and this belief was soon reflected in the local real estate market. The value of monthly land transactions leapt from $60,535 in February to a March figure of $244,835. Land in heretofore undeveloped portions of the city increased as much as 800 percent in value and developers scrambled to subdivide lots in present day Highland Park, Ridgedale, and St. Elmo.[25]

Even a spring flood did little to affect real estate trading. In April, 1886, after heavy rains, the Tennessee

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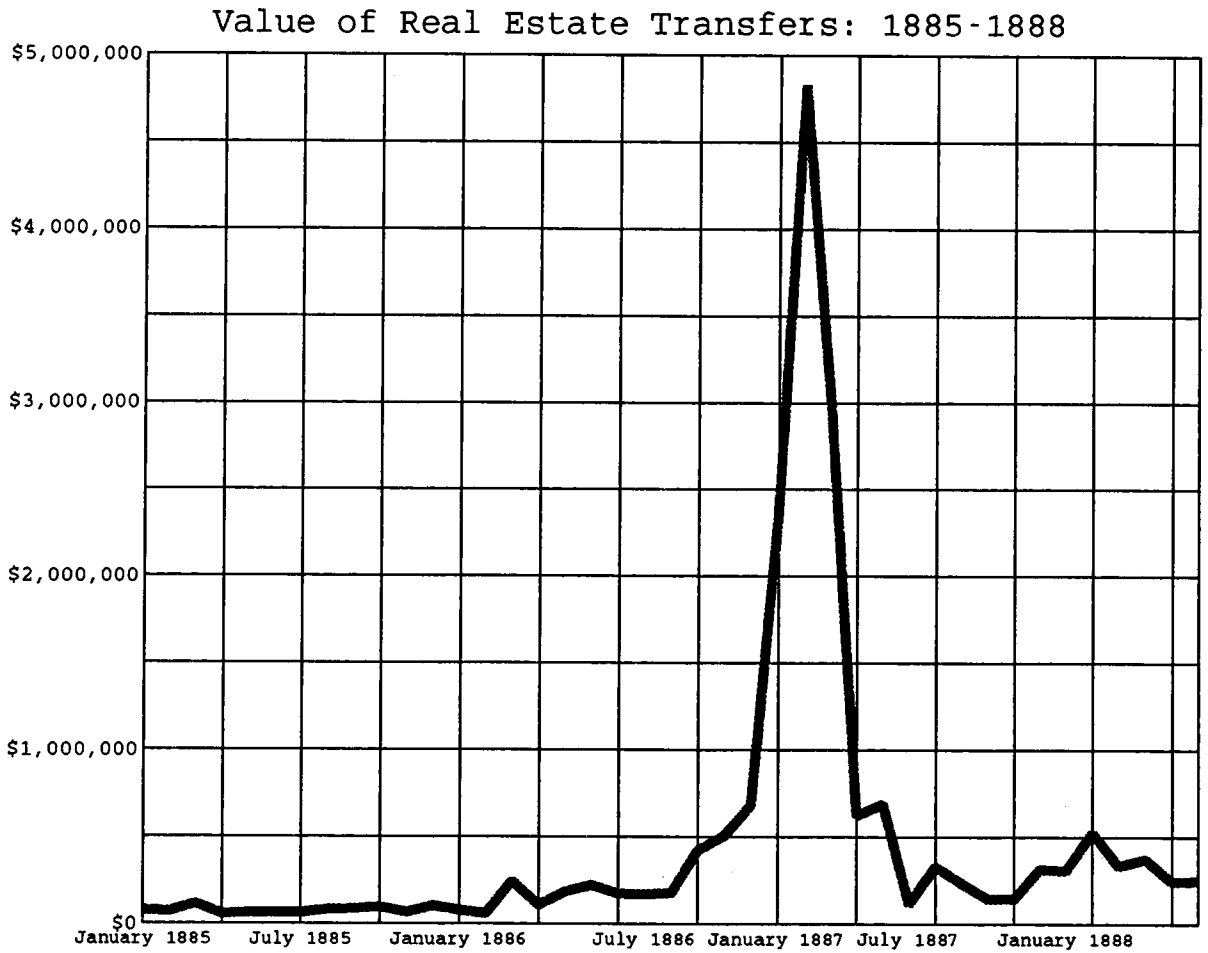
[23]*Ibid.*

[24]Chamberlain, *Pig Iron Industry*, 8.

[25]*Chattanooga Times*, January 30, 1887, December 8, 1892.



Source: *Chattanooga Times*, July 1, 1888

Figure 6.1: The Chattanooga Land Boom

River rose above its banks, eventually cresting at over fifty-two feet. One-fourth of the city's homes were innundated, but the deluge dampened speculation only slightly. "The high water only served to whet the appetite for city property," the *Times* commented, and the city enjoyed over $100,000 in land sales that month in spite of the disaster.[26]

As the boom progressed, land values rose still higher. By December, 1886, the value of monthly real estate transfers had risen to $680,000.[27] Some 128 new firms were established and a "phenomenal" thousand new homes built. Yet despite such massive home construction, there was "not a vacant house in the city" and construction could not "near fill the demand for tentaments."[28] Seduced by the prospect of sudden wealth, Chattanoogans dove headfirst into the volatile land market and "nearly every citizen who could raise a hundred dollars was a speculator."[29] A visiting reporter from the *New York Times* found that residents were "in the swim of the boom." Among locals, he observed that "options have become the popular dissipation" and wryly noted that everyone from "the boys in the street" to "the

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[26]*Ibid.*, April 8, 1886, July 1, 1888.

[27]*Ibid.*, July 1, 1888.

[28]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2:106; *Chattanooga Times*, January 11, 1887.

[29]*Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892.

darkey who serves you your dinner" seemed to be trading the notes.[30]

Flushed with its new prosperity, the city assumed a carnival-like atmosphere. Visitors and speculators filled hotels to capacity and horses, "covered with loud advertisements of agent's properties," paraded the streets night and day.[31] As 1887 dawned, the national press likened Chattanooga to the rising cities of the North, calling the town "the coming Chicago of the southern country" and trading grew even more frenzied.[32] In January, the value of real estate transfers skyrocketed to over 2.3 million dollars.[33] At one point over a million dollars' worth of land changed hands in just one week.[34] Some of this increase can be attributed to the excited optimism created by the announcement of a new rail line, the Chattanooga, Rome, and Columbus, which further boosted confidence in the city's future.[35] The emergence of several large-scale land development schemes also contributed directly to the boom. One of the first of these was the East End Land Company, a

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[30]*New York Times*, January 27, 1887.

[31]*Atlanta Constitution*, January 9, 1887; *Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892.

[32]*Chattanooga Times*, March 2, 1887.

[33]*Ibid.*, July 1, 1888.

[34]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2:106.

[35]*Chattanooga Times*, January 31, 1887.

firm organized locally but funded mainly by Mississippi investors. With plans to develop over one thousand acres of land adjacent to the city, this company confidently promised investors a three-hundred percent return and, in its initial offering, sold over $600,000 worth of stock in just fifteen minutes.[36] Similar firms soon followed, such as the Southern Land Company, which compared Chattanooga to another boom town of the day and called it the "Kansas City of the South."[37]

Land prices soared. A four-acre lot which changed hands for $1,900 in 1885 now sold for $30,000.[38] Fortunes were made in a matter of days and everyone in town seemed to be cashing in on the boom. Among the traders were a number of unlikely speculators. "Refined ladies," the *Times* recalled, "showed no little skill in the scramble."[39] Black residents also participated in the land craze and some increased their meager holdings considerably. One hotel porter parlayed a hundred dollars into sixteen hundred in just six months; and at least two local blacks, James Baxter and J.P. Mayes, grew

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[36]*Ibid.*, January 26, 1887, July 1, 1888.

[37]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, March 23, 1887.

[38]Adolph Ochs to Julius Wise, February 17, 1887, letterpress copy, Adolph S. Ochs Papers, *New York Times* Archives.

[39]*Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892.

wealthy from real estate sales.[40] Still others benefitted from old, and previously worthless landholdings, as in the case of an aging freedman who sold his modest home for ten thousand dollars.[41]

Among those who benefitted most from the boom was Adolph Ochs. His newspaper was the speculators' main organ, and as the boom grew, so did the *Times*. By February of 1887 the daily edition of the *Times* had expanded to sixteen pages, up from four a year earlier. Nearly all of the increase was due to land advertisements; the resulting revenues made Ochs wealthier than ever. The sudden growth, however, also left him somewhat startled.[42] To a friend he confided, "I have never in my life witnessed nor never have heard of such activity in real estate transactions as is now taking place in Chattanooga."[43]

Not content simply to witness the boom, Ochs began emulating his neighbors and invested heavily in local real estate. He bought property throughout the city and even developed a small town, Timesville, on land purchased atop Walden's Ridge.[44] A born promoter, Ochs soon became the

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[40]*Ibid.*, January 30, 1887; Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2:106.

[41]*Chattanooga Times*, March 2, 1887.

[42]*Ibid.*, February 28, 1887.

[43]Adolph Ochs to S. Grabfelder, January 27, 1887, letterpress copy, Ochs Papers.

[44]*Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892.

leading booster of Chattanooga real estate. The *Times* printed lavish handbills, extolling the city's virtues for distribution nationwide. The paper mailed one such pamphlet, describing Chattanooga's "resources, advantages, trade, and inducements to settlers" to twenty-five thousand homes and businesses across the United States.[45] The *Times* hand delivered another circular to a group of northern capitalists in Knoxville who were on a promotional train chartered by Ochs.[46] The publisher also welcomed numerous delegations of prospective investors; and at one point, Ochs complained he was "much annoyed with sundry schemes and strangers from all parts of the globe."[47]

Emboldened by the success of these ventures, Ochs next helped organize the most daring land scheme yet attempted in the city--the Chattanooga Land, Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company. Known locally as the "over-the-river company," this syndicate proposed the residential and industrial development of some twenty-five thousand acres of land, most of which lay across the then unbridged river from Chattanooga. The company's officers, which included Henry Clay Evans, Hiram S. Chamberlain, and Theodore G. Montague, boasted of building a new city which "might make a suburb of

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[45]List of contributors to "Chattanooga--Its advantages and Resources," manuscript, 1885, Ochs Papers.

[46]*Chattanooga Times*, May 10, 11, 1886.

[47]Adolph Ochs to Mr. Stix, February 19, 1887, letterpress copy, Ochs Papers.

even Chattanooga proper."[48]

They formally announced the project to the city on March 23, 1887, at the height of the boom. Organizers unveiled grandiose plans for the venture, including the construction of two or possibly even three bridges to connect the new development with the city. They also promised a blast furnace, coal and iron mines, a lumber mill, a streetcar line, and a steamboat company. Some promoters even proposed sinking oil and gas wells on company property. Though the enterprise was initially capitalized at twelve million dollars, officials confidently predicted it would be worth fifty million dollars in just a few years.[49]

The creation of this giant undertaking fueled the growing boom. In the first two months of 1887, local banks doubled their business as money poured into the city.[50] Yet in procuring such vast parcels of land, the company's representatives may have driven land values still higher, ironically often forcing them to pay inflated prices. This absorbed huge amounts of capital; and thus by the time the firm went public, it lacked sufficient funds to develop its

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[48]*Chattanooga Times*, March 23, 1887; *Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, March 23, 1887; "Adolph S. Ochs as recalled by E.Y. Chapin," typescript, Ochs Papers.

[49]*Chattanooga Times*, March 23, 1887; *Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, March 23, 1887.

[50]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2:106; Adolph Ochs to S. Grabfelder, January 27, 1887, letterpress copy, Ochs Papers.

substantial property holdings.[51] Potential investors, increasingly wary of Chattanooga real estate, shied away from the project. Stock in the Chattanooga Land, Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company failed to sell and the venture, just days old, seemed doomed to failure.[52]

Speculators, alarmed by these developments, dumped their property onto the market; land prices therefore collapsed overnight and "strenuous efforts" to revive them failed. The boom, once called "reasonable, substantial and safe," suddenly "disappeared like magic" in the course of a few rain, sleet and slush-filled days.[53] Real estate transactions, which totaled $2,990,828 in March, 1887, fell to $624,000 the following month. By July 1887 the level of trading would sink to just $116,675.[54]

Yet despite sinking land values, the local economy remained surprisingly strong. Landowners, who now found themselves holding expensive lots, began improving their property in an attempt to recoup their initial investment. Thus, in the spring of 1887, they transformed the land boom

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[51]According to one associate, Ochs paid as much as six hundred dollars per acre for much of the land. When this same property was finally developed in the 1920s, it sold for just $125 an acre. "Adolph S. Ochs as recalled by E.Y. Chapin," typescript, Ochs Papers.

[52]Gerald W. Johnson, *An Honorable Titan: A Biographical Study of Adolph S. Ochs* (Westport, 1970), 79-90.

[53]*New York Times*, January 27, 1887; *Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892.

[54]*Chattanooga Times*, July 1, 1888.

into a building boom as they raised fifteen hundred new homes, a full fifty percent increase over the previous year's record. The construction pumped nearly 1.6 million dollars into the city's economy and provided a windfall for local merchants.[55] It also gave new hope to land speculators. Among these was Adolph Ochs, who confidently reassured nervous investors. "The city is undoubtedly enjoying a period of prosperity unparalleled in its history," Ochs informed one associate, adding that "Business is good in all lines, and there is a great influx of new people, new business houses, and manufacturing concerns." Still optimistic, he proclaimed "the future looks bright and encouraging" and predicted "a handsome return" on local real estate investments.[56]

The community expanded rapidly in the months following the real estate boom as land companies rushed to develop their property. This level of construction, along with a stabilization of land prices, soon restored investor confidence in Chattanooga property values.[57] By year's end the city seemed to have recovered completely and residents awaited the return of the speculators. That December, Adolph Ochs confided "everybody is sniffing a boom in the air,"

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[55]*Ibid.*, April 17, 1887; Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2:106.

[56]Adolph Ochs to Ben Pritz, May 7, 1887, letterpress copy, Ochs Papers.

[57]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, July 21, 1887.

for, as he explained, "the Mississippi contingent will appear after the holidays with purses filled with cotton money."[58]

Building continued unabated and by 1888 several suburban neighborhoods were well established, including St. Elmo, Highland Park, and Sherman Heights.[59] Almost 1.6 million dollars' worth of construction took place in the first half of 1888 alone.[60] Homes remained scarce, however, as the city's population continued to rise faster than housing could be built to accommodate it. By 1890 the city had 29,100 citizens, an increase of over 125 percent since 1880.[61] Most of the new townspeople came from the surrounding region, but Chattanooga continued to attract residents from the North and Midwest. City leaders encouraged such immigration and promoted the city's advantages among those "seeking houses in milder regions."[62]

The city still lured immigrants from abroad as well.

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[58]Adolph Ochs to E. Troy, December 19, 1887, letterpress copy, Ochs Papers.

[59]*Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892.

[60]*Ibid.*, July 1, 1888.

[61]Chattanooga had 6,093 residents in 1870 and 12,892 residents in 1880. On average, Tennessee cities grew 105.5 percent during the 1880s, slightly below the rate achieved by Chattanooga during the decade. *Census of Population, 1880* (Washington, 1880), 334; *Census of Population, 1890* (Washington, 1890), 321; Donald B. Dodd and Wynelle S. Dodd, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Vol. 1, *The South* (Tuscaloosa, 1973), 50-53.

[62]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2:104, 107.

Increasingly, as in other American cities, these newcomers were natives of Southern and Eastern Europe. Among the earliest of these locally was Wolf Brody, a Polish Jew who arrived in 1880. He soon proved instrumental in attracting other East European Jews to Chattanooga. Among these were Halman and Reuben Blumberg, who established a peddler's supply business in town upon their arrival in the early 1880s. Catering exclusively to Jewish salesmen who travelled the local countryside, they actively recruited vendors as well. In many cases, the Blumbergs enlisted immigrants at the docks in New York and paid their way to Chattanooga. Upon arrival, they then outfitted the men as peddlers and sent them out to work the backroads of North Georgia and East Tennessee.[63]

Some forty Jews came to the city in this way, and as they prospered, others followed. By the late 1880s Chattanooga claimed a small but thriving neighborhood of East European Jews.[64] This group, mostly Russian, settled in the Third Ward where they established an Orthodox

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[63]Jubilee Committee of Congregation B'nai Zion, *The Golden Book of B'nai Zion* (Chattanooga, 1938), 16-18.

[64]The 1890 federal census found three hundred Jewish households in Chattanooga, a third of which were Orthodox. This gave the city the second largest Jewish population in the state, behind Memphis with 905 households but ahead of Nashville, which claimed 290 Jewish families. The largest Jewish population in the region, however, resided in Birmingham, a city with 1,075 Jewish households. *Report on the Statistics of Churches of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, 1894), 112-14, 413-416.

congregation, B'nai Zion, and a Hebrew school. The Orthodox synagogue became the social and religious center of this community, providing recreation and support as well as a place of worship.[65] The synagogue may have also helped the group acquire a political voice, for by the early 1890s local papers were already making note of Russian Jews at the polls.[66]

In addition to new residents, the boom also brought new firms to the city. By the summer of 1888 some seven hundred businesses were in operation in the city, marking a 600 percent increase since 1882. More impressive was the success rate of new enterprises. Since the early 1880s less than 4 percent of new business ventures in Chattanooga failed.[67] Though many of these new enterprises were devoted to the land trade, many others, such as the Provident Life and Accident Insurance Company and the Chattanooga Medicine Company, were of a more permanent nature.[68] The latter, operated by the flamboyant Zeboim Patten, became famous throught the South as a producer of popular medicines. Among its wares were "Wine of Cardui" for women and "Thedford's Black Draught," said to cure ailments ranging from liver

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[65]*Ibid.*

[66]*Chattanooga Times*, November 9, 1892.

[67]*Ibid.*, July 1, 1888.

[68]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2:107.

disease to "offensive breath" and "loss of memory."[69]

Chattanooga's banking interests also prospered during the 1880s. Throughout the decade, the city was dominated by three lending institutions: the First National Bank, the Third National Bank, and the City Savings Bank. The most important of these institutions, and the first of the city's postwar banks, was the First National Bank of Chattanooga. This depository was established in 1865 by William P. Rathburn, an Ohio banker, and his former teller, Theodore G. Montague, a Union Army veteran. Clearly the city's leading lender, the First National Bank held assets at mid-decade of $410,000 and extended loans worth nearly $4,000,000.[70] It soon faced increased competition, though, as entrepreneurs established new banks in the years following the land boom. In 1889 alone eight new lending institutions were established in the city and by 1890 the city possessed thirteen banks with deposits totalling $4,500,000.[71]

Iron production, however, continued to dominate the local economy. At the time of the boom Chattanooga furnaces produced six thousand tons of pig iron annually, worth $3,600,000. By 1887 over six thousand men were employed by local iron manufacturers, generating a daily payroll of over

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[69]*Chattanooga Times*, July 1, 1888.

[70]*Goodspeed's History of Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby*, 882-83.

[71]*Chattanooga Times*, December 8, 1892.

$7,000. Iron related industries also prospered and local foundries and machine shops manufactured almost $1,095,000 worth of goods annually by the deacde's end.

The city's lumber mills thrived as well, producing over thirty-eight million feet of boards in one year alone. Aided by the local building boom, wood processing became the town's second largest industry, with local lumber and planing mills producing almost $2,000,000 worth of goods annually. This success, in turn, helped create a growing furniture industry locally, producing over $500,000 worth of tables, chairs, and caskets yearly.[72]

Virtually all local industries reported similar gains during the period. Between 1880 and 1890 the number of local manufacturing concerns grew from 58 to 294, an increase of nearly 507 percent. All totaled, Chattanooga industries produced goods in 1890 worth $10,216,000, up 316 percent from 1880s' figure of $3,230,000. The number of residents employed in manufacturing similarly increased, from 2,133 to 5,741, a rise of 269 percent during the decade.[73]

Representing these manufacturers and businesses was a new organization, the Chamber of Commerce. This body, formed in December, 1887, replaced the Coal, Iron and Manufacturers Association as the town's leading business organization. A

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[72]*New York Times*, January 27, 1887; *Census of Manufacturing, 1890* (Washington, 1890), 122-29.

[73]*Census of Manufacturing, 1880* (Washington, 1880), 174-75; *Census of Manufacturing, 1890*, 122-29.

much larger group, the Chamber's membership included industrialists, bankers and merchants and reflected the growing complexity of the local economy.[74] It also demonstrated the growing involvement of businessmen in community affairs. From its inception, the Chamber of Commerce was devoted to the improvement of the community. It also pledged to work for "good government" and, in future years, would take a prominent role in local politics.[75]

More illicit trades also thrived during the boom. Prostitutes, expelled from the city in 1883, gradually returned from their hiatus in the late 1880s and resumed operations in their traditional quarters around Florence and Helen streets. By all accounts, they did a thriving business. Alice Cooper, for example, accumulated considerable wealth during this period. As proprietress of "the wickedest den of infamy in the city," she acquired "not a small amount of property." Now at the height of her "ill-starred and ill-gotten success," Cooper possessed, so the *Times* reported, "all the money one could want and all that one could wish in the way of pleasure, ease and comfort." According to the paper, she was "an aggressive enemy of law

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[74]Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, "Manual, Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce," 42-43.

[75]*Chattanooga Times*, December 9, 1887.

and order" and "a giantess willing to do wrong."[76]

Saloon keepers also prospered during the boom, often to the consternation of local prohibitionists. "Wages were good in 1888 and 1889" one temperance leader recalled, "and a large percentage of the men who were paid on Saturday night went straight to the saloons." Many saloons stayed open around the clock and employed three shifts of bartenders to accommodate the steady stream of customers. Often a night of drinking would lead to seedier pursuits. The same prohibitionist recollected how "better paid clerks and skilled mechanics, after getting up a fair amount of alcoholic inspiration . . . would pass on to the red light district." There, in addition to "other expenses," they would spend "one dollar per bottle of beer and five dollars per bottle of champagne."[77] Liquor consumption was not limited to the working class, of course. Indeed, William Gibbs McAdoo observed that among all Chattanoogans, "drinking seemed to be a sort of recreation and nobody thought much of it."[78]

This apparent decline in public morality alarmed many

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[76]*Ibid.*, November 29, 1893; James B. Jones, "Municipal Vice: The Management of Prostitution in Tennessee's Urban Experience. Part II: The Examples of Chattanooga and Knoxville, 1838-1917," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 50 (1991): 110-12.

[77]John H. Cantrell, "Fifty Years of the Liquor Traffic in Tennessee" (typescript, Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, 1927), 18-20.

[78]McAdoo, "Crowded Years," 33-35.

residents, particularly those in the religious community. Ellen McCallie, wife of Presbyterian minister T.H. McCallie, was among those who expressed dismay at the town's character. "Our city," she lamented, "is much given to gaiety and frivolity of all sorts." She was especially concerned about the city's youth, who were "filling their minds with gay, worldly thoughts and plunging . . . into dissapation of time and extravagence of dress."[79]

Determined to combat "the active, unceasing, and malicious temptations of Satan," local churches established a nondenominational meeting hall known as "the tabernacle" in March 1891. There, in an "earnest effort for the moral and spiritual improvement of the city, local ministers delivered blistering sermons condemning prostitution, alcohol, and other "powerful seductions of the world." As many as three thousand residents attended the initial services, which sometimes featured a choir of 150 singers. Within a month, however, the city's enthusiasm for the project began to wane, and though the meetings continued throughout the spring, they demonstrated "no great manifestation of power."[80]

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[79]Timothy P. Ezzell, "The McCallie Letters: Portrait of a Chattanooga Family in the 1880s and 1890s" (M.A. Thesis, University of Tennessee, 1988), 151.

[80]Chattanoogans may have been trying to emulate a similar, and more successful movement then taking place in Nashville. There religious leaders erected a "Gospel Tabernacle," later renamed the Ryman Auditorium, where crowds numbering in the thousand would listen to popular

Though the economic boom led to a resurgence of vice, it had a more constructive effect on local transportation. The rapid growth of the suburbs led to new demand for public transportation. In response, the Chattanooga Street Railway Company electrified its line in 1888. This company was soon joined by other streetcar lines which operated in various parts of the city. Powering the lines were a handful of small plants scattered about town. Electric lighting plants were also in operation in the 1880s. The first of these, the Chattanooga Brush Electric Light Company, began operation in 1882 and supplied power to illuminate streets and large public buildings. In 1887 the Hauss Electric Lighting and Power Company joined it. By the end of the decade electric lighting was readily available to homes and small businesses.[81]

The electrification of Chattanooga instilled new hope in the community's future and city fathers readily embraced the new technology. No longer the "Chicago of the South,"

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evangelists such as Sam Jones. Don Doyle, *Nashville in the New South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville, 1985), 126-28. Ezzell, "The McCallie Letters," 151; *Chattanooga Times*, March 29, 1891.

[81]Other cities in the region began using electricity at about the same time as Chattanooga. Atlanta, for example, was among the first southern cities to use electricty and electrified its streetcars in 1886. Nashville came somewhat later, and upgraded its streetcars in 1888. Birmingham, though it began using electric streetlights in 1882, did not electrify its transportation system until 1892. Doyle, *Nashville in the New South*, 89; W. David Lewis, *Sloss Furnaces*, 144, 247; "Early Electrical History of Chattanooga," *System Control News* (July, 1972): 2-13.

Chattanooga became "the Dynamo of Dixie" and an 1888 illustration depicted the city as a giant generator wired to lights in Nashville, Knoxville, Atlanta, and Birmingham. The caption beneath read: "Chattanooga--Its growth and prosperity illuminate the South."[82]

Chattanooga's rapid growth only served to increase the competition between it and other southern cities. Especially keen was the city's rivalry with Birmingham, and the local press constantly berated the Magic City. The *Chattanooga Times*, for example, referred to Birmingham's industrialists as mere "amateurs" and "speculators" who peppered reports of their town's growth with "ridiculous figures and fabrications." Suggesting that Birmingham was a city "built on loans and bonds," the paper smugly concluded that only a "fool" would invest there.[83] The boom of the late eighties increased such comments, as in the Chattanoogan who advised Birmingham residents to sleep with their "boots on" so they might "get out early when the great smash comes."[84] At the height of the boom the feud between the cities became so intense that the *Rochester Herald* declared "Chattanooga, Tennessee and Birmingham, Alabama are having a contest as to which can stake off the most city lots during their respective booms." "At last accounts" the paper reported,

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[82]*Chattanooga Times*, July 1, 1888.

[83]*Ibid.*, March 10, 11, 1883.

[84]*New York Times*, January 27, 1887.

"Birmingham was one lap ahead, having got stakes driven nine miles out in the pine woods."[85]

As the 1880s drew to a close, it appeared as though Birmingham was, indeed, drawing a lap ahead of Chattanooga in the race for industrial supremacy. Yet Chattanoogans remained characteristically optimistic concerning their city's future. In July, 1888, Adolph Ochs celebrated his tenth anniversary as owner of the *Chattanooga Times*. In recognition, he printed a mock prophecy of the next decade entitled, "News of 1898." By then, the paper predicted, Chattanooga would have 306,000 residents and over eighteen hundred manufacturers. Four bridges would span the river and a "public comfort brewery" would supply cold beer to public taps throughout the city. As for Birmingham, the *Times* jokingly foresaw that the once "promising little village" would, by 1898, have "caught hold of the wrong end of a boom" and henceforth existed only in memory.[86]

Developments in the local steel industry also gave Chattanoogans cause for optimism. In October, 1889 Roane Iron Company sold its Chattanooga operations to the Southern Iron Company, a concern dominated by northern investors. The plant's new owners immediately announced plans to renovate the mill's steel production facilities and within days the

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[85]*Rochester Herald*, quoted in *Chattanooga Times*, February 2, 1887.

[86]*Chattanooga Times*, July 1, 1888.

firm began construction on two ten-ton open hearth basic steel furnaces. Completed almost a year later, these improved furnaces produced the South's first basic steel on September 16, 1890. Yet this mill, like its predecessors, was unable to make profitable steel from local iron ore, and the plant's owners were forced to use higher quality pig iron purchased from Birmingham's Tennessee Coal and Iron Company.[87]

Nevertheless, local boosters rejoiced upon hearing the news of the plant's initial success. The *Times*, for example, called the new furnaces "the biggest thing in the manufacturing line we ever achieved or acquired" and predicted that Southern Iron would "attract more capital and population than any single enterprise ever started in Chattanooga."[88] To commemorate the event, civic leaders planned a grand celebration. Dignitaries from across the country descended on Chattanooga, including Secretary of War Redfield Parker, Attorney General William Miller, and Ohio Congressman William McKinley. Also present at the festivities were numerous northern industrialists, who received special praise from John MacGowan in the pages of the *Times*. "These men," MacGowan declared, "are more distinctly benefactors of the South than all the political

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[87]Chamberlain, *Pig Iron Industry*, 8; *Chattanooga Times*, October 5, 1889, September 16, 19, and October 18, 1890.

[88]*Chattanooga Times*, September 19, October 18, 1890.

representatives." The editor then extolled them, for "they have shed a brighter and more beneficent light on southern history than the light of all her heroic annals" "Their work" he concluded, "was a work of peace, a victory of science combined with practical skill, and generously backed by capital."[89]

The highlight of the celebration was a grand banquet, hosted by the Chamber of Commerce and chaired by Adolph Ochs. There guests dined on larded beef and broiled teal duck, served on plates made of Chattanooga steel. Steel menus adorned each table and about the room were decorative cornucopia, symbolically formed from local metal. Visitors even received tin trinkets, including toy whistles inscribed: "toot, toot, ye horns of tin, for Chattanooga steel is bound to win." Yet economic victory remained far from certain, and as dignitaries dined on a service of local steel, none noted that it had been forged from iron produced in Birmingham mills.[90]

The future of Chattanooga thus remained somewhat problematic. Economically, the community faced the trials of sustained growth as its competitors, most notably Birmingham, grew ever stronger. At the same time, the city also encountered new political challenges. The eighties' boom attracted thousands of new residents to the city,

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[89]*Ibid.*, March 12, 1891.

[90]*Ibid.*, March 13, 1891.

fulfilling the dreams of Chattanooga's promoters. Yet these new citizens brought with them the potential for political instability, for their numbers and affiliations threatened to disrupt the delicate balance of local party politics. Economic growth, city fathers learned, would be achieved at the price of political change and the speculative frenzy of the boom would be accompanied by the political turmoil of Jim Crow.

Chapter 7

"A Choice of Evils": City Politics, 1885-1892

As the 1880s drew to a close, Chattanooga's Republicans faced growing challenges to their hegemony. Local and state Democrats increased both in number and in power and mounted a series of political attacks against the town's Republican regime. At the same time, racial and ideological divisions among Republicans threatened the unity and cooperation necessary for the party's survival. Though the party would achieve great success in the face of such adversity, it would eventually meet defeat; and the regime founded upon the spoils of victory would ultimately fall to the forces of whiskey and Jim Crow.

At mid-decade Republicans maintained their domination of local politics. The complete failure of Democratic candidates in the 1885 city election had a demoralizing effect on that party's membership. Bourbon leaders, in their attempts to seize control of city government, inadvertently strengthened the power of their Republican foes; and thus by the beginning of 1886 Democrats held just one seat on the six man Board of Aldermen. Discouraged, many Democratic supporters lost their zeal for local politics. Still others, no doubt, questioned the wisdom of paying a poll tax to vote in an election their party seemed destined to lose. Adding

to the sense of indifference were the new, city-wide ward races, which denied ward residents their choice of candidates and consequently generated little enthusiasm.

As a result, apathy became a characteristic of local Democratic politics and marked the 1886 city canvass. That fall, despite a rapidly growing population, the number of registered voters in the city actually declined from 4,136 to 3,704. The vast majority of the lost votes belonged to white Democrats. According to the *Times* the number of white voters decreased from 2,269 to 1,781 in the 1886 city registration. At the same time black voters, registered by the city's efficient Republican machine, actually increased their numbers from 1,767 to 1,923.[1]

Black voters, who now outnumbered their white counterparts, celebrated the results of the registration drive and the local black press rejoiced that freedmen were "not downed" by charter revisions. White Democrats, on the other hand, viewed the coming election with indignation and dismay. John MacGowan, alarmed by the prospect of Negro rule, condemned white Republicans for their alleged exploitation of black voters. "The bad tendencies of the negro character," the Colonel contended, "are being luxuriantly developed by his rascally political guides." He then accused white Republicans of teaching blacks "trickery as a fine art" and indoctrinating them "with the ethics of

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[1]*Chattanooga Times*, October 4, 1886.

highwaymen."[2]

MacGowan also criticized the city's Democrats, whom he ultimately blamed for the coming political debacle. The editor rebuked apathetic voters for "throwing the power of the ballot into the hands of the irresponsible, ignorant, and depraved." "The vast majority of the white people," he lamented, "have virtually abandoned the government of their city to the negroes and the bad men who lead them." Such "shameful neglect," he predicted, would doom the community to "all the ills of dishonest administration."[3]

Democratic ward candidates, rather than experience certain defeat at the hands of a black majority, opted instead to withdraw from the race. Citing a "hopeless contest," the despondent nominees angrily lashed out at the Democratic leadership for not "performing its duty as to registration" and expressed hope that the impending defeat might "redound to the benefit of the party in the future."[4]

In the ensuing canvass, white turnout was low and black voters dominated. According to the *Times*, "less than one-third the usual vote was cast, and two-thirds of that was by negroes." Altogether, the paper estimated that "not more than five-hundred white men" voted. In each race the number of voters declined substantially. In the Fourth Ward, for

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[2]*Ibid.*, October 11, 1886.

[3]*Ibid.*, October 4, 1886.

[4]*Ibid.*, October 11, 1886.

example, the number of voters dropped from 2,577 in the 1884 ward race to 1,509 in 1886. Similarly, the total vote in the Fifth Ward race decreased from 2,442 to 1622 and fell in the at-large race from 2,560 to 1,700.[5]

Republicans, facing no viable opposition, easily prevailed over an assortment of independent and Prohibitionist foes (see Table 7.1). The only Democrat on the ballot was Pat Fleming, who entered the Fourth Ward race at the last minute and received a paltry 28 votes. Republicans easily elected three new aldermen, including W.C. Hodge, a black candidate representing the Fourth Ward. The victory gave Republicans every seat on the Board of Aldermen and for the first time since the military occupation, Democrats failed to hold a single elected office in city government.[6]

The rapid decline in Democratic fortunes left many of the party's supporters bewildered and struggling for answers. Fearing the prospect of black rule, some Mugwump Democrats abandoned their moderate beliefs in favor of extreme solutions. John MacGowan, for example, even entertained thoughts of a Bourbon coup. MacGowan, who had vigorously opposed the 1883 charter repeal, now advised, "if

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[5]*Ibid.*, October 13, 1886.

[6]Republicans also dominated the local vote in statewide elections. In the 1886 "War of the Roses" gubernatorial race, for example, Chattanoogans voted 2,420 to 1,557 in favor of Republican Alf Taylor over his brother Bob. *Ibid.*, October 13, November 4, 1886.

no other remedy can be applied, it would be well if we asked the governor to appoint a Board of Commissioners to take charge of the city." He then exhorted, "Chattanooga must not be turned over to cunning politicians and the negro element."[7]

Table 7.1
1886 Ward Elections

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
			Alderman At Large			
Williams (R)	1,438	295	254	343	374	172
Cosby (P)	129	48	23	26	21	17
James (I)	133	12	7	20	39	55
			Fourth Ward			
Hodge (R)	1,290	261	217	336	380	176
Fleming (D)	28	6	7	4	8	3
Troutt (P)	191	68	35	28	33	27
			Fifth Ward			
Howard (R)	1,353	261	235	331	320	206
Park (P)	158	56	32	22	24	24
Wilbur (I)	111	16	2	14	67	12

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 12, 1886.

Though Democrats fared poorly in the 1886 city election, another political faction, the Prohibitionists,

[7]*Ibid.*

made modest gains at the polls. Aided by the Democratic withdrawal, temperance candidates increased their average ward vote from less than thirty to well over one hundred.[8] These gains coincided with advances for the temperance movement across the state. During the early 1880s, Tennessee's anti-liquor movement enjoyed increasing popularity, especially in East Tennessee. By mid-decade prohibitionists had gained a foothold in the state legislature and in February 1887, temperance legislators proposed the abolition of the liquor trade in Tennessee altogether. A prohibition amendment to the state constitution was introduced and, after a spirited debate, a statewide referendum on the measure was set for September 29.[9]

Creating a furor in Chattanooga, the prohibition question served to undermine the city's traditional political alliances. Among the proposal's most ardent supporters were white Republicans. Though some party members may have supported the amendment for political reasons, most seemed to view it as a genuine moral crusade. One such Republican, Judge Daniel C. Trewhitt, advised temperance advocates, "the greatest battle of the age is now being fought, headed on the one side by Satan in the form of

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[8]*Ibid.*

[9]Paul Isaac, *Prohibition and Politics: Turbulent Decades in Tennessee, 1885-1920* (Knoxville, 1965), 32-33.

intoxicating liquor, on the other hand by Christianity, morality, sobriety, and decency." He then exhorted, "you are friends of the latter."[10] Inspired by such rhetoric, Republican waged a hard campaign for the legislation. Newell Sanders, for example, ordered all employees of his Chattanooga Plow Company to vote for prohibition. Those who refused were labeled as drunkards and immediately dismissed.[11]

The amendment also enjoyed considerable support among moderate Democrats. Many Democratic adherents, such as the Reverend T.H. McCallie, were members of Chattanooga's religious community. Others, however, were ordinary citizens who felt a strong moral imperative to join the fight against liquor. William Gibbs McAdoo, for example, became a temperance convert after witnessing the pervasive alcoholism present in post-war Chattanooga. "I realized," he recalled, "that liquor breeds poverty, that it brings ruin, and that it breaks up the moral standards of the race."[12]

The most enthusiastic supporters of prohibition in the city could be found among Chattanooga's women. Local women had long been active in various anti-liquor organizations,

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[10]John H. Cantrell, "Fifty Years of the Liquor Traffic in Tennessee" (Typescript, Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, 1927), 4.

[11]*Chattanooga Times*, September 30, 1887.

[12]William Gibbs McAdoo, *Crowded Years* (New York, 1931), 34.

such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union; and the referendum afforded them a rare chance to influence political events. They seized upon the opportunity with unbridled enthusiasm, singing about, praying for, and promoting the amendment throughout the city. As a testament to their work, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union even held its state convention in Chattanooga.[13] Though these promotions served to boost the cause of temperance, they also presented an affront to many local males. Among them was John MacGowan, who warned, "this sort of thing tends to unsex women and make her [*sic*] mannish and all that is unwomanly." He further admonished that the presence of women in politics "is morally wrong, wholly inconsistent with sound policy in a free government, and can produce nothing but evil fruit."[14]

Yet despite the efforts of temperance forces, the majority of Chattanooga's voters remained opposed to prohibition. A large portion of these were working-class Democrats, who frequently patronized local saloons. Joining them was a smaller number of pro-liquor Mugwumps, including Adolph Ochs and John MacGowan. Both MacGowan, a notorious libertine, and Ochs, an epicurean like his father, expressed personal objections to the proposal. Yet they also disapproved of the amendment on grounds it was impractical

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[13]*Chattanooga Times*, September 16, 1887.

[14]*Ibid.*, September 29, 1887.

and unenforceable. Moreover, they feared economic hardships brought about by prohibition, and predicted the amendment would cost the state $222,000 in lost revenues annually.[15] Together, the two men quickly assumed leadership of the town's "wet" forces and the *Times* emerged as liquor's strongest local ally.

Black Republicans also rallied against the proposed legislation. No strangers to saloons, black workers no doubt opposed temperance out of a fondness for alcohol. Yet many blacks also viewed the amendment as an unwarranted intrusion on their newly-won rights. As one black voter told a temperance minister, "We don't know no church today, Parson. We are going to vote for liberty."[16] The *Times*, for its part, encouraged this line of thinking among the freedmen. Prior to the election it warned blacks that the amendment "is chiefly to prevent the negro from tippling." The paper further predicted that with prohibition "the respectables would buy and drink whiskey, wine and beer with impunity" while "the negro laborer and mechanic would be punished for selling or drinking."[17]

The prohibition question thus defied political convention and united traditionally antagonistic groups in a common crusade. Black residents, for example, found

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[15]*Ibid.*, September 5, 1887.

[16]*Ibid.*, September 30, 1887.

[17]*Ibid.*, September 12, 1887.

themselves allied with the very working-class whites who, for the better part of a decade, had tried to disfranchise them. Together they united under the leadership of the Chattanooga *Times*, a paper which to date had expressed little confidence in either group. White Republicans, on the other hand, faced a similar dilemma, as they joined with Mugwump reformers on the side of temperance.

These novel political groupings, combined with the issue's moral implications, made for a colorful local canvass. Voters, who appeared in large numbers, were greeted at the polls by temperance preachers and local women brandishing pitchers of coffee and lemonade. Though women were present at all polls, they concentrated their strength on the city's black and working-class wards. In the largely black Fourth Ward, for example, temperance women sang hymns which proved so grating to voters that a riot nearly ensued. In the Fifth Ward, they employed even stronger methods and marched two hundred hymn-singing children to the polls bearing signs, "Vote for the Amendment" and "Home or Saloon, Which?"[18]

Yet despite these concerted efforts, Chattanoogans voted overwhelmingly against the amendment (see Table 7.2). Wet forces prevailed in four of the five wards and garnered a majority of over one thousand votes. Prohibitionists won the middle-class First Ward, but by a majority of only seven

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[18]*Ibid.*, September 30, 1887.

votes. Wet forces, on the other hand, won handily in the other wards. They were especially successful in the predominantly black Third and Fourth wards and in the woking-class Fifth Ward. Liquor supporters may have been helped by an unusually heavy voter turnout. All totaled, some 4,899 residents participated in the referendum. In contrast, the 1885 mayoral race attracted 3,604 voters and the 1886 ward races drew just 1,700 participants.[19]

Table 7.2
1887 Prohibition Referendum

Ward	For	Against
1	520	513
2	270	399
3	355	735
4	372	712
5	363	660
Total	1,880	3,019

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, September 30, 1887.

By voting for whiskey, Chattanooga contributed to a statewide defeat of the amendment. Across Tennessee voters rejected prohibition 145,000 to 118,000. Yet, though Chattanooga followed the state in rejecting the legislation, it was among a minority of East Tennessee municipalities to

[19]*Ibid.*, October 14, 1885; October 12, 1886; September 30, 1887.

do so. Knoxville, for example, supported the amendment 2,312 to 1,120 and East Tennesseans overall endorsed the measure 42,000 to 31,000. Throughout the region Republicans rallied behind prohibition, but Chattanooga, traditionally a bastion of the party, remained wet.[20]

White Republicans and temperance supporters blamed this incongruity on the city's black voters, who, they believed, had sold their votes to "liquor men" in exchange for "boodle and whiskey." The *Commercial* claimed that "negroes in the Second, Fourth and Fifth Wards were herded together like sheep and driven to the polls with whiskey in their stomachs and their votes for more whiskey in their hands." In many wards, the paper asserted, "boss niggers" forced reluctant blacks to vote against the amendment.[21] The party's sudden dissatisfaction with black voters was not lost on local Democrats, who noted the irony. John MacGowan called the referendum defeat a "dose of their own medicine," and remarked with some satisfaction that white Republicans were now "dismally howling" over the black vote.[22]

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[20]Tennessee's other major cities joined Chattanooga in defeating prohibition, with Nashvillians voting against the amendment 5,460 to 3,981 and Memphians rejecting it 6,621 to 2,389. *Nashville Daily American*, September 30, 1887; Isaac, *Prohibition and Politics*, 54-58.

[21]The paper also accused liquor men of buying the city's Chinese vote, stating that "celestials of the 'washee washee' variety were marshalled by the antis . . . to help continue the saloon business." *Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, September 30, 1887.

[22]*Chattanooga Times*, October 7, 1887.

The prohibition referendum left deep divisions in the Republican ranks which persisted well into the following month's city elections. In the wake of the amendment's defeat many Republican leaders began to question the role of blacks in the party. Blacks, it was believed, had sold their votes for "whiskey and money," and in doing so, delivered a serious blow to the temperance movement.[23] Still others felt betrayed by the black defection and accused freedmen of "party treason." As the 1887 canvass rapidly approached, dissatisfied whites within the party grew determined to curtail the power of black voters. These Republicans, known collectively as "lily whites," sought to purge the party of blacks, whom they regarded as corrupt, unappreciative, and unreliable.[24]

Lily whites dominated that fall's Republican ward primaries and most meetings were marred by racial strife. In some cases blacks were turned away at the door by armed men. In others, white ward bosses shouted down or ignored black participants. One witness to the Third Ward caucus reported "hundreds of throats yelling like Comanches, without sense or a leader." In fact, tension was so great at that proceeding that a melee eventually ensued, with white and black delegates breaking up chairs for weapons and attacking each other. "The scene was a disgrace to the city and the

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[23]*Ibid.*, October 2, 1887.

[24]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, October 12, 1887.

party," the *Times* lamented, "and every man of pride must have felt a deep chagrin to witness the proceedings."[25]

In some wards, nominations could only be made after the police were called to restore order; the resulting ticket was an affront to black voters. Most upsetting to blacks was the nomination of Charles Whiteside for mayor. Whiteside, a former Democrat and the city's current fire chief, was openly hostile to the demands of black voters. He, for example, opposed the construction of a Negro school and had recently refused to create a black fire company, stating, "We don't want any niggers to demoralize our department."[26]

Blacks reacted with outrage. The local black paper, *Justice*, declared, "the Republican managers have in this fight driven from the support of the ticket a considerable class of colored men of respectability." The paper further denounced Whiteside's supporters as "a class of men loaded with pistols, knives, and whiskey, who drove from the primaries many colored men unable to cope with them in this respect."[27] In response, black leaders organized the "Committee of One Hundred," an organization which worked in favor of Republican ward candidates but campaigned against Chief Whiteside.[28]

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[25]*Chattanooga Times*, October 4, 1887.

[26]*Ibid.*, October 10, 1887.

[27]*Justice*, quoted in *ibid.*, October 10, 1887.

[28]*Ibid.*, October 7, 1887.

Democrats, seeking to exploit divisions in the Republican Party, nominated John B. Nicklin for mayor. Nicklin, a moderate northern businessman, was no doubt intended to appeal to disaffected Republicans. In the ensuing race, the Republicans stressed the importance of party loyalty, while the Democratic *Times* described the election as a contest by "a business ticket against one nominated by whiskey and boodle." Democrats also courted angry black voters and even held a special rally for them inside a Third Ward tannery just prior to the election.[29]

This strategy brought Democrats very modest success, with Nicklin defeating Whiteside in the mayoral election by just over 100 votes. Dissatisfied black voters apppear to have been the key to Nicklin's success. In the predominantly black Third Ward, for example, Whiteside received about one hundred votes less than each of the Republican candidates for alderman. Similarly, blacks in the Fourth Ward also cast fewer votes for Whiteside. Yet, though many blacks supported Nicklin in the mayor's race, few supported the entire Democratic ticket, and Republicans won all three ward races by comfortable margins. Also damaging to Democrats was the presence of a labor ticket, organized by the local Knights of Labor, which drew off a small number of working-class

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[29]*Ibid.*, October 8, 1887.

votes (for election results see Tables 7.3 and 7.4).[30]

The Republican *Daily Commercial* blamed blacks for Whiteside's defeat and again accused freedmen of selling their franchise. According to the paper, Democrats had spent lavishly to "catch the nigger vote," paying from two dollars for the votes of "ordinary negroes" to as much as ten dollars for the support of black leaders.[31] The *Commercial* then angrily attacked blacks for the perceived betrayal, charging "there are Judases in the Republican Party, they are even worse than Judas, for they betray and sell out their party for less than Judas received." The paper further asserted that black voters were "traitors, deeply dyed in treachery" who "are false in principle and false to their friends."[32]

The Republican press also levied an attack on Adolph Ochs and the *Times*. It referred to the paper as "that buzzard roost on Eighth Street" and accused it of "contemptible, malicious, and unmanly assaults" on Whiteside's character. The *Commercial* further condemned the "debased and degraded tactics . . . pursued by the *Times* and its mugwump cohorts." The paper then concludedwith a veiled threat. "There are always results and late results to

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[30]*Chattanooga Times*, October 12, 1887; *Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, October 12, 1887.

[31]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, October 10, 1887.

[32]*Ibid.*, October 12, 1887.

Table 7.3
1887 Mayoral Election

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
Whiteside (R)	2,131	369	205	586	489	402
Nicklin (D)	2,249	602	302	450	467	428
Thompson (L)	145	7	10	16	36	76

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 12, 1887.

Table 7.4
1887 Ward Elections

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
			First Ward			
Lynn (R)	2,501	492	266	673	570	400
Peebles (D)	1,897	485	239	340	384	448
Riehl (L)	144	12	7	15	32	78
			Second Ward			
Dyer (R)	2,399	468	345	641	544	401
Frank (D)	1,912	480	258	344	393	437
Stambaugh (L)	145	12	7	16	32	78
			Third Ward			
Sylvester (R)	2,458	485	363	655	557	398
Timothy (D)	1,957	479	238	355	407	478
Moore (L)	74	4	5	8	22	35

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 12, 1887.

elections," the *Commercial* contended, warning "these will be felt by the *Times* and a number of Republicans whose names are printed in the long black catalogue of traitors and mugwumps."[33]

The Republican attack on the *Times* reflected a resentment towards the growing power of the Democratic paper and its publisher, Adolph Ochs. By 1887 Ochs was one of the most influential citizens of Chattanooga, and, thanks to the real estate boom, was also among the wealthiest. As Ochs rose in status, however, he acquired a level of visibility which made him a convenient target of Republican ire. Following the unsuccessful prohibition referendum and the 1887 city canvass, Republican hostility towards the publisher reached a new high and party leaders eager sought an opportunity to strike back at the Mugwump leader. They did not have to wait long.

Just a week after the 1887 city canvass, President Grover Cleveland honored Chattanooga with a visit. The president, on a tour of the South, was persuaded to come to Chattanooga by Adolph Ochs, with whom he occasionally corresponded. As host, Ochs personally oversaw all preparations for Cleveland's visit and arranged for a grand reception and program on the steps of the city's courthouse. There, Cleveland would deliver a brief speech and meet Chattanooga's Republican city administration. For Adolph

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[33]*Ibid.*, October 6, 12, 1887.

Ochs it was to be the proudest moment of his life--the day on which he introduced his city, and his father, to the president.[34]

Yet despite Ochs' planning, the visit was a disaster from the outset. The presidential train arrived four hours late amid heavy rain and was immediately surrounded by curious onlookers. Tired and behind schedule, Cleveland declined an invitation to Ochs' rainy courthouse reception. He did, however, reluctantly consent "to drive around town" and accompanied by Ochs and Mrs. Cleveland, set out on a brief, muddy tour of Chattanooga. Even this seemingly benign act proved embarrassing, though, as former Rebels greeted the president with Confederate flags and portraits of Robert E. Lee. Worse still, Cleveland, in an effort to save time and avoid crowds, deliberately bypassed the courthouse where local dignitaries eagerly awaited him. Thus, while Ochs and Cleveland toured the town, leading Republicans waited angrily in the rain for a president who would not come.[35]

The following day Republicans were outraged and accused Ochs of absconding with Grover Cleveland. The *Daily Commercial* delivered a scathing and, at times, anti-Semitic attack on Adolph Ochs. Claiming that Cleveland had been hauled about town by an "Ochs team," the *Commercial*

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[34]John B. Nicklin, the town's new Democratic mayor, did not take office until November 22, 1887, several weeks after Cleveland's visit. *Chattanooga Times*, October 17, 1887.

[35]*Ibid.*, October 18, 1887.

complained, "the city was disgraced to be represented by the Shylock of the Times." Ochs, the paper claimed, had deliberately steered the president away from the reception because there were blacks present. Instead, the paper contended, Cleveland was delivered to the *Times* office to meet "the young Oches, the old Ochs, and billygoat MacGowan."[36]

These harsh remarks stemmed from Republican anger over recent political defeats. Yet, despite these setbacks, Republicans continued to dominate city politics. Though Democrats had recently elected John B. Nicklin mayor, Republicans continued to hold every seat on the Board of Aldermen. This hegemony continued into the 1888 political season, when the party again swept local elections (see Table 7.5). That year's canvass was essentially a repeat of the 1886 city election. Republican managers registered so many black voters that most Democrats, facing certain defeat, withdrew from the race. "The voting was light," the *Times* reported, "and the Republicans had it all their own way."[37]

Assuring the party's victory was the fact that "nearly two-thirds of the vote polled was negroes." J.H. Marsh, the only Democrat on the ballot, received just thirty-six percent of the vote in the Fifth Ward race. Independent

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[36]*Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, October 18, 1887.

[37]*Chattanooga Times*, October 6, 1888.

candidates in the other ward elections experienced even greater defeats. It was "the quietest election ever held in Chattanooga" and led John MacGowan to wonder "whether the people had completely forgotten about the gentle scramble for little city offices."[38]

Table 7.5
1888 Ward Elections

Candidate	Total Vote	First Ward	Second Ward	Third Ward	Fourth Ward	Fifth Ward
			Alderman At Large			
Williams (R)	2,036	346	293	473	490	434
Woodworth (I)	521	141	47	75	94	164
			Fourth Ward			
J. White (R)	1,777	298	256	431	470	322
W. White (I)	827	168	77	117	140	325
			Fifth Ward			
Howard (R)	1,766	295	261	401	464	345
Marsh (D)	977	231	89	147	162	348

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 6, 1888

State elections were also held in 1888, and though Democrats enjoyed only limited success in Chattanooga city elections, they registered important gains in legislative races across the state. For the first time in the post-war era, Democrats now controlled over two-thirds of both houses

[38] *Ibid.*

of the state government. This new-found majority allowed Democratic legislators to reign unimpeded by the Republican minority. Democrats also succeeded in re-electing Governor Bob Taylor, who proposed sweeping changes in the state's election laws. Thus, when the new legislature convened in January 1889, it immediately undertook the long-awaited task of election reform.[39]

Not surprisingly, the legislators first turned their attention to Chattanooga's city charter. The document, after all, had long been a source of irritation for state Democrats. Lawmakers proposed redistricting the city into eight wards, three more than already existed. Each of the new wards would have two aldermen, raising the number of city aldermen from six to sixteen.[40] This, in itself, stirred few objections. Even most local Republicans agreed that new wards were needed to represent Chattanooga's growing population properly. The manner in which the new

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[39]Chattanooga, for its part, contributed little to the statewide Democratic victory. In the gubernatorial race, for example, the city voted in favor of Republican, S.W. Hawkins over the Democratic Robert Taylor 4,146 to 2,481. Similarly, voters in Chattanooga and Hamilton County also elected two Republican state representatives and a Republican state senator. *Ibid.*, November 8, 1888; Joseph H. Cartwright, *The Triumph of Jim Crow: Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880s* (Knoxville, 1976), 221-23.

[40]The 1883 city charter provided for six aldermen; one representing each of the five wards as well as an alderman at large. All aldermen, regardless of their ward, were elected by the city at large. *Chattanooga Times*, March 28, 1883; Henry M. Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga" (2 vols., typescript, Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, 1916), 2: 131.

wards would be created, however, elicited considerable protest. Republicans favored a system of fairly straight ward lines, much like those already in place. The legislature's proposal, however, included ward lines clearly drawn to contain black votes and limit Republican power (see Figure 7.1). The Fourth Ward, for example, was drawn to accommodate both the Republican elite on Cameron Hill and the working-class blacks who resided near the iron foundries and alongside the river in the former Third Ward. Similarly, the new Seventh Ward was designed to encompass black neighborhoods from the old Fourth Ward, while omitting white districts in the center of town.[41]

Local reaction to the bill was mixed, even among Democrats. Conservative Democrats naturally praised the proposal. One proclaimed, "if it will make the city Democratic, I am in favor of it." Another endorsed the new charter as a worthy attempt "to get rid of nigger domination." Others, however, raised concerns over the legislation. M.J. O'Brian, for example, called the plan "a palpable gerrymander," while John MacGowan urged caution. In the *Times* he warned, "if we attempt to cure a wrong by doing an equal or greater wrong, that which we do will soon perish; and then the 'reformers' of the other party will have their season of triumph." Most disturbing was a

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[41]*Nashville Daily American*, February 14, 19, 1889; *Chattanooga Times*, February 14, 1889.

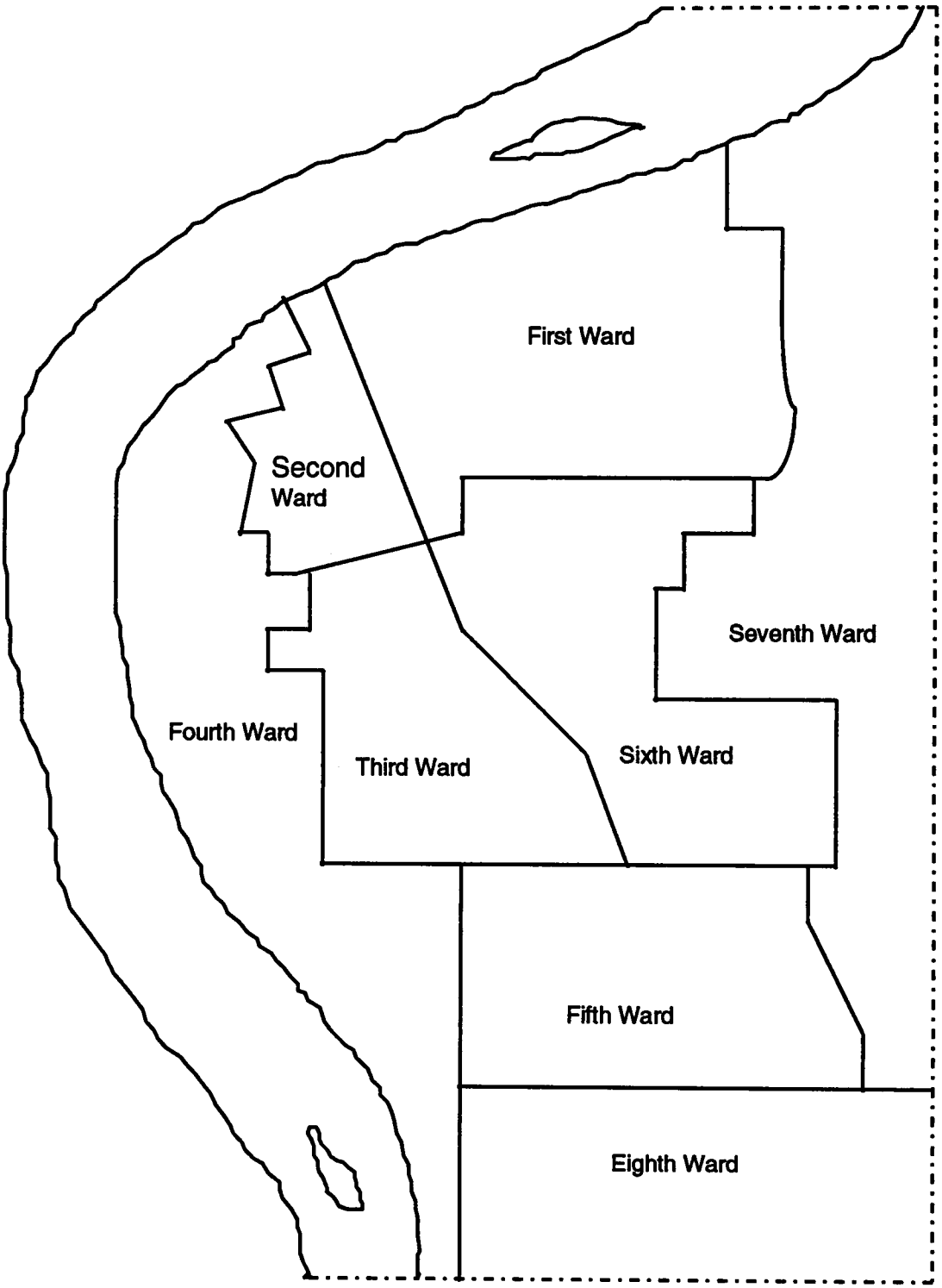

Figure 7.1. Chattanooga Ward Boundaries, 1889.

City Limits -·-·-·-·- Ward Lines ————

Source: *Chattanooga City Directory* (1892), 11.

provision of the bill which provided for the election of the mayor by the Board of Aldermen, rather than directly by the voters. This arrangement defied Chattanooga's tradition of self rule and led Hugh Whiteside to predict: "If the bill passed the people would be so incensed the Democrats would not be able to elect one alderman."[42]

In the midst of the controversy, a compromise bill was proposed by George Ochs at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce. Ochs' plan preserved city-wide mayoral elections and called for slightly modified ward lines which, according to the *Times*, would create three Republican wards, three Democratic, and two dubbed "doubtful." This scheme, immediately hailed as "a wise and conservative measure," gained the unanimous endorsement of Democratic legislators and, despite complaints from the Republican minority, soon became law.[43]

Having successfully changed Chattanooga's city charter, legislators next offered statewide election reforms designed to limit black voting and further curtail Republican power. The first of these was a proposal introduced by Senator John C. Meyers, a prohibitionist Democrat from McMinnville. The Myers bill, which provided for statewide voter registration, easily passed the legislature. The new law,

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[42]*Chattanooga Times*, February 14, 15, 1889.

[43]At the time, George Ochs served on the Chamber's Board of Directors. *Ibid.*, January 11, February 16, 20, 26, 1889; *Nashville Daily American*, February 23, 1889.

which promised to affect voters across Tennessee, had little immediate effect on Chattanooga, however, since the city already required voter registration.[44]

But the legislation which followed presented a direct challenge to Chattanooga's Republicans. Senator Joseph H. Dortch, of Fayette County, sponsored a secret ballot law designed to disfranchise black voters. The bill, which applied only to the state's four main cities, was based on the Australian ballot system and required the use of uniform election ballots.[45] Prior to this time parties had generally supplied their ballots, which were often illustrated or color-coded to assist poorly-educated voters. Supporters of the bill contended that such ballots prevented secret voting and, since they were supplied by party bosses, encouraged fraud.[46]

In a move directed at poorly-educated blacks, the law also prohibited assistance to illiterate voters in marking their ballots.[47] Such aid, lawmakers argued, encouraged

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[44]Cartwright, *Triumph of Jim Crow*, 223-24.

[45]*Chattanooga Times*, April 3, 1889.

[46]There are indications that ballot reform may have actually been needed in Chattanooga. During 1886 county elections, for example, Democratic ballots were illustrated with Abraham Lincoln's portrait and circulated among local blacks at the polls. *Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, August 4, 1886.

[47]According to the 1890 federal census, 54.2 percent of blacks over ten years of age in Tennessee were illiterate. Cartwright, *Triumph of Jim Crow*, 218.

corruption and violated the secrecy of the voting booth. This provision, which also threatened to eliminate some poor white voters, met with some resistance in the legislature but eventually passed. The new law immediately met with praise among Chattanooga Democrats. The *Times*, for example, claimed the bill would deter "the masses of voters who were ignorant" and lauded it as "exactly what the state needed to give its people freer, fairer, honester [*sic*] elections ."[48]

Bourbon Democrats showed even more enthusiasm for the new law. The *Evening News*, a short-lived local Bourbon press, proclaimed: "the Dortch election bill was one of the best things that ever happened for the state of Tennessee." The paper went on to argue that blacks would be the bill's greatest beneficiaries, since it would force them to become literate. "Already," the *Evening News* reported, "we hear of the organization of night schools for the colored people" which, in time, would eliminate "habits and ideas of indolence, rowdiness and unrest."[49]

The Bourbon paper went on to suggest that more extreme reforms were needed to restrict black voters. "Negroes," the paper argued, "multiply like rabbits in Australia or sparrows in Memphis," and, as a result, their numbers at the polls needed to be limited further. As a solution, the *Evening News* proposed that voting itself be made an elected

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[48]*Chattanooga Times*, April 3, 4, 5, 1889.

[49]*Chattanooga Evening News*, April 22, 1889.

office among blacks. According to this bizarre plan, blacks would have to elect an unspecified number of their peers to serve as voters. This, the editor contended, would curtail the number of black voters and thus ensure that only those few deemed "worthy" could participate in elections.[50]

Fortunately for Chattanooga's Republicans, such legislation never materialized. Even without it, however, they faced danger in the new election reform laws. Especially troublesome was the Dortch bill, as an estimated half of all black voters were illiterate. In an effort to stop its implementation, Republican leaders immediately challenged the constitutionality of the Dortch bill in federal court. The case went before United States District Court Judge David M. Key. Key, a Chattanooga Democrat with close ties to the city's industrial elite, issued a ruling which sympathized with Republicans but favored Democrats. In it, the Judge condemned the law for placing "chains around the feet and arms of free men" but refused to act against it, explaining that as a federal judge, he had no jurisdiction over state laws. Stunned by Key's decision, city auditor Charles Whiteside lowered the flag atop city hall to half-mast to symbolize the Republicans' gloom.[51]

With the city canvass only days away, Republicans did as they had in the past, and relied on their skill and

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[50]*Ibid.*, June 4, 1889.

[51]*Chattanooga Times*, October 6, 1889.

organization to counter the new laws. Party managers methodically registered black voters in the city's eight wards and carefully prepared them for the new voting procedures. On the day of the city election, the party operated "voting schools" in the Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh wards. In those, party officials taught black voters how to mark, fold and submit their ballots properly. In the Second Ward, blacks may have also applied deception to circumvent voting restrictions. There, according to the *Times*, blacks would leave the voting booth still carrying their blank ballot, to have it marked on the outside. The completed ballot would then be cast by another black, who would then return with another unmarked voting slip.[52]

Whatever the means, Republicans successfully weathered the new laws and again prevailed across most of the city. Republicans swept the mayor's race, electing John A. Hart, a local lumber producer and former mayor, as the city's new chief executive (see Table 7.6). Hart, who captured fifty-six percent of the vote, defeated Richard L. Watkins, a long-time Chattanooga resident and local leather manufacturer.[53] Hart's victory was a setback for Democrats, who had captured the mayor's office with fifty-one percent

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[52]*Ibid.*, October 9, 1889.

[53]*Ibid.*

of the vote in 1887.[54]

Table 7.6
1889 Mayoral Election

Ward	Hart (R)	Watkins (D)
1	270	363
2	294	221
3	158	216
4	298	69
5	179	177
6	161	160
7	416	169
8	185	158
Total	1,961	1,533

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 9, 1889.

Republican candidates also won in seven of the eight wards and gained twelve seats on the sixteen man Board (see Table 7.7). As in the mayoral contest, Democrats received strong returns in just two wards: the First and Third. Republicans, on the other hand, prevailed easily in the mainly black Fourth and Seventh wards, and won by comfortable margins in the Second and Eighth wards. In other wards, however, the races were much tighter, and Republicans sometimes won by only a handful of votes. Among those elected were two blacks, Hiram Tyree and A.F. Thompson.

[54]John A. Hart also served as mayor in 1879 and 1880. *Ibid.*

Table 7.7

1889 Ward Elections

First Ward	Vote	Second Ward	Vote	Third Ward	Vote	Fourth Ward	Vote
Holland (D)	308	Frank (D)	205	Whiteside (D)	219	Van Duesen (D)	78
O'Connell (D)	364	Timothy (D)	200	Strelitz (D)	152	Allen (D)	85
Wassman (R)	261	Martin (R)	289	Yeager (R)	152	Tyree (R)	277
Williams (R)	297	Dugger (R)	308	McCallister (R)	141	Dyer (R)	278

Fifth Ward	Vote	Sixth Ward	Vote	Seventh Ward	Vote	Eighth Ward	Vote
Abercrombie (D)	174	Fleming (D)	181	Rogers (D)	174	Thomas (D)	140
Marsh (D)	164	Hope (D)	150	Thomas (D)	175	Powell (D)	143
Stewart (R)	200	Wilbur (R)	137	Thompson (R)	380	Howard (R)	219
Batchtel (R)	178	Crimmins (R)	158	Hawkins (R)	405	Cotter (R)	182

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 9, 1889.

Republicans gloated over the victory and one party weekly remarked, "It is miraculous how quick a negro can be taught to read."[55]

The results astonished local Democrats, who had confidently planned a grand victory celebration.[56] The *Times* found that "the people who secured the new political map of Chattanooga and the new electoral laws to make it effective" were "somewhat left" by the results.[57] For the better part of a decade Democrats had utilized virtually every available legal device in attempts to eliminate Republican rule, yet in each instance they failed. "The Dortch law did not prove the bugaboo to the Republicans that had been feared, the *Commercial* proclaimed, adding "it did prove somewhat of a boomerang to the Democrats."[58]

The legislation, in fact, may have disfranchised a significant number of the working-class whites who comprised the heart of the Democratic constituency. Only 3,494 of the city's 5,655 registered voters took part in the election and 886 fewer residents voted in the 1889 mayoral race than participated in 1887. New voting restrictions seem to have

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[55]The Third Ward tie between Yeager and Strelitz was decided in Favor of Yeager when Strelitz, facing certain defeat in a ruling by the Republican dominated Board of Aldermen, withdrew from the race. *Chattanooga Republican*, October 13, 20, 1889.

[56]*Ibid.*

[57]*Chattanooga Times*, October 9, 1889.

[58]*Chattanooga Republican*, October 13, 1889.

eliminated many voters, the majority of whom appear to have been white. Democrats did especially poorly in the Fifth and Eighth wards, which were carved from the former working-class Fifth Ward. In the new Fifth Ward, for example, there were over 360 white registered voters, yet Democrats received less than 175 votes; and in the Eighth Ward, which contained over three hundred white registered voters, the party could muster only about 150.[59]

Undaunted by these losses, Democratic legislators in Nashville continued with the process of election reform and in 1890 imposed a statewide poll tax.[60] Yet despite the new law, Chattanooga's Republicans enjoyed continued success in the 1890 city election, winning six out of eight available seats (see Table 7.8). Republicans even won in the First Ward, a mostly white neighborhood which had voted Democratic in 1889. The Republicans might have won the Eighth Ward as well, had a party manager in the district not lost fifty black registration certificates.[61]

Interestingly, voter participation dropped almost twenty-nine percent between 1889 and 1890. Much of the decrease can be attributed to Tennessee's new voting laws, which seemed to discourage voters from both parties. In the Democratic First Ward, for example, voter turnout dropped

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[59]*Chattanooga Times*, October 6, 9, 1889.

[60]Cartwright, *Triumph of Jim Crow*, 232-33.

[61]*Chattanooga Times*, October 13, 1890.

Table 7.8
1890 Ward Elections

First Ward	Vote	Second Ward	Vote
Bryant (D)	246	Bork (D)	138
Williams (R)	260	Mitchell (R)	205

Third Ward	Vote	Fourth Ward	Vote
Rogers (D)	132	Rider (D)	38
Yeager (R)	123	Tyree (R)	251

Fifth Ward	Vote	Sixth Ward	Vote
Howard (D)	121	Brown (D)	125
Batchell (R)	165	Crimmins (R)	171

Seventh Ward	Vote	Eighth Ward	Vote
Wells (D)	138	Hill (D)	160
Kennedy (R)	142	Cotter (R)	110
Thompson (I)	56		

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 15, 1890.

twenty percent while participation in the Republican Seventh Ward plummeted forty-three precent. Democrats, for their part, blamed voter apathy for the loss.[62] According to the *Times*, "not less than five hundred white voters" declined to register while "very few negroes have so failed." The paper then complained "the people who fail to turn out and vote

[62]According to the 1889 city charter, aldermen were to hold two-year terms. Initially, however, half the aldermen served just one year in order to facilitate annual elections. *Ibid.*, October 15, 1890.

deserve all that may flow in the way of bad government from their inertia and indifference."[63]

Having survived two years under the new voting restrictions, Republicans entered the 1891 canvass confident of victory. Yet Democrats were not willing to concede defeat, as in years past. Chattanooga was a thriving industrial city and now boasted a growing number of Democratic factory and mill workers. At the same time the recent housing boom created new neighborhoods and threatened to shift the political balance of the city's wards. The suburbs of St. Elmo, Highland Park and Sherman Heights, which lay outside the city limits, attracted many middle-class residents, including numerous Republicans. The growth of these communities drained the city of white Republicans and inspired local Democrats to wage a spirited campaign.[64]

The 1891 mayoral race was especially heated. Republicans nominated Alderman J.T. Williams, a coal company executive and a native of Wales. His opponent was Garnett Andrews, a Bourbon Democrat with a controversial past. Andrews, originally from Mississippi, was accused by the Republican press of having taken part in an 1876 race riot

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[63]Just 2,481 residents took part in the 1890 municipal race. More voters, however, participated in that year's gubernatorial election, when Chattanogans voted 1,727 to 1,576 in favor of Republican Lewis T. Baxter over Democrat John P. Buchanon. *Ibid.*, October 9, 1889, October 15, 1890.

[64]Highland Park was annexed by the city in 1905, Sherman Heights in 1913, and St. Elmo in 1929. James W. Livingood, *Hamilton County* (Memphis, 1981), 81.

in Yazoo City in which numerous blacks were murdered and northern whites terrorized. Andrews, conspicuously armed with a shotgun, reportedly led two companies of white vigilantes against blacks in the melee.[65]

The *Times* immediately defended the candidate from charges of racial violence, stating they were "utterly foreign to the man's nature." Though the paper admitted Andrews' participation in the riot, it stated he and his men acted only to protect "their homes, their lives, and their property." The paper then produced affidavits claiming Andrews' actions "prevented the loss of many of the lives of the colored people."[66] The Bourbon press, however, made no such attempt at vindication, but instead praised the actions of the rioters. The *Chattanooga Argus*, for example, declared: "If Garnett Andrews 'counted out' the negroes and ran the damnable carpet baggers from the state which they had infested like lice we say: 'Go to it old fellow, God bless you, we are glad you did it.'"[67]

Given Andrews' possible role in the Yazoo City incident, one might anticipate a record turnout among blacks

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[65]The Yazoo City incident, which occured in September, 1875, sparked racial violence across the state and prompted the effective demise of Mississippi's Republican party. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, 1988), 559-63; *Chattanooga Times*, October 4, 1891.

[66]*Ibid.*, October 4, 5, 1891.

[67]*Chattanooga Argus*, October 11, 1891.

and northerners in favor of the Republican ticket. Yet surprisingly, just the opposite occurred. Republican candidates did poorly in the 1891 city races, winning in just three of the eight wards. In most wards the party experienced a drop in voters. In the Sixth Ward, for example, the Republican vote fell by over sixty-six percent. Republicans also lost the mayoral contest by over two hundred votes. J.T. Williams garnered just 1,542 votes, over four hundred less than the party's 1889 candidate. Garnett Andrews, on the other hand, received 1,744 votes, representing a gain of over two hundred votes for the Democrats. Andrews, who captured over fifty-three percent of the vote, won the mayor's race by the greatest margin of any Democrat since the Civil War.[68]

A number of factors led to the Republican losses. Strict election laws no doubt played a role. In the predominantly black Fourth and Seventh wards, for example, election officials discarded a total of eighty-one improperly marked ballots. Changing demographics may also have played a role, as many middle-class voters moved to Highland Park and other suburbs outside the city. Lingering racial divisions plagued the party as well. In the Fourth Ward, for example, the party's official candidate, a black named Frank Whiteside, was successfully challenged by an independent, Henry T. Olmsted. Olmsted, a so-called "lily

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[68]*Chattanooga Daily Press*, October 14, 1891.

white" Republican, opposed Whiteside simply to keep two blacks from representing a single ward.[69] In the Seventh Ward, the *Daily Press* revealed that "dissatisfaction among the colored voters came near returning a Democratic alderman" (for election results see Tables 7.9 and 7.10).[70]

Table 7.9
1891 Ward Elections

First Ward	Vote	Second Ward	Vote
McReynolds (D)	366	Van Deman (D)	233
Gahagan (R)	315	Bathman (R)	214

Third Ward	Vote	Fourth Ward	Vote
G. Whiteside (D)	246	Amiss (D)	116
McCallister (R)	110	F. Whiteside (R)	182
		Olmsted (I)	198

Fifth Ward	Vote	Sixth Ward	Vote
Teppenaw (D)	122	Wilcox (D)	236
Stewart (R)	240	De Tavernier (R)	57

Seventh Ward	Vote	Eighth Ward	Vote
Henderson (D)	223	Clinton (D)	88
Phillips (R)	251	Howard (R)	212

Source: *Chattanooga Daily Press*, October 12, 1891.

[69]*Chattanooga Times*, October 14, 1891.

[70]*Chattanooga Daily Press*, October 14, 1891.

Table 7.10
1891 Mayoral Election

Ward	Williams (R)	Andrews (D)
1	243	434
2	217	229
3	132	227
4	280	119
5	161	198
6	98	190
7	265	219
8	145	134
Total	1,542	1,744

Source: *Chattanooga Daily Press*, October 12, 1891.

Financial problems within the party also contributed to the defeat. Republicans now had to mount eight ward races annually and, in addition, pay both city and state poll taxes for a growing number of black voters. Unprepared for such financial demands, the party apparently experienced a shortage of campaign funds in 1891. According to a report in the *Chattanooga Times*, the Republican Executive Committee was "broke" in the week prior to the election. Republican leaders, the account stated, were scrambling to raise twenty-five hundred dollars by levying assessments on city employees. The effort, however, was less than successful, as many workers were either unable or unwilling to pay the party for the privilege of municipal employment. The timing of the Republican crisis is especially relevant, since it

occurred at the same time that residents were required to pay their poll taxes. Thus, it seems likely that the local Republican party lacked the resources to pay poll taxes for many black supporters and, as a consequence, may have lost a significant number of votes.[71]

The following year Republicans suffered an even greater defeat. Party candidates lost in all but one of the 1892 ward elections (see Table 7.11). Only in the Fourth Ward did Republicans win.[72] Ironically, the party's sole victor was Hiram Tyree, a veteran black alderman. Republicans anticipated the rout, stating the defeat was "a foregone conclusion." They blamed "unjust election laws" and Democratic corruption for the loss but, as in 1891, less sinister factors also conspired against them.[73] The growing suburbs, for example, continued to drain the city of party voters and an examination of 1892 county election results indicates that all of Chattanooga's middle-class suburbs enjoyed sizable Republican electorates.[74]

Voter apathy also plagued the party. The 1892 vote, as in previous years, was light compared to the city registration. Of the 5,434 registered voters in Chattanooga, just 3,182 went to the polls. Some of this decrease can, no

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[71]*Chattanooga Times*, October 9, 1891.

[72]*Ibid.*, November 12, 1892.

[73]*Chattanooga Republican*, October 15, 1892.

[74]*Chattanooga Times*, August 12, 1892.

Table 7.11
1892 Ward Elections

First Ward	Vote	Second Ward	Vote
Peeples (D)	373	Martin (D)	264
Case (R)	251	Dugger (R)	165

Third Ward	Vote	Fourth Ward	Vote
Roberts (D)	220	Dyer (D)	124
Crossman (R)	133	Tyree (R)	215

Fifth Ward	Vote	Sixth Ward	Vote
Roberts (D)	220	Van Dyke (D)	216
Batchel (R)	142	Crimmins (R)	116

Seventh Ward	Vote	Eighth Ward	Vote
Howell (D)	311	Hill (D)	169
Fralix (R)	221	Moss (R)	42

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 11, 1892.

doubt, be attributed to voting restrictions, but it is interesting to note that both white and black wards reported a decrease in voter participation. In fact the largely white First Ward, in which sixty-eight percent of the electorate voted, actually recorded a lower turnout than the black Fourth Ward, where seventy-one percent of the voters took part in elections.[75] The local press, for its part, attributed the decline to a growing lack of interest in local politics. The *Times*, for example, condemned "the

[75]*Ibid.*, November 12, 1892.

chronic carelessness of the average citizen" for not voting and reminded readers: "At least there is a choice of evils, and by going to the polls and choosing the least, a duty will have been performed."[76]

Racial divisions among Republicans also contributed to the party's decline. Lily white Republicans, who blamed the city's ills on black voters, increasingly bolted the party in the 1890s and threw their support behind independents and moderate Democrats. Some Republicans even began to suggest the creation of a bipartisan reform ticket, similar to the "citizens movement" of 1879. "Question any Republican of note just now," the *Times* reported, "and you will readily learn he favors a citizens ticket and looks with distrust upon his former ally, the brother in black."[77] Both black and white Republicans acknowledged the role of such defections in recent defeats. The *Chattanooga Republican*, for example, blamed "unholy combinations" for the 1892 debacle while a black party leader, commenting on recent losses, lamented "had we the friendship that existed ten

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[76]Chattanoogans turned out in much greater numbers for the 1892 gubernatorial and presidential elections, when approximately four thousand residents went to the polls. Grover Cleveland, a Democrat, won the city's presidential vote, defeating Benjamin Harrison 2,256 to 1,862. A Republican, however, won the town's gubernatorial vote, with G.W. Winstead taking 2,081 votes to Peter Turney's 1,909. *Ibid.*, October 2, 11, November 9, 1892.

[77]*Ibid.*, August 12, 1892.

years ago the results would have been different."[78]

It was the first time in more than a decade that Democrats controlled the city's government and supporters rejoiced over their ascension to power. The *Times* portrayed the 1892 win as a victory for reform and credited it to "the votes of a suffering public." "Cobwebs that have accumulated during many years of mis-rule [*sic*] and ruin have swept away," the paper proclaimed, adding, "the people will have a turn at the management of affairs."[79]

Chattanooga's black Republicans, however, remained proud, and just weeks after the city canvass, they held a defiant demonstration against Democratic rule. On the night of November 5, 1892, just prior to the national election, blacks staged a torchlit parade in support of party candidates. Two hundred blacks, referred to derisively by the *Times* as the "Sambo Club," marched down Market Street beneath a succession of red and blue lamps. Leading the procession, on horseback was alderman Hiram Tyree, the city's sole remaining black elected official. As it approached the center of town, the assembly lifted carefully painted signs and placards. One read "Mr. Dortch, we can read our ballots, don't you forget it." Another simply

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[78]*Chattanooga Republican*, October 15, 1892; *Chattanooga Times*, August 12, 1892.

[79]*Chattanooga Times*, August 12, 1892.

stated, "Read, have faith, and believe."[80]

Chattanooga's black voters continued to express faith in their political future. Yet, for all practical purposes, their torchlight procession may just as well have been their funeral procession. The 1892 city canvass marked the end of Republican hegemony in Chattanooga. The party would elect just one more mayor in the nineteenth century and it would be decades until Republicans again played a decisive role in municipal politics. Ironically, the demise of Republican power coincided with a decline of the local economy, and as Democrats began their long tenure in local government, they encountered a crisis neither they or their predecessors could scarcely have predicted.

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[80]*Ibid.*, November 5, 1892.

Chapter 8

"Desperate Times" and "Desperate Remedies": The Bust of the 1890s

In December, 1892, Adolph S. Ochs treated Chattanooga to a grand celebration. The occasion was the dedication of the impressive new home of the *Chattanooga Times*. As citizens paraded through the imposing edifice and gawked at its extravagance, accolades poured in from across the nation praising the paper and its young publisher. For Ochs, the festivities marked a new milestone in his career; and the building, whose gilded dome dominated the local skyline, symbolized his wealth, power and prestige.[1] Yet as Ochs basked in the praise of his peers, he was also deeply troubled, for behind this gleaming new facade, his empire seemed to be crumbling. He had gambled heavily on local real estate and lost, and, as land values dropped, his liabilities mounted. Less than a year later he would be pleading with his creditors for relief. "Grant me the indulgence I ask of you," Ochs implored of one such banker, lamenting that "these are desperate times and we must resort to desperate remedies."[2]

Adolph Ochs was not alone in his dilemma, for thousands

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[1]*Chattanooga Times*, December 8,9, 1892.

[2]Adolph S. Ochs to Walter Scott and Company, August 18, 1893, letterpress copy, Adolph S. Ochs Papers, *New York Times* Archives.

of his fellow citizens shared his plight. In the early 1890s Chattanooga experienced an economic collapse that seemed to threaten the very survival of the city. Shops and businesses across the city closed their doors, and thousands of residents were suddenly thrown out of work. Faced with such a crisis, Chattanoogans struggled to assist the newly-poor, while attempting to mend their battered community through civic activism and political reform. Voters, aware that the city could no longer afford the luxuries of patronage and corruption, rejected the city's political traditions and elected Chattanooga's first true reform government. Led by Mugwump Democrats, the city's administration became a model of public efficiency and, working in cooperation with community leaders, helped bring about an eventual economic recovery.

Numerous factors contributed to the bust of the 1890s, one of the leading ones being the decline of the local iron industry. For decades Chattanooga had staked its future on the production of iron and related products. In the 1880s, however, with the advent elsewhere of inexpensive steel, the demand for local iron began to wane. Post-war technological advances radically lowered the cost of steel production until, by the mid-eighties, the metal was only slightly more expensive than comparable quantities of iron. In 1882, for example, a steel rail cost just three dollars more than its iron counterpart. Given steel's numerous advantages, such as

its strength and malleability, railroads and industries were quite willing to pay a slight premium to use the commodity. As a result, steel production in the United States soared in the 1880s and 1890s while iron, which helped lay the foundations of the industrial revolution, was quickly relegated to the manufacture of cookstoves and wash kettles.[3]

Demand for iron products dropped rapidly, especially among the nation's railroads. In 1880 domestic foundries manufactured over 440 tons of iron rails; just five years later they produced barely thirteen tons.[4] Alarmed by these developments, Chattanooga's iron producers attempted to adapt to the new marketplace. Some, such as the Chattanooga Iron Company, began making pig iron for conversion into steel elsewhere. Others, most notably the Roane Iron Company, attempted to manufacture steel themselves. Throughout the 1880s Roane Iron had invested heavily in new technology in hopes of producing profitable steel. In each case, however, local producers inevitably failed. Regional iron ores, it soon became apparent, were of too low a quality for steel production. At one point Roane Iron could only produce steel by using imported English pig iron, an

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[3]*Metal Statistics, 1965* (New York, 1965), 202-03.

[4]*Ibid.*, 202.

arrangement which proved neither practical nor fruitful.[5]

No longer profitable, Roane Iron Company sold its Chattanooga operations in 1889 to Birmingham's Southern Iron Company. The plant's new owners made one last attempt at steel production, installing the facility's celebrated ten-ton basic furnaces. Like their predecessors, however, these crucibles, though capable of producing steel, proved unable to yield a profit. In 1891 the Alabama company abandoned the effort and the Roane Ironworks, formerly Chattanooga's largest employer, closed permanently. Other local concerns met a similar fate and by the early 1890s only the modest Citico Furnace remained in constant operation.[6]

The collapse of Chattanooga's iron trade marked an inglorious end to an industry which once held the promise of the city's future. Along with its demise came a loss of confidence as well as a decline in many local fortunes. "The history of iron making," in the words of one southern iron-master, was "strewn with the wrecks of shattered hopes." "If there is a single furnace that has not sunk the original owners all the money they put in and not changed hands," the man lamented, "I do not know of it." "Those who have gone into the iron business, he concluded, "have lost their

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[5]Morrow Chamberlain, *A Brief History of the Pig Iron Industry of East Tennessee* (Chattanooga, 1942), 7-8.

[6]*Ibid.*, 8, 20-22.

money."[7]

The decline of local iron and steel concerns all but destroyed an already languid local real estate market. Land prices, which had declined steadily since their peak in the 1887 boom, sank to new lows in the early nineties. "Chattanooga real estate will never go to lower prices" the *Times* predicted in May 1893. The paper commented that "a man would be glad to sell today for five hundred dollars what he may have been offered one thousand dollars for a few years ago." Even at such reduced prices, though, the report stated that "ten times more men want to sell than people want to buy." Rents fell by one-sixth in one year alone. Such drops served to erode local wealth even more, while further deflating the city's once promising image.[8]

The Panic of 1893 dealt a final crushing blow to the local economy. This nationwide depression, brought about by reckless railroad expansion, agricultural stagnation, and a decline in global confidence in the dollar, hit southern cities especially hard. The number of business failures in the region remained substantially higher than the national average throughout the crisis. In 1893, for example, the failure rate for southern businesses was a full one-third higher than that for the country at large. Cities from Atlanta to New Orleans reeled from the economic devastation

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[7]*Ibid.*, 3.

[8]*Chattanooga Times*, May 8, 1893.

and Chattanooga was no exception.[9] As the national economy ground to a halt, local manufacturers and businesses closed their doors. Within weeks, the bustling city was transformed into a virtual ghost town of idle factories and vacant stores.

N.H. Grady, who moved to Chattanooga in April 1893, was shocked at the town's appearance. He later recalled, "A stranger who did not understand our American use of the red flag would have though Chattanooga was a cooperative of anarchists--so many of the emblems were displayed along market street." "Factories," he recollected, "were closed or working on short time" and local merchants "were forced to the wall by the panicky conditions that prevailed." Businesses which had invested their capital in "town lots" simply "collapsed." "To me," Grady remembered, "who had come seeking a better location, the atmosphere seemed a dark, melancholy blue, and I felt at times like moving on or moving back."[10]

Conditions at Chattanooga's financial institutions only

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[9]C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, 1951), 264-67, 292-93. For more information on the causes of the Panic of 1893 see W. Jett Lauck, *The Causes of the Panic of 1893* (New York, 1907) and Charles P. Kindleberger, *Manias, Panics, and Crashes: A History of Financial Crises* (New York, 1978).

[10]The red flag is a traditional sign of warning and distress. In this case, however, it is unclear whether Grady's use of the term is literal or figurative. *Chattanooga Times*, April 24, 1897; *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "red flag."

added to the crisis. By the summer of 1893 local banks had exhausted their cash reserves and began issuing "clearing house certificates" to their patrons in lieu of currency. These vouchers, worthless outside of the city, were of little value to local businessmen with creditors to pay elsewhere. Among these was Adolph Ochs, who, unable to meet his obligations, complained to his bankers, "our business being principally local--we are compelled to take these certificates." "You can readily appreciate the situation that is presented to me," he pleaded, explaining "until the people who owe me begin to pay me, I have got to shove off things that I owe other people." "Fortunately," he sighed, "I have very little papers such as yours outstanding," but added, "what was a little thing a few months ago is now an awfully big thing."[11]

The economic crisis hit Chattanooga's working class especially hard. In January, 1893, Hiram S. Chamberlain, head of the city's Associated Charities, appealed for help for the newly-poor.[12] More than two thousand men, he reported, were out of work and the winter promised to be the "most severe" in years. As the year progressed the plight of the poor only grew worse. The following fall Chamberlain

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[11]Adolph S. Ochs to Walter Scott and Company, August 18, 1893, letterpress copy, Ochs Papers.

[12]The Associated Charities was a municipal body which distributed funds collected by local churches and various private charities.

lamented, "women come to us daily begging for bread for themselves and their children because their husbands could find no work."[13]

The Associated Charities responded with a relief program for the unemployed, but insisted that recipients "earn their bread." Jobless men were issued "labor tickets" by the city which entitled them to "the privilege of working" on city streets for fifty cents per day if single, sixty cents if married. Relief wages were kept deliberately low, Chamberlain explained, "so men will take better work the minute it is offered."[14] The city also provided work for the wives of the unemployed. Early in the crisis local officials established the "Helping Hand Laundry," which provided jobs for poor women, including many, according to the *Times*, who were "married to men who once earned a respectable living."[15] Though the laundry employed only a fraction of the women who needed help, the project was deemed so successful that Chamberlain launched an unsuccessful effort to build a charity sawmill for unemployed men.[16]

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[13]*Chattanooga Times*, November 8, 1893; Henry M. Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga" (2 vols., Unpublished Typescript: Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, 1916) 2: 111.

[14]*Ibid.*

[15]*Chattanooga Times*, January 8, 13, 1893.

[16]*Ibid.*, November 8, 1893.

Other residents weathered the bust using different means. Many patronized a "soup house" operated by the Lookout Mountain Spiritualists. Others took in work, sewing, mending corsets, and making artificial flowers in their homes. So desperate was the situation, at one point the *Times* suggested that families be allowed to raise sheep on the city's vacant lots--the same lots which, just six years earlier, had commanded astronomical prices.[17]

Chattanooga's poorest residents, its blacks, suffered the most during the crisis and they often lived lives of desperation.[18] One woman, for example, asked that her eight children be sent to the county workhouse to keep them from starving. Still others proposed leaving the city altogether. Throughout 1893 thousands of local blacks talked of leaving Chattanooga. Though some proposed immigrating to Liberia, most planned moves westward. "Excitement is at fever heat" the *Times* reported, "Penniless negroes say they are going West if they have to walk." Those with property were "offering houses and lots for songs" to finance their journeys. Expeditions carrying up to five hundred blacks left the city in the first half of the year, leading the *Times* to predict, "by the end of the year there will be

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[17]*Ibid.*, January 8, 23, 1893.

[18]In the 1890 census, Chattanooga reported a black population of 12,575. *Census of Population, 1890* (Washington, 1890), 554.

three thousand fewer colored people in Chattanooga."[19]

Casualties of the panic, however, were not limited to the poor, and some of Chattanooga's leading citizens also fell victim to the crash. D.B. Loveman, the prominent merchant, declared bankruptcy in the summer of 1893.[20] Michael J. O'Brian, a perennial Democratic candidate and former president of the Chamber of Commerce, experienced disgrace as well. Shaken by business losses, O'Brian absconded with $76,000 from the Catholic Knights of America, a benevolent organization of which he was treasurer.[21] Even Alice Cooper, the city's leading purveyor of sin, met with ruin. As unemployment rose, her business declined and her property holdings, like those throughout the city, lost their value. Unwilling to face the poverty she had known earlier in life, the aging Cooper slashed her own throat. "She died at the age of sixty-three," the *Times* declared, "and the pace she had gone left its imprint on her wrinkled

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[19]The primary figure in this movement was John Lovell, a black Chattanoogan who immigrated to California in the 1880s and subsequently organized expeditions for other residents. Yet, though Lovell no doubt carried hundreds of blacks west, the total number was probably far less than the three thousand predicted by the *Times*. In fact, though Chattanooga's black population grew just 4.1 percent in the 1890s, this increase was still greater than the 2.4 percent growth registered by whites during the decade. *Chattanooga Times*, January 26, May 10, 1893.

[20]*Ibid.*, June 13, 1893.

[21]*Ibid.*, October 11, 1892.

and hardened face."[22]

Reflecting on his own losses, Adolph Ochs grew pensive. He confided to an associate: "I was carried out into deeper water than I ever had any intention of getting in, on the crest of a wave that has caused the disaster of thousands of the most progressive and enterprising spirits of this section." "I only managed to keep afloat," he confessed, "by good luck that my restlessness did not entitle me to." Yet, though Ochs longed for the days "when it looked like money was growing on apple trees," he remained optimistic. "My losses have been discouraging and disheartening," he admitted, but added "I am young, vigorous, hopeful . . . and believe with patient toil . . . I will again be on dry land, having regained all I lost by the follies of my younger years."[23]

Stunned by the bust's magnitude, local boosters rushed to assign blame for the collapse. J.H. Warner, for example, cited "high taxation," "high tax assessments," and a "lack

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[22]*Ibid.*, November 29, 30, December 3, 1893.

[23] Adolph S. Ochs to Krohn, Feiss, and Company, November 15, 1894, letterpress copy, Ochs Papers. Adolph Ochs, of course, did recover from his Chattanooga losses. Desperate to generate income to pay his creditors, Ochs bought another failing daily, the *New York Times*, in 1896. Under his direction, the *Times* became one of the nation's leading newspapers and Ochs became one of the nation's most influential publishers. Interestingly, though Ochs attained great wealth and power in New York, he never lost interest in Chattanooga and he never invested in real estate again. For more information on Ochs's later career, see Gerald W. Johnson, *Honorable Titan* (Westport, 1970) and Gay Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power* (New York, 1969).

of good faith on the part of our city and citizens to some of our enterprises." Others mentioned poor business practices and a lack of cooperation as possible causes. Referring to the lumber trade as an example, George Ochs noted "the planing mills had cut each other's throats and engaged in a moneyless competition."[24] His brother, however, attributed the crash to greed and the excesses of the late eighties. "There is no use ignoring the cold fact," Adolph Ochs complained, "there has been too much speculation, too much manufacturing, too much, in fact, of everything." The publisher then admonished, "we have been running on an extravagant schedule . . . and the day for liquidation has arrived."[25]

Led by the Chamber of Commerce, local businessmen attempted to restore prosperity. A chamber committee, chaired by George Ochs, assessed the city's condition and noted the "languishing condition" of area industries. In response, Ochs's commission proposed a multi-part remedy to the economic crisis. Among his recommendations were the reduction of city taxes, increased diversification, and more "home consumption" of locally produced goods. The committee, however, dismissed the idea of using tax exemptions to attract new businesses, as was done in the past. Instead, it

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[24]*Chattanooga Times*, January 7, 1893.

[25]Adolph S. Ochs to Louis Tachau, October 6, 1893, letterpress copy, Ochs Papers.

suggested the creation of a local "trust company" which would lure industries with promises of low interest loans and mortgages.[26]

Yet the chamber's recommendations went beyond economic reform. Some members sought to improve local government as well. Though the Board of Aldermen was now dominated by Democrats, many of its members still relied heavily on the patronage system. Among the worst offenders were the "Big Nine," a coalition of three Republicans and six Democrats dedicated to preserving city patronage.[27] At the head of the group was Tom Wilcox, the city's leading political boss. Wilcox had succeeded the recently-disgraced Michael J. O'Brian as the acknowledged political leader of Chattanooga's Irish-Catholic community. As such, he wielded considerable political power. According to George Ochs, Wilcox controlled two wards outright, and enjoyed measurable influence in the other six.[28]

Stubborn opponents of reform, these nine city fathers continued to distribute offices freely among supporters even in the midst of the economic crisis. Such lavish spending no doubt garnered considerable support for the Big Nine in

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[26]*Chattanooga Times*, January 7, 1893.

[27]*Ibid.*, November 2, 1892.

[28]Ochs did not name the two districts allegedly controlled by Wilcox, but one was probably the Sixth Ward, where Wilcox lived and frequently served as alderman. William M. Schuyler, ed., *The Life and Letters of George Washington Ochs-Oakes* (Privately published, 1931), 23.

their respective wards, but it also threatened the fiscal stability of the city. By January 1893, Chattanooga carried a floating debt of over $70,000 and a bonded debt in excess of $900,000. Because of this, the city's residents labored under a tax rate of 1.3 percent, a full 160 percent higher than that of Chattanooga's chief rival, Birmingham.[29]

Businessmen, angered by relatively high taxes and alarmed by the growing municipal debt, appointed a special committee to study the city's administration. The commission was headed by R.L. Watkins, a long-time resident and local leather manufacturer, and included a number of prominent Mugwumps, including both George and Adolph Ochs. When the Chamber Commission issued its recommendations in early 1893, it advocated a total restructuring of city government. According to the Watkins plan, virtually all power would be stripped from the Board of Aldermen. Instead, the city would be governed by a five-man Board of Public Affairs, presided over by the mayor and appointed, for the most part, by the governor. Aldermen, under the proposal, would "be shorn of all rights to expend money" and their only responsibility would be the election of city officers.[30]

The Watkins plan instantly drew praise from Chattanooga's business and Mugwump communities. One

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[29]*Chattanooga Times*, January 23, 1893; *Annual Report of the Mayor, 1893-94* (Chattanooga, 1894).

[30]*Chattanooga Times*, January 10, 1893.

supporter exclaimed that "it virtually made a business out of city government" and the *Times* praised the measure as "a long step in the direction of complete local self government." Encouraged by the proposal's widespread support, the Chamber of Commerce quickly took steps to implement the plan. A bill, named for R.L. Watkins, was presented to the state legislature by chamber leaders. At the same time, the bill's supporters presented a petition from local residents asking the state's lawmakers to adopt the chamber's recommendations. Among the document's fifteen hundred signers were virtually all of "Chattanooga's substantial citizenship," as well as an estimated three-fourths of the city's registered Democrats. Notably missing, according to the *Times*, were the names of the Big Nine's six Democratic aldermen who "made an alliance with Republicans to almost equally distribute city offices between Republicans and Democrats."[31]

Demand for the legislation grew daily and the *Times* announced "a great reform movement is afoot." Mass rallies in favor of the bill drew hundreds of supporters. "Even the ladies have become interested," the *Times* reported, adding that "like the wise and dear prudent ones they are, they favor the Watkins Bill." John MacGowan was so moved by the city's enthusiasm that he composed a poetic tribute to the campaign which, in part, read:

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[31]*Ibid.*, February 2, March 12, 1893.

Good citizens all, would ye have reform?
Is economy still your municipal norm?
Then let your support be hearty and warm,
For the wonderful Watkins Bill![32]

The Big Nine, however, were unmoved by such sentiments and the *Times* complained: "the city ring is dying hard." The proposal's opponents rallied city workers who quickly prepared their own petition against the measure.[33] The Bourbon press supported the group, and the *Evening News* contended that passage of the bill would "besmirch" Chattanooga "in the eyes of the world."[34] Bourbon leaders, for the most part, backed the Big Nine. Defenders of patronage, most seemed oblivious to the public's cries for reform. One such Democrat remarked, "we are in power now--why should we change the condition of things." Another, when asked why there were now so many empty houses in town, replied: "some men built such damnably poor houses they ought to be empty."[35]

In March the Watkins bill came before state lawmakers for consideration; Chattanooga's conservative Democrats appealed to their Bourbon allies in the legislature for assistance. The state's party leaders responded with a circular delivered to every member of the legislature. The

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[32]*Ibid.*, February 7, 1893.

[33]*Ibid.*, January 22, 1893.

[34]*Chattanooga Evening News*, January 23, 1893.

[35]*Chattanooga Times*, January 31, 1893.

pamphlet, signed by the chairman of the Democratic Congressional Committee, denounced the reform proposal and labelled its Mugwump authors, "a squad of bolters." Republican lawmakers also opposed the legislation on the grounds it gave too much power to the state's Democratic governor.[36] In the face of such partisan opposition, the chamber's reform proposal was doomed to failure. Though a watered-down version of the bill managed to pass in the Senate, it failed in the House with all but two Republican representatives voting against it.[37]

The failure of the Watkins bill did not bring an end, however, to Chattanooga's reform movement. Rather, it made good government an issue in the 1893 city elections. Mugwumps entered the fall canvass determined to seize control of city government, and, for once, much of the public seemed ready to support them. Moderates dominated September's Democratic party conventions and nominated thirty-one-year-old George W. Ochs as the party's candidate for mayor. Ochs, brother of the *Times'* owner, was then publisher of the *Tradesman*, a family-owned trade journal. In addition, he served as chairman of the Chamber of Commerce's Ways and Means Committee. From the outset, Ochs promised efficiency and fiscal responsibility. In his acceptance

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[36]*Ibid.*, March 6, 1893; *Nashville Daily American*, March 18, 1893.

[37]*Chattanooga Times*, March 17, 1893; *Nashville Daily American*, March 30, April 11, 1893.

speech, for example, he described the municipal government as "an immense corporation in which all the people are stockholders." He then decreed that as such, it was the "sacred duty of those placed in charge of that corporation to manage its affairs with the same fidelity, honesty, and integrity which they would devote to their own private businesses."[38]

To oppose Ochs, Republicans nominated Fourth Ward alderman Henry T. Olmsted, a successful manufacturer and local real estate magnate.[39] Yet George Ochs not only had to run against Olmsted, he also had to face the objections of his brother, Adolph. To a friend, Adolph confided, "I think he [George] is making a blunder going into politics." The publisher then lamented, "there is nothing but heartburnings and disappointments in such a career to the most fortunate, and a Jew is especially handicapped."[40] Ochs was particularly concerned about how George's candidacy would affect the *Times*. He remarked to an associate that it "certainly was not to the advantage of the paper to have an ambitious politician in the family."[41] Ochs went so far as to disassociate his paper publicly from George's candidacy.

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[38]*Chattanooga Times*, September 2, 1893.

[39]*Ibid.*, October 5, 1893.

[40]Adolph S. Ochs to Oscar Levy, October 6, 1893, letterpress copy, Ochs Papers.

[41]Adolph S. Ochs to Louis Tachau, October 6, 1893, letterpress copy, *ibid.*

In an editorial, he noted: "Mr. Ochs is not a candidate by reason of any suggestion . . . of the *Times* manager." "In fact," he added, "his candidacy has been discouraged in this quarter."[42]

George Ochs, however, was undeterred by his brother's misgivings. Having lived in Adolph's shadow for most of his life, George saw politics as a means of establishing his own identity. In many ways George was quite different from his famed sibling. For one, he possessed none of his brother's social apprehensions. Whereas Adolph tended to be shy and reticent, George was generally brash and outgoing. As a young reporter for the *Times* he was dangerously bold, and in fact once shot and nearly killed a man in a dispute over a story.[43] Adolph privately regarded George as "headstrong and ambitious, and very youthful in some things."[44] In recent years, however, George had worked to enhance his public image. He became more active in Democratic politics and in 1891 served a rather unremarkable term as Chattanooga's police commissioner.[45] Most recently he had acted as an officer of the Chamber of Commerce, where he led that body's reform and recovery efforts. Such was his reputation in 1893

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[42]*Chattanooga Times*, September 2, 1893.

[43]Schuyler, *Life and Letters*, 11-13.

[44]Adolph S. Ochs to Oscar Levy, October 6, 1893, letterpress copy, Ochs Papers.

[45]Schuyler, *Life and Letters*, 20.

that one Democrat referred to him as someone "who, by experience and training, was fitted to care for the business and material interests of the community."[46]

Yet Ochs's nomination was not universally popular. Ochs, who opposed prohibition, enjoyed considerable support among Chattanooga's Catholics and early on formed a political alliance with the leaders of that community, including Tom Wilcox. This association riled local Republicans and led to charges of corruption and collusion. Opponents asserted that Ochs's nomination was "conceived in iniquity and born in sin" and that he was "the child of a gang" who "was favored by the rings, the saloons, and the gamblers."[47] Still others maligned Ochs as a German and a Jew. Ochs complained of "outrageous attacks" by "narrow-minded bigots" and asked, "Were the know-nothing laws to be revived?" Defending his right to worship freely, the candidate then declared: "I believe that the liberty-loving, God-fearing, true-hearted people of Chattanooga will resent at the polls such detestable intolerance of the Dark Ages."[48]

Olmsted, for his part, refrained from such bigotry, and instead portrayed Ochs as a quixotic dreamer who was "always springing some scheme for the benefit of the city." Local

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[46]*Chattanooga Times*, September 2, 1893.

[47]*Ibid.*, September 27, 1893.

[48]*Ibid.*, October 5, 1893.

residents, however, rejected such arguments and the forces of reform prevailed in the city elections. George W. Ochs, at the head of the ticket, captured the mayor's seat in a close race. With fifty-two percent of the total vote, Ochs prevailed by just 128 ballots. The deciding factor in his victory may have been an especially strong showing in the largely-Catholic Sixth Ward, where alderman Tom Wilcox had "ardently supported" the Democratic candidate (see Table 8.1).[49]

Table 8.1
1893 Mayoral Election

Ward	Olmsted (R)	Ochs (D)
1	187	351
2	204	257
3	141	181
4	277	91
5	193	172
6	69	251
7	277	210
8	176	139
Total	1,524	1,652

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 10, 1893.

Democrats also elected four aldermen, winning contests in the First, Third, Sixth, and Eighth Wards. Among those elected was Tom Wilcox, who retained his Sixth Ward seat

[49] *Ibid.*, October 5, 10, 1893.

with no opposition. With Ochs's election, the Big Nine dissolved and the Board of Aldermen briefly divided along party lines. In the days immediately following Ochs's inauguration, the Board's Democrats voted as a bloc, and the party's leaders confidently announced that the "Big Ten" had replaced the corrupt "Big Nine."[50]

Yet such hopes for party unity were soon dashed as a row ensued over the new mayor's committee assignments. Alderman Wilcox, largely responsible for Ochs's victory, demanded the chairmanship of the powerful Committee of Schools and Schoolhouses. Ochs, however, feared Wilcox might use the position to divert public funds to parochial schools, and therefore assigned the ward boss the chairmanship of the rather inglorious Committee of Health and Hospitals. It was, as Ochs later recalled, "a political bombshell." Outraged, Wilcox withdrew his support for the mayor and joined Republican aldermen in an effort to block the mayor's agenda. Yet despite this defection, Ochs maintained the support of other Democratic aldermen, and was thus able to implement reforms without Wilcox's backing.[51]

George Ochs took office just a week after his October election and confronted a formidable task. Chattanooga was still reeling from the effects of the panic and unemployment

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[50]*Ibid.*, October 10, 1893.

[51]Schuyler, *Life and Letters*, 23; *Chattanooga Times*, November 17, 1893.

remained high. Local industries and the local government were on the brink of collapse. The city treasury, burdened by decades of mismanagement and patronage abuse, was on the edge of a financial crisis. By the fall of 1893 Chattanooga's municipal government had accumulated a floating debt of over $75,000, over half of which was in notes paying from eight to ten percent interest. The city also carried a bonded debt of over $900,000 and held over $16,000 in unpaid bills. Against these demands, the city treasury held just $673.20 in cash reserves.[52]

Recognizing the severity of the situation, Ochs acted quickly to restore fiscal sanity and salvage the city's good credit. Working with reform-minded aldermen such as W.L. Peeples and John Bachtel, Ochs reduced the city's work force and slashed municipal salaries. The mayor and Board also reduced the number of city employees and cut remaining salaries as much as fifty percent. In doing so, they cut the town's total payroll by sixty-six percent.[53] Among the positions eliminated were such patronage plums as the offices of assistant fire chief, license collector and back tax collector. At the mayor's insistence the Board also rid the city, once and for all, of the old market house and in

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[52]*Annual Report of the Mayor, 1893-94.*

[53]Practically the only department left intact was the town's police force, which remained under the control of the governor's police commission and was thus unaffected by the new local administration.

the process, eliminated two more city employees.[54]

The new administration also reformed the manner in which the city conducted business. The Board doubled the number of its meetings and now required the city auditor and treasurer to give a detailed assessment of city finances each month. City fathers also enacted new laws designed to eliminate waste and corruption. Aldermen, for example, introduced safeguards to prevent unnecessary or fraudulent claims against the city and now required sealed bids for all city contracts. In addition, the Board subjected city administrators to increased accountability, including biannual audits of each municipal department.[55]

The new Board and Mayor also took steps to assist the city's unemployed. Upon taking office Ochs assigned $2,000 in municipal funds to the Associated Charities for relief work, and by year's end that figure more than tripled to nearly $6,500.[56] In a further attempt to assist the poor, city fathers suspended the collection of back taxes and forgave late fines incurred by many delinquent taxpayers.[57]

By the end of his first term in office in 1895, George Ochs and his allies had achieved remarkable results. They, for example, completely eliminated the city's floating debt

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[54]*Annual Report of the Mayor, 1893-94.*

[55]*Ibid.*

[56]*Ibid.*

[57]*Chattanooga Times*, August 9, 1894.

and, for the first time in twenty years, Chattanooga carried no outstanding obligations. In fact, the city treasury reported a surplus of over $15,000. Municipal expenses during Ochs' tenure were $143,000 lower than those of the previous administration and $194,000 less than those of the town's last Republican government. At the same time water taxes fell by almost a fourth, tax assessments dropped fifteen percent and Chattanooga's tax rate, at 1.25 percent, was the lowest in city history.[58]

Given this record, Mugwump Democrats enjoyed considerable popular support going into the 1895 city canvass. Ochs received a unanimous nomination at the city's Democratic convention and he entered into the mayoral race against the Republican candidate, T.H. Payne, a popular local merchant. Payne, who had no political experience, was the hand-picked candidate of Henry Clay Evans. Evans had risen to national distinction in Republican circles in the past decade, and by 1895 was considered a possible candidate for the vice presidency in the upcoming national election. As part of his campaign for that nomination, Evans sought to return Chattanooga to the Republican fold and thus prove his value as a potential running mate in 1896.[59]

His political future on the line, Evans campaigned hard

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[58]Schuyler, *Life and Letters*, 25; *Annual Report of the Mayor, 1893-94*.

[59]Schuyler, *Life and Letters*, 25; *Chattanooga Times*, October 5, 7, 1895.

for Payne and the *Times* joked that he had "taken up the role of a ward hustler." Payne, for his part, made no secret of Evans' motives. A reluctant candidate, he admitted, "I did not want to run" and did so only at the insistence of "some of my friends." Indeed, Payne seems to have been nominated solely on the basis of his popularity and was largely absent from his own campaign. Most Republican rallies were dominated by Evans, who also made the majority of speeches. Payne even declined to participate in the traditional pre-election debate. The transparency of Evans' actions led John MacGowan to ask: "Is the town going to elect a mayor for Hon. Henry Clay Evans or for their own service."[60]

In the end, though, Evans' personality and experience proved no match for George Ochs's record as mayor. Ochs retained his office with only fifty-one percent of the vote (see Table 8.2). His slightly poorer showing in 1895, especially in the Catholic Sixth Ward, was probably due to the continued rift between Ochs and Tom Wilcox. Wilcox, who favored municipal funding for parochial schools, remained at odds with the mayor, who opposed public support of "sectarian institutions."[61] Democrats also continued their domination of ward elections, winning seats in the First, Second, Third, Fifth and Sixth Wards. They thus maintained their majority of ten seats on the Board of Aldermen,

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[60]*Chattanooga Times*, October 5,7, 1895.

[61]Schuyler, *Life and Letters*, 23.

enabling Ochs and the Mugwumps to continue their reform agenda.[62]

Table 8.2
1895 Mayoral Election

Ward	Payne (R)	Ochs (D)
1	309	429
2	207	369
3	188	218
4	290	91
5	180	226
6	138	234
7	374	248
8	197	165
Total	1,883	1,980

Source: *Chattanooga Times*, October 9, 1895.

In his second term, George Ochs persisted in his policies of efficiency and good government. As mayor he accomplished the seemingly impossible: he lowered taxes while instituting city improvements and increasing city services. Numerous reforms made such changes possible. The elimination of the many debts, the reduction in city salaries, and the elimination of many municipal offices all generated savings which were applied towards lower taxes and new construction. In addition, city fathers tapped new

[62]*Chattanooga Times*, October 9, 1895.

sources of income, such as franchise fees imposed on streetcar lines and other utilities, to help offset lower tax revenues. Some city improvements also generated considerable savings for the municipal government. A new city hall, for example, consolidated all city offices, the city court, and a fire hall into one facility, thus saving taxpayers an estimated $3,000 per year in rents and other expenses. Similarly a new high school, completed in 1897, eliminated the need for several smaller rented school buildings.[63]

Ochs's success soon earned him a national reputation as an urban administrator. The *St. Louis Republic*, for example, cited Ochs as a model of civic leadership and urged its city's adoption of "the Chattanooga plan."[64] Regional papers praised the mayor as well. One, the *Birmingham Age-Herald* lauded Ochs for having "changed the government to business methods" and proclaimed "the reform mayor of Chattanooga . . . has inaugurated reforms that are bearing fruit."[65]

Ochs was again nominated unanimously for a third term in 1897, but he declined in order to pursue other interests. His tenure as mayor, however, made a powerful impression on

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[63]*Ibid.*,January 2, 1895; *Annual Report of the Mayor, 1896-97*, (Chattanooga, 1897).

[64]*St. Louis Republic*, quoted in *Chattanooga Times*, January 13, 1895.

[65]*Birmingham Age-Herald*, quoted in *Chattanooga Times*, January 4, 1895.

Chattanooga's municipal government. In four years Ochs not only eliminated the city's floating debt, he also reduced the town's bonded debt by almost $60,000 and cut the town's work force by half. No new bonds were floated during his administration and city taxes were kept below their 1892 level. At the same time, however, the city initiated many much-needed improvements. A new city hall and a municipal auditorium were constructed, streets were extended, and a new high school was opened. In addition, a city hospital was near completion, construction on a new jail and police headquarters was initiated, and the city's first public parks were laid out. Public health also improved. Sewers were extended, public sanitation improved, a successful yellow fever quarantine was imposed, and two smallpox epidemics were prevented. Such efforts helped the city's mortality rate drop fifteen percent in just four years, to a record low of 12.67 deaths per one thousand residents.[66]

Ochs had less direct success in reviving Chattanooga's sluggish economy. His proposed industrial trust company, which he continued to promote, never materialized.[67] A handful of factories did open in the city during the bust, however, and boosters pointed with pride to the new lead pencil works and the expanded Scholze tannery as evidence of

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[66]*Annual Report of the Mayor, 1893-94; Annual Report of the Mayor, 1896-97.*

[67]*Chattanooga Times*, September 29, 1893.

the town's recovery. The community also added a wagon factory, a pipe works, and a new textile mill.[68] The greatest economic windfall, however, came to the city in 1895, when the recently formed Southern Railway chose Chattanooga as its divisional headquarters.[69] Yet despite such developments, the town's economy remained stagnant and local establishments continued to suffer. Adolph Ochs, for example, saw his newspaper's earnings fall seventy-five percent during the course of the bust. In 1896 the *Times* did so poorly Ochs jokingly referred to the year as "the dullest in the history of business."[70]

As revenues from traditional industries fell, Chattanoogans turned increasingly towards tourism to sustain the economy. Local boosters were quick to promote the city's natural beauty and cite its advantages as a summer resort. The *Times*, for example, extolled local scenery, and boasted, "No other city in America is more superbly blessed." The paper further reminded residents "Nashvillians and Atlantians [*sic*] would regard such surroundings as a God-send." By far, the most popular attraction in town was Lookout Mountain where, according to one account, "summer breezes blow as cool and refreshing as those the poet sings

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[68]*Ibid.*, April 24, 1897.

[69]*Ibid.*, October 15, 1895.

[70]"Business of the *Chattanooga Times* under the management of Adolph S. Ochs, 1878-1899," Ochs papers.

about from Araby the blessed."[71] Several hotels, including the city's largest, and most lavish retreat, the Lookout Inn, were constructed atop the mountain to accommodate tourists. Opened in 1891, the Inn could host over a thousand visitors and earned a reputation as one of the region's premier resorts. Guests there enjoyed "every modern convenience," including evenings of "fine music" and scenic transportation on the Inn's own broad-gauge railroad.[72]

Local tourism received a further boost with the establishment of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. The park was first conceived in the late 1880s by Henry V. Boynton, a northern journalist and a former commander in the Army of the Cumberland. The idea soon gathered support among veterans from both sides of the conflict and was received enthusiastically by Chattanooga businessmen. Adolph S. Ochs was among the park's greatest boosters. Although just a toddler at the time of the battle, he nonetheless recognized the economic potential of the park and served as chairman of the local Chickamauga Memorial Association. In 1890 Ochs, along with other organizers, persuaded the federal government to adopt the project. Completed in 1895, the preserved battlefield was the first park of its kind in the United States and proved to be an

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[71]*Chattanooga Times*, April 2, 1897.

[72]*Ibid.*, July 22, 1894; Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 110; Robert Sparks Walker, *Lookout: The Story of a Mountain* (Kingsport, 1941), 201-02, 211-26.

instant success. Over fifty thousand visitors attended the dedication ceremonies alone, filling hotels, campgrounds, and private homes to capacity. Thousands more tourists came though Chattanooga in the months that followed, and the revenues they generated helped revive an otherwise sluggish local economy.[73]

The battlefield provided an additional boost to the local economy in 1898. When war broke out with Spain that year, the Army appropriated the Chickamauga Park for use as a massive training and processing center. The first troops arrived in mid-April and by the end of May their numbers had swelled to forty-five thousand. Eventually some seventy-five thousand troops were billeted at the park, now dubbed Camp Thomas in honor of Civil War hero George H. Thomas, "the Rock of Chickamauga."[74]

The arrival of the soldiers transformed Chattanooga back into a boom town. By June the army had already spent $40,000 in the city on potatoes and other rations. Local bakeries suddenly found themselves producing an average of thirty thousand loaves of bread per day just to feed the hungry troops. Hotels were packed with reporters and

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[73]*Chattanooga Times*, September 20, 21, 22, 1895; Henry V. Boynton, *The National Military Park, Chickamauga-Chattanooga: An Historical Guide* (Cincinnati, 1895), 219-71; Anthonette L. McDaniel, "'Just Watch Us Make Things Hum': Chattanooga, Adolph S. Ochs, and the Memorialization of the Civil War," *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 61 (1989): 6-28.

[74]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 114-15.

salesmen as soldiers and their families jammed the city's rail terminals. No one benefitted more from the military than Chattanooga's languishing merchants. Payrolls at the camp often exceeded $1,000,000 and officials estimated that between $150,000 and $200,000 were spent by soldiers within two or three days of payday.[75] At the facility's peak in June 1898, the federal paymaster distributed some $2,350,000 in cash, almost ten times the city's entire budget for the previous year.[76]

"Money flows freely" the *Times* happily reported, and Chattanooga's store owners scrambled to get their share of the spoils.[77] Those merchants who survived the bust expanded their inventories for the first time in years. Many firms carried goods especially geared towards the servicemen, including camp furniture, hammocks, and patent medicines. Business was so brisk some firms opened branch stores on the park grounds. Among these was D.B. Loveman who, though bankrupt just a few years earlier, opened a second store at Camp Thomas which promised soldiers "first class merchandise, city prices."[78] A few local manufacturers even

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[75]*Chattanooga Times*, August 3, 1898.

[76]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 114-15; *Annual Report of the Mayor, 1896-97.*

[77]*Chattanooga Times*, August 10, 1895.

[78]Though camp stores were very profitable, they could also be quite dangerous. One unnamed sutler, accused of offending a serviceman, was beaten and nearly hanged by angry soldiers as other troops looted his store. *Ibid.*, June

benefitted from the camp. The Mountain City Stove and Manufacturing Company, for example, made money turning out camp stoves, cookware, and tinware for the troops.[79]

Chattanooga's more illicit businesses also benefitted from the war. Local brothels prospered for the first time in nearly a decade and turned profits which would have made Alice Cooper proud. One resident, discussing the "shameless sexual indulgence" displayed by soldiers, recalled that "the numerous houses of ill fame . . . were constantly crowded." "Rotten women," reportedly "infested the woods about the camp" and "following army pay days, lines of soldiers in broad daylight formed and waited their turn in front of houses of ill fame." Local saloons also flourished. Bars stayed open around the clock and even camp canteens served beer.[80]

"Filth, drunkenness and a want of discipline" pervaded the camp and helped bring about an increase in the city's crime rate. Not surprisingly, public intoxication was especially common. "After pay day," one witness recalled, "it was no uncommon sight to see men drunk and asleep on the sidewalk." Lewdness also prevailed and "it was not safe for

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1, 14, 1898.

[79]*Ibid.*, June 2, 1898.

[80]John H. Cantrell, "Fifty Years of the Liquor Traffic in Tennessee" (Typescript, Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, 1927), 21-28.

decent women to go upon . . . principal streets unattended."[81] Especially troublesome for local authorities was the prevalence of concealed weapons. Soldiers, issued firearms by the government, felt entitled to carry them wherever they went. "Fights, riot and bloodshed" were also frequent and servicemen were a constant presence on municipal chain gangs. Henry M. Wiltse recollected that "manacled soldiers working on the streets were a common and pitiful spectacle." "They were," he observed, "paying unwilling tribute to the majesty of civil law."[82]

The camp also created a fair amount of racial tension. Many of the troops were black, and they sometimes clashed with white soldiers and residents. One black soldier, for example, stabbed a white policeman in a brawl at the "little joker saloon."[83] In another incident, "a row ensued" when white soldiers crashed a "negro dance" and attempted to cavort with black women.[84] The worst incident occurred in 1899, when some of the last black troops left the camp. Two full trainloads of rowdy black soldiers descended on Chattanooga as part of the demobilization. Once in town, they plied themselves with "mean whiskey" and commenced to cause a near riot. "The negroes had pistols," one observer

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[81]*Ibid.*, 24-25.

[82]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 114-15

[83]*Ibid.*, 2: 115.

[84]*Chattanooga Times*, July 11, 1898.

noted, "and they were evidently bent on mischief." Scores of the servicemen wandered the streets "making all sorts of threats of violence." Others, on a train out of town, fired wildly out the windows, wounding two bystanders. Police, though hopelessly outnumbered, managed to contain the troops and thereby prevented further bloodshed. "By midnight the jail was almost full of negroes," the *Times* reported, and Chattanoogans expressed relief that the troops were almost gone.[85]

By the summer of 1899 Camp Thomas was gone, and though the soldiers had strained Chattanooga's tranquility, few regretted their presence. "We have no cause to complain," George Ochs said of the camp, adding, "we have realized a good thing out of it."[86] Henry Wiltse concurred with this assessment. "Chattanooga," he boasted, "was rescued from a threatened collapse of great expectations and placed upon the long trail of actual prosperity." Ironically, the same forces which built the city--Civil War veterans and the United States Army--sustained the community in its time of need and revived it from an economic catastrophe. It had been thirty years since the soldiers last marched out of Chattanooga and, as Henry Wiltse watched them depart again, he recognized that another era in the town's history had

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[85]*Ibid.*, March 8, 1899.

[86]George W. Ochs to Adolph S. Ochs, August 22, 1898, Ochs Papers.

begun. "A new growth began for her," he observed, noting: "she began to be a real city."[87]

[87]Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga," 2: 114.

Epilogue

The departure of the U.S. Army in 1898 marked the end of an era in Chattanooga's history. Having survived the bust of the 1890s, the city was once again a thriving, prosperous community. Chattanooga, however, would have to enter the coming century with a new set of leaders. The city's northern Republican elite, who had largely built the town, now found themselves out of power locally, and many moved on to other challenges elsewhere. Henry Clay Evans, for example, went to Washington, where he served as William McKinley's commissioner of pensions.[1] His long-time ally, Newell Sanders, also emerged as a national political figure and was appointed to the United States Senate in 1911.[2]

Still others, such as John T. Wilder, decided to retire from public life altogether. Wilder, now aging and increasingly infirm, spent the last years of his life in Florida, living on the riches he had acquired the South. In 1904, after the death of his first wife, he committed his final act of sectional reconciliation and married Dora E. Lee, a distant relative of Confederate General Robert E.

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[1]John B. Seehorn, "The Life and Public Career of Henry Clay Evans" (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1970), 72-85.

[2]Rufus Terral, *Newel Sanders: A Biography* (Kingsport, 1935), 202-14.

Lee.[3]

Chattanooga's Mugwump leaders also faded from the local spotlight. Adolph Ochs moved to New York shortly after his acquisition of that city's *Times* and installed his family in a spacious townhouse on West Seventy-Fifth Street.[4] He was soon joined there by George Ochs, who after serving two terms as Chattanooga's mayor, retired from politics, and began a career in his brother's burgeoning publishing empire.[5] Only John MacGowan remained active in local affairs. True to form, MacGowan stayed at his post until the end and he remained editor-in-chief of the *Chattanooga Times* until his death in 1913.[6]

As Chattanooga's post-war elites left their civic duties, however, they were succeeded by a new generation of business leaders. These men, young and unencumbered by the memories of war and slavery, looked towards the future with a new vision for their city. In 1895, this group came together and formed the Young Men's Business League, an organization devoted to the "material welfare and prosperity of the city." A progressive body, the Young Men's Business

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[3]Samuel C. Williams, *General John T. Wilder: Commander of the Lightning Brigade*, (Bloomington, 1936), 48-49.

[4]Gay Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power* (New York: 1969), 176.

[5]William M. Schuyler, ed. *The Life and Letters of George Washington Ochs-Oakes* (n.p., 1935), 33.

[6]Gerald W. Johnson, *An Honorable Titan: A Biographical Study of Adolph S. Ochs* (Westport, 1970).

League continued to pursue municipal reforms, and was credited with "exposing and arraigning some of the most scandalous abuses ever inflicted upon a free and public spirited people."[7] Such activism brought the League to the forefront of civic organizations, and in 1897, in a move which symbolized the change in local leadership, the association merged with an increasingly staid Chamber of Commerce.[8]

This generation of leaders, which included the likes of John T. Lupton, James F. Johnston, and J. Conn Guild, transformed the local economy. Unlike their predecessors, these men were not obsessed with the manufacture of iron and steel. This new elite recognized that Birmingham had won the South's race for industrial supremacy and they harbored no illusions of Chattanooga ever supplanting Pittsburgh or Chicago. Instead of relying on heavy industry, these businessmen introduced a balanced economy, and insured the city's survival by producing goods and services their forbearers could scarcely have imagined. Chattanooga's future, they realized, lay with Coca-Cola, not with carbon

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[7]Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, *Chamber of Commerce Manual* (Chattanooga, 1897), 52-54; *Chattanooga Times*, April 24, 1897.

[8]Henry M. Wiltse, "History of Chattanooga" (2 vols., unpublished typescript: Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, 1916) 2: 115.

steel.[9]

The advent of this new generation of business leaders did much to insure Chattanooga's continued growth and prosperity. It did little, however, to ameliorate the plight of the city's black residents. Although the town's new elite expressed sympathy for "the ignorant and inoffensive sambo," they supported Democratic attempts to further erode black political power.[10] These efforts culminated in 1911 when local Democrats, acting with the consent of reform-minded businessmen and professions, secured a new city charter which effectively disfranchised Chattanooga's black population. Now lacking crucial support, local Republicans increasingly became a nonentity in local elections, and more than thirty years after Reconstruction, Chattanooga finally joined the "solid South."[11]

As this new generation of business elites tightened their hold over Chattanooga, the city's former leaders, who had come to the city in the closing months of the Civil War, gradually withered away. The last of these men, Zeboim C.

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[9]Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, *The Chattanooga Country, 1540-1976: From Tomahawks to TVA*, 3rd ed.(Knoxville, 1977), 385-91; John Wilson, *Chattanooga's Story* (Chattanooga, 1980), 284-87.

[10]*Chattanooga Times*, April 24, 1897.

[11]Nancy J. Potts, "Unfulfilled Expectations: The Erosion of Black Political Power in Chattanooga, 1865-1911," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 49 (1990): 124-28.

Patten, died in 1925.[12] He was buried in a community he had helped build, yet, in many ways, it was a city he had never intended. Patten and his comrades had envisioned a "vigorous young Pittsburgh," a northern city at home in the southern hills.[13] At times, in the 1870s and 1880s, it must have seemed as though they might fulfill their dreams. In the 1890s, however, these hopes escaped them, and Chattanooga grew into something altogether different; not northern, not southern, but something peculiar "set down in Dixie."[14]

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[12]Zella Armstrong, *History of Hamilton County and Chattanooga, Tennessee* (2 vols., Chattanooga, 1931), 1: 450.

[13]*Chattanooga Times*, July 22, 1880.

[14]*New York Times*, January 27, 1887.

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