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Politics of Self-Destruction: The Virginia Republican Party Split of 1895-1897

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POLITICS OF SELF-DESTRUCTION:
THE VIRGINIA REPUBLICAN PARTY SPLIT OF 1895-1897

by

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B.A. December 1978, University of Maryland

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
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ABSTRACT

POLITICS OF SELF-DESTRUCTION: THE VIRGINIA REPUBLICAN PARTY SPLIT OF 1895-1897

Michael A. Southwood
Old Dominion University, 1989
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In explaining the rise of Democratic rule in Virginia, political historians have overlooked the significance of the Republican split of 1895-1897. Drawn mainly from primary source materials, this thesis traces the rupture that divided the GOP leadership after the death of General William Mahone, one of the Commonwealth's most remarkable political figures. The controversial election of Mahone's successor (Colonel William Lamb of Norfolk) as party chairman in November 1895 sparked two years of bitter struggle, a conflict that ultimately left the state Republicans shattered as a political force. An understanding of Democratic dominance as it developed in Virginia is incomplete without an examination of the rift that greatly weakened the state's other major political organization.

Unlike previous studies that have focused heavily upon the Democratic version of events, this study sheds more light on the forgotten Republican leaders and their actions. Although the major thrust of this work is to

describe the Republican leadership struggle and factionalism, an effort has been made to place the split into a proper historical context by also including selected treatment on local politics, interracial relations, the Democrats, the Populist party, political patronage, contested elections, editorial opinion, and the eventual adoption of a new state constitution.

Attracting national attention, the GOP rift eventually required the reluctant intervention of President McKinley and his advisor, Marcus Hanna. By restoring a needed balance to the historical interpretive framework, a study of the Republican schism helps reveal more fully the advent of one-party dominance in the Old Dominion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing about the forgotten Republican struggles of 1895-1897 was a rewarding experience in itself, but I also consider myself most fortunate to have received the advice and guidance of a thesis committee composed of three distinguished scholars, who have each done much to promote the study of Virginia's past. To Dr. Peter C. Stewart, I owe a great debt of gratitude, for it was he who first directed my attention to the valuable William Lamb Papers at the College of William and Mary. Despite a demanding schedule, Professor Stewart was always generous with his available time and throughout the research associated with this study, he was a constant source of inspiration and wisdom. In his careful review of this paper, Dr. James R. Sweeney offered a number of thoughtful suggestions for improvement. As a former U. S. Representative from Virginia's Second Congressional District, Dr. G. William Whitehurst provided political as well as historical perspective in his examination of this work.

For cheerful, prompt, and professional service, I would like to extend a special thanks to Margaret Cook, Kay Domine, Laura F. Parrish and other members of the

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The Norfolk area proved to be rich in the source materials I needed and with people eager to offer their research talents. At the Kirn Memorial Library, Lucille Portlock and Peggy Haile of the Sergeant Memorial Room were of great assistance. Archivist Ellen Emser and the inter-library loan staff of Old Dominion University helped this study in many ways. The Portsmouth Public Library deserves mention for its fine local history collection.

Since most of this thesis was written while I was employed at the National Archives in Washington, D. C., I was afforded the opportunity to utilize the collections of numerous institutions located within easy walking or driving distance. In addition to the staff at the National Archives Library, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Alexandria Public Library's Lloyd House, the Arlington County Public Library, the Culpeper Town and County Library, the Mary Riley Stiles Library (Falls Church), the Gelman Library of George Washington University, the McKeldin Library of the

University of Maryland at College Park, the Virginia Historical Society, the Virginia State Library, and the Alderman Library, University of Virginia. Merely to mention the fact that I visited the Library of Congress would not give proper recognition to the helpful staff members of the Law Library, Main Reading Room, Microform Reading Room, and Newspaper and Current Periodicals Room. Not long after I moved to Northern Virginia, I came to rely upon Mr. Eugene Powell of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Public Library, District of Columbia, for indispensable inter-library loan services. His tireless efforts and many kindnesses are well remembered.

During my student days I had the privilege and pleasure of studying under historians for whom I harbor the greatest admiration and respect. In addition to the members of my thesis committee, I must also thank Old Dominion University's Harold S. Wilson and John Kuehl for opening their vast knowledge of Clio's craft to me. While an undergraduate at the University of Maryland, I was a student of Elbert B. Smith, who shared his rich experiences in writing biography and history with me, as well as entertaining anecdotes about his mentor, Avery Craven. At College Park, I also remember Alfred A. Moss, who was always willing to discuss Afro-American history and his association with John Hope Franklin.

During the course of writing this thesis, many kind people, old friends and new, encouraged me at every stage of research. I feel obligated to mention Bradley P. Dean and family, David Geyer, Fred and Lucy Herman, Stanley and Arianna Ivey, John Mangus and family, Captain James E. McConville, U.S.N., and Lieutenant Philip S. Spain, Chaplain Corps, U.S.N. One happy result associated with this work has been my meeting Mr. William Lamb of Austin, Texas, the grandson of Colonel Lamb, central figure of the Republican rift. To help me in my endeavor, Mr. Lamb allowed me to use items from his family papers. Although Paola Manna of Naples, Italy, helped me primarily in obtaining materials concerning her famous townsman, the late Benedetto Croce, she has also been a friend in every sense of the word regarding this project. Typist Cynthia Cohens Jackson deserves much credit for accepting and staying with a tough and lengthy assignment.

In Billy Gene and Valerie Miya Southwood, a son could not ask for more patient or understanding parents. To them, this work is dedicated. The contributions of scholars and friends have given this study many strengths, but I, alone, am responsible for errors, omissions, and interpretive weaknesses.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
 Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THE SHADOW OF WILLIAM MAHONE	10
3. ROAD TO PETERSBURG	17
4. CHAIRMANSHIP STRUGGLES AND HOISTING THE MCKINLEY BANNER	36
5. TARNISHED GOLD AND SILVER: THE 1896 CAMPAIGN	57
6. THE REPUBLICAN CHESS GAME CONTINUES: LAMB IN CHECK	93
7. THE 1897 CAMPAIGN: PEOPLE AGAINST THE RING	114
8. FALL OF THE "BIG THREE"	139
CONCLUSION	159
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	168

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Almost six years after his crushing defeat in the 1889 Virginia governor's contest, General William Mahone of Petersburg died in the nation's capital on October 8, 1895. Believing that the Virginia Republican organization had been rendered impotent by Democratic election laws and widespread fraud, Mahone, as GOP state chairman, decided to keep the party out of subsequent state elections, including the 1893 gubernatorial race. Since Mahone was hated by most Democrats for his political alliance with black Virginians and had also alienated many state and northern Republicans, it could be argued that the General should have resigned the chairmanship for the good of the party. Since Mahone never stepped down, GOP prospects for a revival remained bleak and many Republican leaders chafed under the party's official stance of inactivity.

After years of dormancy, Mahone's death thus represented an opportunity for the Republicans to select a more effective leader and to formulate a new political agenda. However, even with Mahone now departed, the GOP leadership (i.e. the state committee) could not elect a

chairman who would command the broad support needed from the most of the party's key bosses. Instead of rallying their party, the committee members created a political disaster. The dispute that emerged from choosing William Lamb of Norfolk as the new state chairman soon exploded into a party civil war.

The purpose of this thesis will be to examine the 1895-1897 split that divided the Virginia Republicans and to add the findings to the prevailing interpretation that exclusionary election laws, poll booth irregularities, and the 1902 state constitution were the only major reasons behind Democratic ascendancy. Given at most only passing reference by historians, the Republican split has not received serious scholarly attention. Since contemporary Republican politicians are virtually unknown in comparison with the ruling Democrats, it has been this writer's intention to remain close to the sources and identify the numerous leading players, major and minor, on the GOP political stage.

Chapter Two, "The Shadow of William Mahone," begins with introductory background material and includes a brief review of post-1889 Republican affairs. In Chapter Three, the narrative will move to a close examination of late 1895: Lamb's meetings with northern Republicans, his conferences with state leaders, the state committee

vote/aftermath, and Lamb's first acts as state chairman. Regarding the latter, it should be noted that Lamb interacted with some of the most powerful old guard (pre-McKinley) Republican leaders in the early days of his office.

Initiated at the state committee meeting held to select a new chairman, the conflict within the Republican ranks continued unabated throughout 1896. Chapter Four treats the significant issues of the year's first six months. During the first half of 1896, the scenes of party strife were Richmond and Norfolk over city chairmanships, the state convention held in Staunton in April, and the national convention which assembled at St. Louis in June.

A noteworthy development during this period was the alliance between Lamb and the fiery John Mitchell, Jr., of Richmond, an editor and one of the state's leading black politicians. Long active in championing the advancement of his race, Mitchell used his newspaper, the Richmond Planet, to support the man he believed would do the most for the Virginia Negro.

Chapter Five will discuss the operation and inner workings of the Virginia Republican Campaign Committee during the presidential canvass. Then the text will turn to the post-election offensive (November-December)

undertaken by the anti-Lamb faction.

Although the Virginia Republicans were united in their support for the McKinley-Hobart ticket, the state party leaders were still unable to bridge their internal division. Aware of this discord, the Campaign Committee was selected not by Lamb, but by Marcus A. Hanna, McKinley's trusted advisor and campaign manager. N. B. Scott of West Virginia, a member of the national committee since 1886, was chosen to oversee the general direction of the Virginia body which was composed to balance the Lamb supporters and the men who backed rival Judge Edmund Waddill of Richmond. As the campaign progressed, Hanna, Hobart, and Scott found themselves acting as arbiters among the squabbling Virginians.

The fifth chapter concludes by recounting the successful late year maneuver by the Waddill camp to strip Lamb of support on the state committee. By mid-November, Waddill had managed to secure a majority vote on the committee and he utilized this advantage in two sessions (November 26th and December 15th) to oust pro-Lamb committeemen and to deny seats to incoming members known for their loyalty to Lamb.

The period from January to August 1897, will be the subject of the sixth chapter. During these months, Lamb journeyed to Washington on a number of occasions to speak

with President McKinley, Vice President Hobart, and Hanna among others, to discuss affairs south of the Potomac. Lamb was justifiably concerned since the Waddill faction was receiving the important federal patronage appointments. In mid-August, the state committee voted Lamb out of the chairmanship, replacing him with Park Agnew, an Alexandria businessman and recent convert to the Waddill cause. In addition, the committee also decided against holding a nominating convention, thus conceding the governor's mansion to the Democrats in the fall.

The Virginia gubernatorial contest of 1897 will be examined in Chapter Seven. In early September, Hanna recognized Agnew as the chairman of the Virginia Republicans. For his part, Lamb considered it unthinkable not to enter the political fray. The bold Norfolkian defied both Agnew and Hanna by calling for a state convention and launched the Republican Review, a campaign weekly devoted to stirring GOP action. Despite the powerful opposition manifested by the regular organization controlled by Agnew and Waddill, the Lambites held their convention at Lynchburg in October. At this gathering, the Lamb wing of the party elected a state ticket and their own chairman, William F. Wickham of Richmond when Lamb declined the honor.

Most accounts of the 1897 governor's race devote little, if any attention to Republican activities. Wickham and his candidates battled not only their traditional opponents, but the Agnew-Waddill Republicans as well, with the latter urging the other side, especially black voters, not to go to the polls. Utilizing the diary of William Lamb, newspaper articles, and the Virginia Republican Party papers, 1896-1926, the GOP half of the ledger will finally receive the attention it deserves.

The final chapter will present an overview of Republican developments under Agnew and conclude by discussing the significance of the study. Agnew guided the Virginia Republicans until early January 1905. At that time, Agnew and his associates on the executive committee were asked by President Roosevelt to step down in the face of a successful revolt led by Congressman Campbell Slemple and his son, C. Bascom, of Lee County, in the Ninth District. Agnew's departure will be the ending point for this work. Party leadership now shifted from the eastern urban centers to the Southwest. Known as "Mr. Republican," C. Bascom Slemple emerged as the party's acknowledged chieftain after his father died in October 1907.

In tracing the Republican decline and the gradual

collapse of a viable two-party system in Virginia, modern historians have correctly pointed to the passage of discriminatory election laws and the adoption of a new state constitution in July 1902, which eroded the foundation of Republican strength. Faced with imposing GOP bastions in Richmond, Norfolk, the Southwest, and the heavily black Southside, the alteration of voting requirements was not satisfactory for many uneasy Democrats. Ronald E. Shibley, a recent student of the electoral system in Virginia, has carefully explored the extensive fraud practiced by certain elements within the Democratic machine.¹

Although the story of Republican division is a vital key to a comprehensive understanding of the Virginia political arena in the post-Mahone years, it has received little attention from scholars. On the topic of Republicanism, most writers maintain that the party

¹For the effect of Democratic election laws and the 1902 constitution, see Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd 1870-1925 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), pp. 56, 97-98, 120-193; Raymond H. Pulley Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), pp. 44-47, 57-58, 64-65, 77-78, 89-90; Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), pp. 7, 11-33. For an examination of Democratic fraud, consult Ronald Edward Shibley, "Election Laws and Electoral Practices in Virginia, 1867-1902: An Administrative and Political History," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1972), pp. 144, 146, 191-201, and 255.

simply collapsed with Mahone's defeat in the 1889 governor's race. By concentrating most of their attention on the dominant Democrats, political historians have overlooked the significance of the 1895-1897 rupture. In order to understand the Republican demise and restore a needed balance to the historical record, this largely forgotten episode should be incorporated as an integral part of the interpretive framework.²

The aim of this study will be to examine closely the important events of the 1895-1897 split and to offer the conclusions as a revision to the prevailing interpretation. In addition to recognizing the effect of election laws and related fraud, the historian must also explain why the Republican leadership failed to fashion a united organization after the death of Mahone. Part of

²The Republican rift is not mentioned in the political surveys of Moger, Bourbonism to Byrd and Pulley, Old Virginia Restored. Virginus Dabney's Virginia: The New Dominion (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971), also overlooks this brief, but pivotal transition period in state politics. Among the older works, the exception is provided by William C. Pendleton, Political History of Appalachian Virginia, 1776-1927 (Dayton, Va.: Shenandoah Press, 1927) which presents the viewpoint of a leading Republican concerning the schism on pp. 398-400, 418. The only other significant treatment of the split can be found in Thomas Edward Gay, Jr. "The Life and Career of J. Hoge Tyler, Governor of Virginia, 1898-1902" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1969). Gay's account, pp. 112-133, focuses on the 1897 governor's contest and is based upon Pendleton and newspaper reports from the Washington Post and The Dispatch (Richmond).

the way for Democratic ascendancy was paved by the enervated Republicans. Through their inability to overcome internal differences, the state GOP must share some of the responsibility for subsequent developments.

By late 1897, after two exhausting years of incessant intra-party discord, a new leadership structure emerged to command the weary Virginia GOP. As one of the Old Dominion's great political tragedies, this struggle dashed the last realistic hope for a resurrected Republican organization. The campaign of 1897 witnessed the final instance of significant black-white GOP political cooperation. Following the "Lily White" trend then spreading throughout the South, most white Virginia Republicans also turned their back on the loyal Negroes. No mere family squabble, the GOP rift eventually required the careful attention of the McKinley Administration. Ironically, for the new Republican leaders, there were seeds of defeat in their victory over the Lamb faction. In a few years, another revolt and challenge to their authority arose, continuing the cycle of upheaval. How the Virginia democratic process suffered a crippling blow is the neglected story recounted in these pages.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SHADOW OF WILLIAM MAHONE

Succumbing to a stroke that he had suffered during the previous month, General William Mahone of Petersburg, Chairman of the Virginia Republicans, died at his residence in the exclusive Chamberlin Hotel, Washington, D.C., on October 8, 1895. Mahone's passing marked the close of a tumultuous, but colorful chapter in the post-Reconstruction history of the Old Dominion. An aggressive, creative, and pragmatic politician, the General was the major architect of the biracial Readjuster movement, which was dedicated to managing the state's staggering public debt and promoting a variety of needed reforms. A distinguished historian has described Virginia's Readjuster experiment as "the most successful political coalition of whites and blacks organized in the South between Reconstruction and the 1960s."¹

Riding a wave of popular disenchantment with "Bourbon" policies, the insurgent Readjusters overturned

¹Carl N. Degler, The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 270; Nelson M. Blake, William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond, Va.: Garrett and Massie, 1935), pp. 253-54. Blake's work remains the standard biography.

conservative Democratic rule in late 1879. At its height, under Mahone's able direction, the Readjuster party occupied the governor's mansion, controlled the General Assembly, and headed many local governments. This powerful, but fragile, alliance also produced two United States senators (one was Mahone), won six seats in the congressional delegation elected in 1882, and dispensed the Commonwealth's extensive state and federal patronage. While the Readjuster reign was destined to be relatively brief, the spectacular triumph represented "the most extensive rebuff to Democratic rule in a Southern state since Reconstruction."²

²Degler, The Other South, p. 279. For an understanding of the Readjuster revolt, the reader should consult Charles C. Pearson's The Readjuster Movement in Virginia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917) and the modern treatment by James Tice Moore in his Two Paths to the New South: The Virginia Debt Controversy, 1870-1883 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974). In addition to Degler, Mahone's political career is also ably discussed in C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951); Vincent P. DeSantis, Republicans Face the Southern Question: The New Departure Years, 1877-1897 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959); Stanley P. Hirshon, Farewell to the Bloody Shirt: Northern Republicans and the Southern Negro (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968) and Thomas C. Reeves, Gentleman Boss: The Life of Chester Alan Arthur (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975). When Mahone entered in the Senate in 1881, that body was deadlocked between the Democrats and Republicans. In one of the most famous political maneuvers of the era, the Virginia Readjuster sided with the GOP which allowed that party to organize the Senate and gave Mahone control over Federal patronage in his state.

The bloody Danville riot that erupted on the eve of the 1883 state election fanned racial tension to a high pitch and helped the reorganized Democrats under John S. Barbour to recapture control of the legislature. In response, the resourceful Mahone forged a new "Republican Party of Virginia" by leading many of his followers into a coalition with the state GOP in mid-1884. Undaunted by the taint of "Black Republicanism," Mahone presented the Democrats with yet another formidable challenge. Determined to turn back the ominous Republican tide, a prominent Democratic editor recalled that the victors, "accordingly amended the election laws," so that, "under these statutes the elections in Virginia became a farce."³

By the end of the 1880s the Virginia Republicans were weakened from within by factional strife, rumblings of racial unrest, and growing dissatisfaction with the party's chieftain. Mahone's crushing defeat in the 1889 governor's race dealt the organization a severe and demoralizing setback. Although the Republican banner was

³William L. Royall, Some Reminiscences (New York and Washington: Neale Publishing Co., 1909), pp. 201-02. Passed in 1884, the Anderson-McCormick Act gave the General Assembly dominated by the Democrats control over appointments to local election boards. The Walton Act (1894) introduced the secret ballot and provided a constable to aid the illiterate, a combination which allowed voting irregularities to continue.

badly tattered, the "Era of Mahone" was not yet over since the General guided the party for another six years, until his death. Believing that fair elections were impossible to obtain in Virginia, Mahone decided to keep the Republicans out of subsequent state elections, while refusing to make an alliance with the rebellious Populists. With no Republican in the field for the 1893 gubernatorial race, many GOP voters rallied behind Edmund Randolph Cooke of Cumberland County, the Populist standard-bearer.⁴

While grateful for his past services, many leaders in the Virginia GOP recognized that Mahone's continued presence was a serious obstacle to a Republican rebirth. Despised by the Democrats for his willingness to ally himself with the Negro, Mahone had also lost the support of many fellow Republicans. In 1893 and 1894, one of Mahone's closest lieutenants, the popular William Lamb of Norfolk was urged by Philadelphia businessmen (railroad and coal interests) and numerous state Republicans to

⁴For a detailed treatment of the Virginia Republican party's 1884-1895 record, see Blake, Mahone, pp. 228-53 and Allan W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968). The latter ranks as the leading political work for the period. See also: Charles E. Wynes, "Charles T. O'Ferrall and the Virginia Gubernatorial Election of 1893," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 64 (October 1956): 440, 449, 451, and 453.

assume leadership of the GOP. After being asked to run for governor in the summer of 1893, Lamb remarked in his diary on July 12 that "I consider it absurd for a Republican to run during the existence of the Anderson-McCormick law, but under no condition would I run at the present, as I could not afford to leave my business." Declining to join any effort that would supplant his old friend, Lamb the following year suggested a resurrection of the Whig party, based upon protectionist principles and a currency backed by silver and gold (bimetallism). After some publicity in the Washington and Richmond newspapers, the idea quickly died.⁵

Dedicated to voting reform, Mahone launched the Honest Election Movement, his last cause, in the spring of 1895. As unveiled at the movement's Petersburg convention in August, Mahone's plan was to have Democratic, Republican, and Populist representatives share equally in each step of the electoral process, thereby guaranteeing fairness for members of all parties. Hoping to eliminate another source of fraud associated with the secret vote, Mahone also wanted a simplified ballot with results openly announced before election

⁵Lamb Diary, July 12, September 5, 1893, March 14, 28, 29, 31, April, 2, 12, 1894, in the William Lamb Papers, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

officials left the polling site. The Democratic response was to urge concerned Virginians to work for desired reforms within the ruling party. Although Mahone died prior to the state election, many anti-Democratic candidates ran for office using the Honest Election platform.⁶

Mahone's unexpected death vacated the Republican helm in the midst of a state election and thrust the men he left behind into a difficult period of uncertainty about the party's future. For the Republican inner circle the stakes were crucial since Mahone had held the organization's two highest offices: the state chairmanship and lone seat on the national committee. Ideally, the question of new leadership and direction represented an opportunity to select a leader less controversial than the General, someone with the ability to reunite a party frustrated by recent defeat and burdened with a long record of internal dissension. However, even with the stormy Mahone now removed from the scene, the Republican state committee would be unable to choose a man who could command solid support from a

⁶The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), August 5, 1895. The Honest Election Movement receives detailed attention in Chap. 9 of Ronald Edward Shibley, "Election Laws and Electoral Practices in Virginia, 1867-1902: An Administrative and Political History," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1972).

decisive majority of that body's badly divided membership. Instead of achieving the harmony required to challenge effectively the traditional opponent, the heated election of a new chairman in November 1895 ushered in another phase of internecine struggle. The resulting conflict would consume much of the party's energies over the next two years.⁷

⁷Costly infighting, a Readjuster-Republican tradition, sapped the organization's true potential and left deep scars in the party ranks. Mahone's autocratic leadership style sparked a number of serious revolts, notably the defections led by "Parson" John E. Massey, an early Readjuster champion, and John S. Wise, who had been one of the General's closest friends. Mahone did not help his standing among his black allies when he vigorously opposed the 1888 bid of John M. Langston, a mulatto who sought the Fourth District congressional seat. During the early 1890s, James D. Brady of Petersburg, collector of Internal Revenue for the eastern district of Virginia, emerged as the leader of the party's anti-Mahone wing.

CHAPTER THREE

ROAD TO PETERSBURG

Within days of Mahone's death, newspapers took up the succession issue. Throughout October and November, various sectional leaders were identified as possible heirs for the party's crown. Of the different candidates named, four experienced men with the desired qualities of "tried courage and ability" emerged as the leading contenders. Three had served their districts in the United States House of Representatives and the fourth was a capable, respected politician.¹

Veteran of two House terms (50th and 51st Congresses), George E. Bowden (1852-1908) of Norfolk was an oldline Republican boss who rose to local prominence as an efficient bank president, innovative customs collector, and official with the Norfolk and Western Railroad. Before the official merger of 1884, Bowden and Mayor William Lamb, a key Mahone advisor, helped promote significant Readjuster-Republican cooperation in the Second District. An important figure in party

¹Washington Post, October 9, 1895; The Virginian (Norfolk), October 13, 1895; Yost's Weekly (Staunton), October 24, 1895; The Index-Appeal (Petersburg), November 10, 12, 19, 27, 1895; The Times (Richmond), November 6, 28, 1895.

matters, Bowden wielded the gavel as permanent chairman of the 1889 state convention and was elevated to the executive committee at that same gathering. Hoping to win a third consecutive congressional term, Bowden was unsuccessful in his 1891 attempt.²

A lawyer by profession, forty year-old Edmund Waddill, Jr., (1855-1931) of Richmond became the leading Republican in the Third District when a disillusioned John S. Wise, Mahone's former favorite left the Virginia capital for New York City in 1890. Waddill was a former Henrico County judge (1880-83), United States attorney for the eastern district of Virginia (1883-85), and member of the House of Delegates (1886-89). Although Waddill was defeated in his initial congressional try (1886), he later successfully contested George D. Wise's seat and served in the Fifty-First Congress (April 1890-March 1891). Waddill did not run for a second term, but he remained influential in state political affairs through his friendship with Mahone.³

²Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, Lyon G. Tyler, ed. (New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1915) IV: 417-18; Nelson M. Blake, William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond, Va.: Garrett and Massie, 1935), pp. 243-44; The Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk), January 23, 1908.

³Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 1862-63; The Times-Dispatch (Richmond),

The lone westerner among those favored to take the state GOP reins, General James A. Walker (1832-1901) was a Democrat until 1893. A Virginia Military Institute graduate, Walker commanded the Stonewall Brigade during the Civil War. Walker's acquaintance with Mahone dated back to Reconstruction politics and his seat on the board of directors for the General's Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad. Before switching party loyalties, Walker served as Lieutenant Governor during the administration of Frederick W. M. Holliday (1878-1882). As a new Republican, Walker captured the Ninth District's seat for the Fifty-Fourth Congress in 1894.⁴

Recognized as someone "in good favor with all factions," Colonel William Lamb (1835-1909), a Norfolk railroad agent and businessman, was acknowledged to be the strong favorite to assume the leadership of the Republicans. A popular man of varied interests, Colonel Lamb commanded Fort Fisher during the Civil War and earned well-deserved fame as the gallant defender of the South's last major blockade-running port. Member of an eminent Norfolk political family, Lamb suffered an

April 10, 1931. George D. Wise (1831-1898) was a cousin of John S. Wise.

⁴Biographical Directory of the American Congress, p. 1869; Blake, Mahone, pp. 106, 119.

unexpected reverse in the 1878 Second District congressional primary which caused him to see the "insincerity of his late associates." A year later, Lamb abandoned the Democrats, a move that shocked many of his former friends. Joining the Readjuster crusade, Lamb was elected mayor of Norfolk for three consecutive terms (1880-1886), enabling him to "carr[y] his city and section for the party." In 1889, Lamb declined, for family reasons, to run for governor, despite the urgings of Mahone, the state committee, and the Republican national committee. Through Lamb's long political relationship with Mahone, the Norfolkian also became well acquainted with many leading northern Republican office-holders and bosses. These politicians would later assume that Colonel Lamb was the natural choice to follow Mahone.⁵

The Republican leadership question not only reviewed the qualifications and records of respective aspirants, but much importance was also placed upon their

⁵The Virginian (Norfolk), October 13, 1895 (source of first quotation); The Dispatch (Richmond), October 10, 1895; The Sun (New York), October 21, 1895; The Free Lance (Fredericksburg), November 29, 1895; "Colonel William Lamb" (remaining quotations), Laurentian, XIV (May 1901): 103-09. The Laurentian was published by St. Lawrence University (Canton, New York), where Lamb received an honorary degree in 1899. This biographical sketch was the most complete and informative version prepared by Lamb for publication.

presidential leanings. Naturally, the preference of the new chairman could be a major factor in the composition of Virginia's delegation for the 1896 national convention. In this regard, the friends of Waddill probably did the best promotional job, emphasizing the Judge's enthusiastic support for a McKinley candidacy. Lamb made clear his neutrality concerning presidential hopefuls.⁶

Another aspect of the thorny succession problem was whether the chairmanship and national committee seat should be held by one man, or be shared. Opinion was sharply divided. While some sentiment was voiced favoring a concentration of the party's executive power, allies of Bowden and Waddill informed reporters that they believed, "it is not well for one person to have entire control of the party," and warned "they [would] not yield" on this point. On the other hand, Colonel Lamb, in late November, told a Richmond newspaper that he would "accept both honors if offered in a bunch."⁷

Sobered by the hard lessons learned from the bitter Langston-Mahone affair of 1888 and faced with entrenched

⁶Washington Post, October 9, November 6, 1895; The Sun (Baltimore), November 29, 1895.

⁷The Index-Appeal (Petersburg), November 12, 1895; The State (Richmond), November 26, 1895.

opposition to their elevation within the party hierarchy, black Republican leaders were also deeply interested in the party's direction. A combative advocate of black pride and advancement, John Mitchell, Jr., (1863-1929), editor of the Richmond Planet, urged his readers to cast their votes for the Democrats if the Republican party persisted in following the "Lily White" road. Mitchell's editorial of October 12, 1895, suggesting this drastic action expressed the bleak outlook held by many Virginia blacks concerning their political future in the Old Dominion.⁸

The Virginia Republicans remained leaderless for about three weeks. At Colonel Lamb's suggestion, in late October, General Stith Bolling of Petersburg was named as temporary chairman. A respected businessman, Bolling was an old Mahone supporter and member of the party's executive committee. On November 5, Bolling informed reporters that he planned to call a meeting of the state committee to elect a new chairman, emphasizing that he was not a candidate for the position. With five men

⁸Ann Field Alexander, "Black Protest in the New South: John Mitchell, Jr., (1863-1929) and the Richmond Planet," (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1972), p. 253. Mitchell's unique career also receives deserved attention in Virginius Dabney, Richmond: The Story of a City (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1976) and Howard N. Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1900 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

representing each of Virginia's ten congressional districts, the state committee was a body of fifty members.⁹

Encouraged by the response he had received from fellow state Republicans and various northern leaders in the days following Mahone's death, Colonel Lamb was able to note in his diary on October 21, that he planned to accept both the chairmanship and national committee seat if these posts were "offered" to him. As experienced politicians of sectional importance, Lamb, Bowden Waddill, and Walker each commanded a significant following. Lamb, however, had the backing of some important northerners, former associates of Mahone. In their eyes, Lamb was the man who should next take up the sceptre of party leadership.¹⁰

In mid-October, Lamb received a letter from national committeeman James S. Clarkson asking the Colonel to meet with powerful bosses Matthew S. Quay of Pennsylvania and Thomas C. Platt of New York to discuss Virginia affairs. In a conversation reported by the New York Sun the

⁹Lamb Diary, October 19, 31, 1895, in the William Lamb Papers, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia; Blake, Mahone, pp. 141-42, 244, 258-59; The Times (Richmond), November 6, 1895. Colonel Lamb's private journals provide a valuable daily record of his activities for the entire period of this study.

¹⁰Lamb Diary, October 21, 1895.

following week, Quay predicted that Lamb would provide the Virginia Republicans with "more liberal and far more successful leadership than that of Gen. Mahone, whose imperiousness and jealousies alienated Republicans and bitterly intensified Democrats against him." In late October Lamb dined with leading Republicans in New York, where they indicated their desire that he assume the chairmanship, if offered to him. This, they told Lamb, was Mahone's own wish when he left active politics. In response, the Colonel replied that despite the many personal sacrifices involved, he would accept in order to free Virginia from the yoke of Democratic "misrule."¹¹

Lamb's role as Mahone's loyal lieutenant placed the Colonel on the inside track to replace his former boss. Another advantage for Lamb was his unwavering stand on one of the party's important principles, protection for American business and industry, a position that transcended the race issue and placed him in great favor with the northern men who recently gave him their endorsement. The Petersburg Index-Appeal editorialized that Lamb was,

Probably more generally known in the north as an intelligent advocate and

¹¹Lamb Diary, October 15, 21, 23, 1895; The Sun (New York), October 21, 1895; "Platt in the Saddle," Washington Post, October 31, 1895; "The Republican Rumpus," The Times, (Richmond) January 26, 1896.

defender of protection than any other Virginian. Other Republicans in the state have had more prominence in national politics but that fact will, we presume, have little weight with the better informed members of the national committee. They will look for a man known to be thoroughly well informed and sound upon the tariff question-one whom Republicans can follow with safety, and who is, also free from any vagaries or eccentricities or records that will repel other Virginians who may be attracted to the Republican party by its stand in favor of protection.¹²

Well before the state committee gathering planned for late November, battle lines were formed behind the scenes between the eastern contenders. On October 31, Bowden and Waddill visited Colonel Lamb, initiating a discussion where general ideas were exchanged and the callers professed their support for a Lamb chairmanship. Eight days later, Alvah H. Martin (d. July 1918), Norfolk County Republican boss and Lamb advisor, warned his

¹²The Index-Appeal (Petersburg), October 29, 1895. A month later, The Public Ledger (Norfolk), November 29, remarked, "Colonel Lamb is an able leader, and enjoys the confidence, perhaps, of the inner circle of the Republican leaders of the country, to a greater extent than any other Republican in the South." In order to safeguard Norfolk's vital trade interests (esp. coal and lumber), Lamb had long advocated a protective tariff against foreign competition. Lamb campaigned for this position as Norfolk's Chamber of Commerce president, member of the American Coal Trade Committee (financed by Philadelphia businessmen), and in his political speeches. See the Laurentian XIV (May 1901): 106; Lamb Diary, December 6, 14, 27, 28, 1893, January 13, 18, March 14, 28, 1894; The Free Lance (Fredericksburg), October 20, 1896; and The Star (Portsmouth), October 2, 1896.

friend that Waddill wanted the chairmanship to promote the McKinley cause in Virginia. The following week, Waddill called on Lamb for a second time. In this conversation, Waddill altered his earlier position, now asking Lamb to support him in his quest for the chairmanship. In return, Lamb would receive the Richmonder's backing for the national committee seat. To this offer, Lamb firmly "refused as I had consented to take both places if offered me by the Committee."¹³

During the last week of November, Virginia Republicans gathered in Petersburg for the party's first official meeting since the death of Mahone. The fifty-man state committee, including nine blacks, held their proceedings at the Imperial Hotel. With great interest in the important decisions to be made, the Cockade City was crowded with visiting political onlookers and eager reporters from leading newspapers.¹⁴

¹³Lamb Diary, October 31, November 8, 14, 1895; The Ledger-Dispatch (Norfolk), July 6, 8, 1918. Martin was the powerful Norfolk County Court clerk, an office he had held since 1880. Following the deaths of Bowden (1908) and Lamb (1909), Martin became the leading Republican in the Second District, sitting on the national committee from 1908 until the year of his death. A review of Martin's related career in area newspapers can be found in Lenoir Chambers and Joseph E. Shank, Salt Water and Printer's Ink: Norfolk and its Newspapers, 1895-1965 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967).

¹⁴The Free Lance (Fredericksburg), November 29, 1895; Richmond Planet, December 7, 1895.

Concerning the assembled Republican leaders, R. P. Barham's Petersburg Index-Appeal, a Democratic daily, had much praise, reminding its readership that the party's upper echelon had changed and was improved over their predecessors of Reconstruction days. In a balanced and favorable editorial, the Index-Appeal observed:

In character, intelligence and social standing the membership of this committee is a fair type of Virginia manhood. Among the members are Confederates of gallant and stainless record, ex-Democrats who had stood high in the counsels of the party and other citizens who bear themselves reputably. It is well for Virginia and wise that the Democratic party should recognize it. It is very necessary for good government that there should be two respectable parties in the state. No party, however wise and virtuous, can be trusted with a long lease of power.¹⁵

As was to be expected, intensive lobbying occurred before the scheduled meeting, with the different sectional groupings quickly coalescing into Lamb and Waddill factions. During his Petersburg stay, Lamb made the Shirley House his headquarters, where he received calls from many supporters, representing all areas of Virginia. Two notable leaders in the pro-Lamb camp at this time were Park Agnew (d. July 1910), a prominent businessman from Alexandria and former United States

¹⁵The Index-Appeal (Petersburg), November 28, 1895; Lester J. Cappon, Virginia Newspapers, 1821-1935 New York and London: D. Appleton-Century, 1936), p. 150.

Representative in the 50th Congress, Jacob Yost (1853-1933), who was once described by the Washington Evening-Star as "a small, sharp-featured man of keen intellect." After receiving early briefings, Lamb wrote in his journal that "from appearances I can get the National Committeeman's place without trouble, but will have opposition for Chairman."¹⁶

The Waddill wing boasted considerable strength. S. Brown Allen of Augusta brought in some western members, and Bowden threw his lot with the Judge. Like Waddill, Bowden opposed the idea of one man holding the party's two top posts. Bowden's action must have been painful to Lamb since the men once had a partnership that had contributed materially to Republican success in the Commonwealth. An Englishman by birth who fought under Custer during the late war, Edgar "Yankee" Allan (d. October 1904) of Richmond was Waddill's closest ally. A Virginia resident since Reconstruction, Allan assumed the city chairmanship shortly following John S. Wise's move

¹⁶Lamb Diary, November 26, 1895; The Gazette (Alexandria), July 14, 15, 18, 1910; Washington Post, July 15, 1910; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, p. 1967; The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), March 13, 1897. During his political career, Agnew also clashed with Mahone over patronage appointments. In 1888, Agnew was defeated by General W. H. F. Lee for the Eight District congressional seat. Yost later served in the 55th Congress.

from Richmond. Lamb soon learned that Waddill was planning "to defeat me for both places if I adhere to [a] determination to have both."¹⁷

After seven weeks of anticipation, the Republican state committee convened on Wednesday, November 27, and was opened by Stith Bolling. Although the meeting's purpose was to select Mahone's successor, the first order of business concerned the examination of seating credentials of members from the Third and Fourth Districts. Revealing the division among Richmond Republicans, Waddill and Allan opposed the admittance of the Planet's Mitchell and J. W. Southward, a supporter of the fiery editor. After listening to the debate, Mitchell and Southward were seated by a 26-19 vote. Next on the agenda was settling the Fourth District dispute. In this contest, the Richmond State reported that Collector Brady received some timely assistance from Lamb's men in securing seats for two members of his delegation. For this service, Brady was expected to support Lamb in the upcoming battle for party leadership.¹⁸

¹⁷Lamb Diary, November 27, 1895; Blake, Mahone, pp. 221-24; Alexander, "Black Protest," p. 226; The Times-Dispatch (Richmond), October 29, 1904.

¹⁸The Free Lance (Fredericksburg), November 29, 1895; "Lamb Wins," The State (Richmond), November 28,

The seating process consumed a number of hours and it was past midnight before the matter was finally resolved. As members took up the emotional chairmanship question, the Richmond Times observed, "the meeting at times [became] quite stormy, some three or four being on the floor at the same time, wishing to be recognized." S. Brown Allen offered a resolution stating that the chairmanship and national committee seat should be held separately. Convinced that Lamb wanted a white man's party, five of the nine black members voted their support for Allen's proposal. Rising above the din, Edgar Allan made "a bitter, impassioned speech" against bossism. Put to a full vote, the Allen resolution was defeated 28 1/3 to 21 2/3, a tally that prompted Lamb to exult in his diary, "the Opposition went to pieces and I was elected without opposition and by acclamation."¹⁹

In accepting the leadership of the state Republican party, Chairman Lamb paused to pay a warm tribute to the departed Mahone, praising the General's "unaided genius and indomitable will," and many accomplishments during a long public career. With a "feeling of consecration" on

1895; Richmond Planet, December 7, 1895.

¹⁹Lamb Diary, November 28, 1895; The Times (Richmond), November 29, 1895; Richmond Planet, December 7, 1895; The American (Baltimore), November 29, 1895.

this occasion, Lamb told the gathering that "these positions came to me unsought," and he promised "to devote all the energies of mind and body, with the help of heaven to redeem Virginia." Lamb's victory "was the result of a bitter fight," commented the Index-Appeal, and the lingering "heartburnings and disappointments" were "not wholly allayed in the complimentary vote which followed." With their labors finally concluded, the fatigued committeemen adjourned at 4:30 A.M.²⁰

Regardless of political orientation, editorial reaction in Virginia to the newly elected Republican chairman was favorable, complimenting Lamb on his proven leadership qualities and his past record as a tireless advocate for the port of Norfolk, Republican causes, and attracting business to his native state. Calling Lamb "a better leader than Mahone," the Richmond Dispatch confidently predicted that the Colonel could reunite this troubled party and advised Democrats "to take notice of the change."²¹

At this moment, for the first time in the decade, GOP prospects had risen enough to worry the Democrats.

²⁰The Index-Appeal (Petersburg), November 29, 1895; The Gazette (Alexandria), December 12, 1895.

²¹The Star (Portsmouth), November 28, 1895; The Dispatch (Richmond), November 29, 1895; The Public Ledger (Norfolk), November 29, 1895.

Although the recently completed state election registered another Democratic victory, Honest Election candidates (mostly Republicans) were able to capture thirty-two seats in the incoming General Assembly. With the growing demand for electoral reform crossing party lines, many Democrats did not even bother to cast ballots. In Lamb, the Republicans now had a forceful chairman who might be able to rally his party and exploit Democratic vulnerability on the silver question. A way to stall Republican resurgence, opined the thoughtful Index-Appeal, was through the passage of ballot reform measures.²²

Not wasting a moment, Chairman Lamb immediately set in motion an ambitious plan to place Congressman Walker on the Rivers and Harbors Committee. With this goal in mind, Lamb traveled to Washington and met with House Speaker Thomas B. Reed on December 4, and presented the "Czar" with this proposal. Reed realized that the idea was somewhat embarrassing, since Lamb was asking him to

²²Ronald Edward Shibley, "Election Laws and Electoral Practices in Virginia, 1867-1902: An Administrative and Political History," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1972), pp. 181, 184-86; Washington Post, November 6, 1895; The Times (Richmond), November 7, 1895; The American (Baltimore), November 4, 7, 1895; The Landmark (Norfolk), November 30, 1895; The Index Appeal (Petersburg), November 30, 1895. Passed in 1896, the Parker Law, a minor revision, was the Democratic response to the clamor for voting reform.

remove a sitting committee member, William A. Jones of Virginia, a Democrat. To drum up further support, Lamb spoke with other leading Republicans, including Clarkson, and Senators Quay and William E. Chandler. On December 12, Lamb wrote Reed a "final letter" on the matter. The waiting was over on December 21 and 22, as the Washington papers published the new House committee listings, showing the "influence of the Platt-Quay-Clarkson combination." As Lamb had hoped, General Walker replaced Jones on the Rivers and Harbors Committee. Walker was also named to the Elections Committee. Obviously pleased, Lamb penned another letter to Reed, "thanking him for what he had done at my request." Then, Lamb wrote Walker and Brady, telling them of the good news.²³

With a presidential campaign only months away, the Republican national committee met in Washington on December 10 to select the site for the national convention. In a caucus at Quay's home held the night before, the national chairman asked Lamb to make a motion during the meeting. The national committeemen gathered at the Arlington Hotel, and Lamb was identified by the

²³Lamb Diary, December 4, 11, 12, 23, 24, 1895; "Speaker Reed Now at Work," Kennebec Journal (Maine), December 13, 1895; "The Task Assigned," The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), December 21, 1895; "Reed Breaks Silence," Washington Post, December 22, 1895.

Washington Post as a "new face in the throng" who was "confidently relied upon to bring Virginia into the Republican column next year." Of the four cities that competed to host the Republicans, St. Louis prevailed after four ballots. On the successful motion of Lamb, June 16th was the date chosen for the convention. Then, after James S. Clarkson paid a respectful tribute to Mahone, Lamb was made a member of the arrangements committee. Lamb was still not committed to a presidential hopeful, but he told Platt that he would work with him and Quay. Platt hoped to promote Levi Parsons Morton of New York and was worried about McKinley's growing strength in the South.²⁴

Annoyed over the Petersburg verdict, the Waddill faction did not mask its anger over Lamb's election. Underestimating "the great dissatisfaction," the Norfolk Public Ledger dismissed an early report and cautioned Democrats "not to rely too much upon Republican dissension in the near future." Edgar Allan was determined to tell his version. Regarding Lamb's

²⁴Lamb Diary, December 7, 9, 10, 13, 1895; Kennebec Journal, December 10, 11, 1895; The Press (Philadelphia), December 11, 1895; Washington Post, December 11, 1895; Robert McElroy, Levi Parsons Morton: Banker, Diplomat and Statesman (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930), pp. 291-93. On December 13, Lamb wrote the New York Herald, correcting its statement that he supported Thomas B. Reed for the presidency.

statement that the offices were offered to him 'unsought,' Allan told the Alexandria Gazette that the new chairman had pursued them "with an urgency that was most unseemly." To achieve his objective, Allan further claimed that Lamb was behind the ouster of the committeemen opposed to him.²⁵

Lamb waited until December 23 before responding to Allan's attack. In his letter to the Richmond city chairman, Lamb attempted to correct Allan's "misrepresentations," about the Petersburg result. Lamb also took time to describe his meetings with Quay, Platt, and other leading northern Republicans. In closing, Lamb informed Allan that he would soon call a meeting in Richmond to "set himself right" and invited him to attend.²⁶

²⁵The Public Ledger (Norfolk), December 2, 1895; The Gazette (Alexandria), December 9, 12, 1895. Edited by Harold Snowden, the Gazette, took great pleasure in reporting Republican problems.

²⁶Lamb Diary, December 23, 1895; The Times (Richmond), January 26, 1896.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHAIRMANSHIP STRUGGLES AND HOISTING THE MCKINLEY BANNER

The sparks produced at the raucous Republican state committee meeting survived through the early winter and smoldered in the coals of discontent. As the New Year unfolded, the wavering flickers soon erupted into a roaring flame that swept across the Commonwealth turning the Old Dominion into a political battlefield. Unwilling to tolerate what he believed to be disloyalty, Colonel Lamb pursued the foe, initiating sharp skirmishes in Richmond and Norfolk over city chairmanships. Presenting the Republican faithful with a painful choice, the expanding conflict surfaced at city, county, and district nominating conventions. In April, the Republican state convention gathered in Staunton, where the major struggle centered around the issue of instructions for the party's St. Louis delegation. McKinley supporters wanted a pledge for their man, while Lamb's faction fought for an unpledged delegation. In a personal triumph, Lamb was confirmed as state chairman at the Staunton meeting. However, the chairmanship as inherited from Mahone now came to an end. During the sparsely attended final session of the

convention, a new reorganization plan was adopted which effectively trimmed much of the state chairman's authority.

In a bold and provocative step, Colonel Lamb took his dispute with Edgar Allan to the city chairman's own backyard. On January 23, Lamb met with some local Republicans at Henrico Court House to discuss the tense situation. Claiming that Allan was "not in accord with their state chairman," Lamb told the meeting that if Richmonders wanted to "sustain me, they should ask the State Committee to make a change." Uninvited, Allan was not present to speak on his behalf. A few days later, Allan supporters claimed that Lamb's meeting ignored the regular city Republican organization, was conducted in secret, and branded the dissenters as "a little band of men who for five or six years past have been engaged in the same scheme of disorganization."¹

Shortly after the Henrico meeting, Lamb granted an interview to the Richmond State, a Democratic newspaper edited by William Ryan and W. W. Archer. Wanting his version made public, Lamb informed the State that he felt a sense of betrayal concerning the Allan affair.

¹Lamb Diary, January 23, 1896, in William Lamb Papers, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia; The Times (Richmond), January 28, 1896.

Hoping "to make friends," Lamb recalled that he spoke with Allan after the Petersburg vote and thought that the matter was settled. The Alexandria Gazette report of December especially angered Lamb because Allan accused the new chairman of engineering his election by joining with Mahone's 'most inveterate enemies.' As a result of the Gazette article, Lamb lost faith in Allan and he then contacted Third District committeeman W. J. Southward and asked him to hold a meeting of interested Republicans. Affording Allan an opportunity to respond, the city chairman told the State reporter that he did not attend the Henrico meeting because only members of John Mitchell's faction were invited. In Allan's eyes, Lamb's election was an extreme "illustration of bossism," but had considered the argument closed until hearing of the previous day's assembly at Henrico, where "without a word of notice, and with every effort at concealment, [Lamb] made the cowardly assault upon myself as a Republican leader."²

Parrying Lamb's thrust, Allan continued his riposte by releasing the Colonel's December 23rd letter which appeared in the January 26th edition of the Richmond

²"A Lambasting," The State (Richmond), January 24, 1896; Lester J. Cappon, Virginia Newspapers, 1821-1935 (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century, 1936), p. 186.

Times. Describing Lamb's correspondence as "ugly" and "intemperate," Allan also published his terse reply to the state chairman. Lamb, noted Allan, did not bother to respond. If the Colonel removed him from his present post, Allan warned that Lamb would "soon find [his] hands full," and that "he had better watch that corpse." When asked for his comments, Waddill told the Times journalist that he stood behind Allan. On January 27, the pro-Allan Richmond Republican city committee convened and passed resolutions (by a vote of 33-6) supporting their chairman, denouncing outside interference, and deploring Lamb's recent actions.³

Defeating Allan continued to shape much of Lamb's thinking during the early months of 1896. At the Republican executive committee meeting of January 28, held to select the state convention date and site, Lamb found an occasion to discuss the subject of Allan's possible removal as Richmond chairman with S. Brown Allen and other Valley members. If Lamb was probing for support to bolster his plans, he was disappointed because the westerners advised him against removing Allan. Concerning the state convention, the executive committee set April 23 as the date to assemble in

³The Times (Richmond), January 26, 28, 1896.

Staunton.⁴

Occupied with a myriad of party organization matters, Chairman Lamb received an interesting offer of assistance in his fight with Allan. On February 14, John Mitchell paid a call on the state chairman. The Planet editor has been described by one Richmond historian as the city's "most prominent and militant member from the black community" during these years. Although details about the meeting were not elaborated upon, Lamb's journal recorded the salient fact that he "arranged with him [Mitchell] to defeat Yankee Allan."⁵

Lamb's alliance with Virginia's leading black editor now drew the Chairman deeper into the maelstrom of turbulent Richmond Republican politics. Based in Jackson Ward, which was home to over half of Richmond's black population, Mitchell had long championed many causes for his brethren, giving them a strong voice in city and state Republican party matters. In his opposition to Allan's organization (dating back to at least 1892), Mitchell was aided by Alderman James Bahen (1844-1906), an Irish saloon-keeper and leader of

⁴Lamb Diary, January 27, 28, 30, 1896.

⁵Lamb Diary, February 14, 1896; Virginius Dabney, Richmond: The Story of a City (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 237.

Jackson Ward's immigrant (German, Irish, Italian) grocery-saloon owners. For their willing cooperation with the city's blacks, Bahen and his business associates were disliked intensely by the native whites. Drawing upon their foundation of black support and loyal businessmen, Bahen and Mitchell made a powerful combination that won them multiple terms on the city council. On the local level, the other major political grouping was the pro-Allan "Post Office Gang," led by Richmond postmaster Otis H. Russell (appointed in 1889), who also sat on the city Republican committee.⁶

During February and early March, Chairman Lamb carefully planned the eventual removal of the presiding city chairmen of Richmond and Norfolk. To accomplish this, Lamb first gathered further evidence to justify their replacement with his men. In mid-February, Alvah H. Martin produced some letters attacking Lamb supposedly written by Allan, including one showing the latter's alliance with Collector Brady. Interestingly,

⁶Ann Field Alexander, "Black Protest in the New South: John Mitchell, Jr., (1863-1929) and the Richmond Planet," (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1972), pp. 222-23, 235, 256, 259-60, 262, 264; Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, Lyon G. Tyler, ed., V: 683-84; Howard N. Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1900 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 284, 409 (notes 7, 8). The remarkable Mitchell fought for black rights in a political career that lasted until 1921.

later that month Brady told Lamb that Stith Bolling and party secretary Asa Rogers were "untrue to me." In early March, Lamb received disturbing reports about the continuing efforts of Allan, Waddill, and Bowden to undermine his authority. Seeking advice on "the right of removal and other powers" held by the executive committee, Lamb consulted with respected Norfolk Republican attorneys Thomas R. Borland (1844-1900) and Robert M. Hughes (1855-1940).⁷

Politically, aside from the Richmond and Norfolk chairmanships, Lamb's other major concern was the party's delegation to the St. Louis convention. In his travels prior to the Staunton convention, Lamb spoke with selected friends such as J. Hampton Hoge of Montgomery County who had converted to the GOP in 1893,

⁷Lamb Diary, February 8, 17, 21, 22, March 3, 4, 1896. For information on Rogers, see Nelson M. Blake, William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond, Va.: Garrett and Massie, 1935), pp. 148 (note 82), 240. Borland served in the House of Delegates (1871-72) and made an unsuccessful bid for the Second District U.S. House seat in 1894. Active in local Republican politics, Robert Morton Hughes was a noted admiralty lawyer who served on the College of William and Mary Board of Visitors from 1893-1917. He was the son of Robert William Hughes (1821-1901), a respected editor, judge, author, and Republican gubernatorial candidate in 1873. For R. M. Hughes' important role in laying the foundation for higher education in Norfolk, see James R. Sweeney, Old Dominion University: A Half Century of Service (Norfolk: Old Dominion University, 1980), pp. 4-6, 27, 55, 128.

in order to build an unpledged delegation. At the outset, Lamb wanted an all-white delegation, a position that he patiently explained to the numerous black leaders who called upon him. Correctly sensing the strong black objection to the plan, Lamb publicly modified this stance in a speech given in Norfolk's heavily black Fourth Ward on March 4. To the large crowd gathered at Breslow's Hall, Lamb proclaimed that the Planet's John Mitchell was his choice as a delegate for the national convention. In his home (Second) district, Lamb's interest in unpledged delegates was attended to by Alvah Martin and Harry Libbey (1843-1913) of nearby Hampton, a former U.S. representative (48th and 49th Congresses). In order to defend his independent posture, Lamb wrote to Platt, denying that he had ever agreed to control the Virginia delegation for any of the presidential contenders.⁸

⁸Lamb Diary, January 3, 4, 21, 23, 27, 31, February 10, 15, 17, 19, 20, March 4, 1896; Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), p. 178; "Colonel Lamb's Denial," The Times (Richmond), January 28, 1896; Biographical Directory of the American Congress (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 1289. Some of the black politicians who called on Lamb were J. C. Asbury, R. L. T. Page, and Jacob Reed. On February 10, William Thoroughgood (various spellings) a black leader from Norfolk's Third Ward, offered Lamb support in return for the Colonel's aid in obtaining a place for him on the St. Louis delegation. Lamb declined Thoroughgood's proposition.

Convinced that the time was finally right to move against his adversaries, Lamb launched his audacious plan to appoint new Republican chairmen for Virginia's two largest cities. On March 6, Lamb convened the executive committee at Norfolk in order to decide the Richmond case. Persuaded by Lamb to remove the troublesome Richmonder, the committee installed Michael Murphy, a little-known Republican in Allan's place. The decision sparked loud celebrations in parts of Jackson Ward. During a large rally held in his precinct, Alderman Bahen predicted that Allan's fall would soon push Waddill over to the Democratic camp. Immediately after the committee ballot, Chairman Lamb provided Mitchell and Alvah Martin with \$500.00 each for use in their respective districts.⁹

Reaction from Waddill and Allan was swift and scathing. Defending his friend, Judge Waddill told a Times reporter that the state chairman's vendetta was based upon a scheme to "improperly influence" the selection of delegates to Staunton and St. Louis. Only with Allan out of the way, could Lamb's "unjustifiable and indiscreet course" succeed. Calling Lamb's latest action "hurtful to our party interest," Waddill urged

⁹Lamb Diary, March 6, 1896; "Edgar Allan Removed," The Times (Richmond), March 7, 1896.

Virginia Republicans to ignore the executive committee vote. Allan considered his removal illegal, vowed to stay on as city chairman, and scoffed at the idea that the vote was unanimous. Depicting Lamb as an arrogant despot intoxicated with power, Allan said that the solution to the present problem rested with choosing a new chairman, one "who will work for the best interest of the party."¹⁰

Allan's sudden dismissal also surprised committee member Stith Bolling, who was not present at the voting. Bolling told the Times' Petersburg correspondent that he did not approve of the action against Allan and would have spoken out against the resolution. In response to further questioning, Bolling said that he did not believe the executive committee had the power to remove the heads of city or county organizations. In respect to Allan and for the sake of "party harmony," Bolling added that the Richmond chairman should have been given proper notice of the committee's intentions.¹¹

As expected, Lamb's strongest supporters applauded Murphy's selection. Alvah Martin upheld the legality of the committee's action by referring the ubiquitous Times

¹⁰"Allan's Friends in Arms," The Times (Richmond) March 8, 1896.

¹¹Ibid.

representative to existing party law (Section 1, Article 5), which permitted the committee to name new local chairmen when deemed necessary. Commenting on Bolling's professed absence during the March 6th ballot, Martin insisted that all the committee members had been notified. In his Planet editorials, John Mitchell advised Allan to accept the committee's determination and asked Richmond Republicans to give their whole support to Colonel Lamb and Michael Murphy.¹²

While the Richmond chairmanship controversy raged, the lone voice of J. W. Southward could be faintly heard, pressing for compromise and understanding. Also a member of the city committee, Southward felt that Richmond's Republican organization would suffer irreparable damage if the competing factions could not soon achieve a cessation of their hostilities. Hoping to bridge the everwidening chasm, Southward suggested that both Waddill and Mitchell be chosen as members of the St. Louis delegation. Although Southward's simple solution was a reasonable one, the poisoned political climate would not now allow a much needed

¹²"Gen. Allan Sustained," The Times, (Richmond) March 10, 1896; Richmond Planet, March 7, 14, 1896.

reconciliation.¹³

Within days of his appointment as city chairman, Michael Murphy stepped down from his office, citing health problems that prevented him from devoting full attention to his duties. Alarmed at this unexpected turn of events, Lamb dashed off a letter to Murphy, urging him to "show [his] Irish blood," and reconsider the resignation. As Murphy quickly bowed out of the political storm, Lamb convoked the executive committee on March 14 for another session. At this meeting, another obscure politician, Dr. P. H. C. Noble, was elected as the new Richmond chairman. Asked for his reaction, Edgar Allan told the Richmond Times on March 15 that he would not take "notice of Colonel Lamb's second abortive attempt to disorganize" the Richmond Republicans. Since Allan still commanded a sizeable following in the capital, Lamb's effort to topple him failed. In addition to detailed reporting of Republican troubles, the Times employed an artist named Barclay to draw a series of humorous political cartoons which the paper printed in mid-March. As a result of Chairman Lamb's maneuvers, a sharp wedge was driven deep between

¹³"For and Against Col. Lamb." The Times (Richmond), March 11, 1896; The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), March 14, 1896.

Richmond's already discordant Republicans.¹⁴

With a flair for showmanship, Colonel Lamb decided to settle the Norfolk city chairmanship during a mass rally held at Armory Hall on March 10. Lamb's choice to replace the Bowden faction's Chairman Thomas Lowery, was Colonel John R. Waddy (b. December 1839), a VMI graduate, Civil War veteran, ex-farmer, and inspector for the Norfolk and Western. Before a crowd estimated at around 2,500, largely composed of blacks, Lamb claimed that Allan had tried to "sell out" his fellow Republicans and that Thomas Lowery was also no longer fit to head the Norfolk organization. Then, Lamb called out for any of Lowery's friends to come forward. When no one came to the stage, Lamb asked the crowd if they favored a reorganization. With only three "nay" votes counted, nominations for a new city chairman were taken. Colonel Waddy was nominated and elected to the post without opposition. In accepting his honor, Waddy promised the gathering that the Norfolk GOP would fight for honest elections and "fair" electoral laws. Like Allan, Lowery refused to recognize this removal by Lamb's tactic and declared that he would not give up his position.¹⁵

¹⁴The Times (Richmond), March 10, 12-15, 1896.

¹⁵"It's Chairman Waddy," The Virginian (Norfolk), March 11, 1896; Lamb Diary, March 2, 9-11, 1896; William

In the crucial weeks leading to the Staunton convention, Lamb and his opponents made the final push for delegates. On March 25, a troubled Lamb conferred with Matthew S. Quay of the national committee, revealing that his organization needed help in Virginia. Wanting to assist an old friend, Quay shared Lamb's difficulties with fellow committee member Joseph H. Manley of Maine, who provided the Virginian with \$2,000 on the following day. In his travels to various district conventions, Lamb noted in his diary on March 31 that "the McKinley bunch has done its work very effectively throughout the State, & the Allan-Waddill gang have created opposition to me in a number of counties." Lamb also observed that his initial effort to build an all-white delegation was now being used against him by his enemies "with considerable effect."¹⁶

Chairman Lamb arrived at Staunton's Virginia Hotel on April 22, a day before the opening of the state convention. Many of the delegates were already in town and several hundred of them called upon the state

H. Stewart, ed. and comp. History of Norfolk County... (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co., 1902), pp. 571-72.

¹⁶Lamb Diary, March 24-26, April 3, 9, 13, 14, 16, 21, 1896; "No Designs on Delegates," Washington Post, March 14, 1896.

chairman during the day, promising him their support. Although his personal popularity remained high, Lamb estimated that nine of ten delegates were for McKinley. Among Lamb's many visitors was H. R. Clarkson, son of the national committeeman, who brought him another \$2,000 from Washington, "to be used if practicable." Later that day, a conference of the party's leaders was held at the hotel. Waddill, Lamb, Brady, and Congressman Walker were reported to be present, in another effort to "bring about a compromise." Afterward, the men did not discuss the meeting with the throng of waiting reporters. At the same time, a McKinley advisor, General William M. Osborne worked the "immense crowd" gathered at the hotel, doing "missionary work" for his cousin.¹⁷

In his trip to Staunton, General Osborne was simply putting the final touch on a campaign he began in the summer of 1895. To help place Virginia upon the McKinley bandwagon, Osborne first sought out Edmund Waddill, who agreed to use his influence for the Ohioan. Lamb was also contacted, but he declined to join the McKinley effort. On the eve of the convention, a

¹⁷Lamb Diary, April 22, 1896; "A Conference Held by Leaders before the Convention Opened," The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), April 23, 1896.

victory in the form of a St. Louis delegation with instructions for McKinley seemed inevitable. Of the state's ten congressional districts, only one, the Fourth, came to Staunton with a firm, anti-McKinley delegate. Buttons for McKinley were seen "everywhere," according to the Washington Post correspondent who also observed that "the trail" of Marcus Hanna's money was to be "seen over everything." Frowning upon Hanna's expenditures, the Washington Post branded his method as a "Campaign of Boodle." Recalling that earlier delegations to national conventions had been burdened with instructors for Arthur and Sherman under Mahone, Lamb told the Post reporter that he wanted Virginians to make their decision at St. Louis. For his unwillingness to declare openly for any of the White House hopefuls, Lamb stated that "the friends of Mr. McKinley have made a persistent and bitter war upon me and have not hesitated to use the Democratic press to circulate their attacks."¹⁸

Approximately 800 Republican delegates, about 300 of whom were black, gathered at Staunton's Columbian

¹⁸"Virginia for McKinley," Washington Post, April 23, 1896; Chalmers M. Roberts, The Washington Post: The First 100 Years (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), pp. 52-53. Collector Brady was for Reed, while fellow Fourth District delegate Stith Bolling favored McKinley.

Hall on April 23. Lamb called the convention to order and addressed the assemblage. "Heartily greeted," the state chairman called out for party harmony and his brief reference to the Ohio "Napoleon of Protection," evoked a minute of loud cheering. Reflecting the recent conflicts in Norfolk and Richmond, the credentials committee heard contests from the Second and Third Districts. In these cases, pro-Lamb delegates Harry Libbey and Alvah Martin were seated, as were all of Waddill's men. Congressman Walker was chosen as permanent chairman and the delegates approved a platform that endorsed protective tariffs, denounced unsound (Democratic) economic practices, opposed a state constitutional convention ("An effort to disfranchise our illiterate voters, both white and colored"), and instructed the St. Louis delegation to cast its vote for McKinley. Regarding the latter plank, Lamb "used all my influence unavailingly to prevent instructions."¹⁹

Even though Lamb's fight against delegation instructions ended unsuccessfully, his individual

¹⁹"Lamb Wins His Fight," Washington Post, April 24, 1896; Lamb Diary, April 23, 24, 1896. The Republican state convention is not mentioned in Moger's Virginia or by Pulley in his Old Virginia Restored. In the Third District, the anti-Waddill faction chose Mitchell as a delegate for St. Louis and Bahen for elector. They were not seated by the credentials committee.

popularity among his fellow Republicans was unquestioned. Nominated by J. Hampton Hoge, Lamb was confirmed as state chairman "by an overwhelming vote." Lamb, Congressman Walker, and Major S. M. Yost, a Staunton editor, were elected by acclamation as delegates-at-large for the party's twenty-four man delegation (each district contributed two regular delegates). In deference to unmasked black disappointment, Patrick H. McCaull (1851-1915) of Culpeper withdrew his name for consideration as an at-large delegate. A black lawyer, A. W. Harris of Dinwiddie, was then nominated by Edgar Allan and his selection caused "great rejoicing among the negroes." Working until well past midnight, the delegates finally concluded their first round of activity at 2 A.M.²⁰

With the exciting drama surrounding the instructions for the St. Louis delegation and the vote for state chairman now behind them, many of the tired delegates did not bother to attend the convention's second day of proceedings. Alternates-at-large and electors-at-large were now chosen. After this balloting was completed, Major Orrin E. Hine of Fairfax County

²⁰Washington Post, April 24, 1896; Cappon, Virginia Newspapers, pp. 210-22. During his career, Major Yost edited the Valley Virginian and Yost's Weekly, both of Staunton.

presented the report he drafted for the organization committee. A veteran Republican, Hine settled in northern Virginia after the Civil War as a Freedman's Bureau agent and represented Fairfax County in the state convention of 1867-68, which produced the Underwood Constitution. Although Hine was not a member of the anti-Lamb wing, he was on record against one-man rule in the Mahone style. In the plan that was adopted, the powers of the state chairman were curtailed significantly: a) the state committee was reduced from fifty to thirty members; b) committee members were to be elected by a district convention; c) the executive committee reduced to four men was to be elected by the state committee from candidates outside that body; and d) appeals against the state chairman or executive committee could be made to the state committee. Recognizing the significance of the Hine proposal, the report received the backing of the Allan-Waddill-Bowden faction. Joining the anti-Lamb group, Brady also called for the plan's approval. Motivated by a desire to reduce current party strife, Hine told a Post reporter that his changes were offered in order to expand "the power of the voters to manage their party affairs." Major Hine's report was adopted and the convention came

to a close.²¹

John Mitchell's Richmond Planet hailed the Staunton convention as another victory for the state chairman. To the careful reader, the headlines rang hollow because a difficult road lay ahead for William Lamb. Developments at Staunton sharply reduced Lamb's range of choices and actual power. As someone committed to none of the leading candidates, Lamb's selection as a delegate-at-large made him an uncomfortable member of a pro-McKinley delegation that had received instructions to cast their ballot for the Ohioan. In response to months of bitter Republican infighting, Major Hine's reorganization plan gave increased power to the revamped state committee. With its membership protected from manipulation, the state committee could carry out its task to watch over the chairman and his executive committee.²²

²¹"Lamb Shorn of Power," Washington Post, April 25, 1896; Lamb Diary, April 24, 25, 1896; "Party Organization," The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), April 24, 1896; Nan Netherton et al. Fairfax County, Virginia: A History (Fairfax Board of Supervisors, 1978), pp. 379, 387, 432, 451, 487. An extensive landowner and former mayor of Vienna, Major Hine was one of Fairfax County's leading citizens. Using only \$200 of the money he received for use at the convention, Lamb sent James S. Clarkson the remaining \$1,800 on April 25th.

²²Richmond Planet, May 2, 1896.

The backdrop for Staunton was formed in Richmond and Norfolk during Lamb's March offensive, a failed strategy that effectively demonstrated the limitations of the chairmanship in the face of entrenched opposition. From Lamb's standpoint, one can understand his ardent desire to purge personal enemies from the party ranks. However, Lamb's plans were doomed to failure since the city chairmen Allan and Lowery, were aligned with powerful party leaders Waddill and Bowden, who commanded power structures which allowed them to weather the chairman's thrusts. Lamb's forays simply pushed the existing factions in Richmond and Norfolk further apart.

Many months of careful planning and hard work produced the spectacular McKinley triumph at Staunton. While Allan, Waddill, Bowden, and other leaders contributed to the construction of a McKinley organization in Virginia, Lamb became an observer by clinging to his oft-stated promise to follow the Republican choice who would later be named in St. Louis. While this impartiality and strong conviction can be admired, Lamb's rivals exploited his lack of enthusiasm for McKinley.

CHAPTER FIVE

TARNISHED GOLD AND SILVER: THE 1896 CAMPAIGN

The Republican state convention heralded months of heated political activity in the Old Dominion. As the subject of previous studies, the Democratic version of events has already received scholarly attention and interpretation. In the campaign that lay ahead, Virginia's ruling Democratic machine would experience a serious split of its own over the emotional currency issue. Dubbed "A Silver Carnival," the Democratic state convention in June witnessed a great victory for the free silver, anti-Cleveland wing of the party headed by Senators John W. Daniel, Thomas S. Martin, a late convert to the cause, and Congressman Peter J. Otey. Under the leadership of Governor Charles T. O'Ferrall, Joseph Bryan, owner of the Richmond Times, ex-Readjuster Governor William E. Cameron, former Governor Fitzhugh Lee, and author-lawyer William L. Royall, the gold Democrats held a bolter's convention at Richmond in late August to chart their own course of action. With the Populists still a part of the crowded political scene, the campaign in Virginia promised to be eventful.¹

¹The leading accounts of the 1896 campaign in

In contrast with the divided Democrats, Virginia's Republicans rallied behind the national party platform's endorsement of the gold standard, protectionism, and the McKinley-Hobart ticket during the 1896 presidential contest. Although the Republicans did not suffer an open break over the burning issues of the day, the state GOP was further hobbled by internal dissension. Ironically, the ties that bound the Republican chieftains together as a McKinley-Hobart campaign committee presented new opportunities for additional conflict and misunderstanding. Overlooked by historians, an analysis of this neglected but important record of ineffectual Republican leadership will add to a more complete understanding of the 1896 campaign in Virginia.²

Virginia are Chapter VII "Depression and the Silver Panacea" in Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968) and William C. Woolridge, "The Sound and Fury of 1896, Democrats Face Free Silver," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 75 (January 1967): 97-108. Alfred W. Carter, "1896: Free Silver And the Virginia Democratic Party," (M.A. thesis, East Carolina University, 1969) provides a good analysis of the free silver movement, 1889-1896. William DuBose Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion: Virginia Farm Politics, 1885-1900 (Princeton University Press, 1935; reprint edition, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967) remains the standard history.

²A well developed Republican perspective is lacking in Moger, Virginia, and Woolridge, "The Sound and Fury." In each of these treatments, the authors have placed the emphasis upon the Democratic crisis over the silver question.

Hanna's special attention to the South and New England made McKinley a solid favorite to win the Republican presidential nomination at St. Louis. Outmaneuvered by the brilliant strategy and organizational ability of the Cleveland businessman, William Lamb's old allies, Quay and Platt, were unable to contain the growing movement for the popular "Advance Agent of Prosperity." McKinley's personal charm, careful speeches, and controlled interviews complemented Hanna's tireless efforts to promote the "Major" as the country's next chief executive. Thomas B. Reed, McKinley's closest rival and Lamb's political friend, soon lost any realistic hope of a victory. The strength of the McKinley boom gave Hanna effective control of the credentials committee that was assembled on the eve of the national convention.³

As Virginia's national committeeman, William Lamb was entitled to a seat on the credentials committee. Accompanied by Harry Libbey, Lamb arrived in St. Louis on June 9 to take up his duties. Over the next four days (June 10-13), Lamb and the committee listened to testimony concerning over 170 cases. The closest

³H. Wayne Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877-1896 (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1969), pp. 482-93, 498.

contests involved delegations from Delaware, Texas, and Virginia. With the sessions lasting until past midnight each day, the grueling schedule took its toll on Lamb and other weary committee members. During a New York contest heard on June 13, an exhausted Colonel Lamb angered Platt by not appearing for the post-midnight voting. Since over 110 pro-McKinley delegates were eventually awarded convention seats, an early nomination for the Ohioan was now virtually assured.⁴

The credentials committee was originally scheduled to hear contests from Virginia's Second, Third, and Eighth Districts. Attention was focused on the Norfolk case since contesting delegations from the Third and Eighth Districts decided to withdraw their protests. John S. Wise, Republican candidate for the Virginia governorship in 1885, offered his services to Lamb's men, Alvah Martin and Libbey. Wise's assistance was most welcome since Lamb later recalled, "Libbey and Martin had not properly prepared their case." Opposing them for the two Second District seats were Bowden and R. M. Smith, a black supporter. The contest was heard on Saturday, June

⁴Lamb Diary, June 9-13, 1896, in the William Lamb Papers, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia; The Republic (St. Louis), June 11, 14, 15, 1896; New York Times, June 15, 1896; Herbert D. Croly, Marcus Alonzo Hanna: His Life and Work (New York: Macmillan, 1912), pp. 190-91.

13th. During the hearing, Wise told the committee that his interest in the case began when he received letters from both Hanna and McKinley asking him to investigate reported anti-McKinley sentiment in Norfolk. Finding that the city's Republicans would support a McKinley candidacy, Wise charged that Bowden opposed Lamb's organization solely for personal reasons. In Wise's opinion, Bowden's contest was based merely on the latter's plan to have himself and Smith represent the district in St. Louis. Wise then read a state from Libbey, who asserted that Bowden's scheme "was outrageous and intended as a personal indignity to Colonel Lamb." Taking his own defense, Bowden utilized the time allotted him to refute all of Wise's accusations. On the initial ballot, the committee voted 27-21 in favor of Bowden and Smith. According to his diary, Lamb immediately addressed the committee, requesting that both delegations be seated and each of the men be granted 1/2 vote. Reconsidering the matter, the committee acted upon Lamb's proposal, voting 32-15 to accept the Colonel's solution. While Lamb's quick thinking saved places for his associates, the Hanna-McKinley cause was not affected at all since the four men were known to be for the "Napoleon

of Protection."⁵

On Monday, June 15, the Virginia delegates voted for a new national committeeman and selected men to represent them on the various committees. In what the St. Louis Republic called a "red hot fight," the Virginians chose Bowden as their next representative on the national committee. "Virginia, like Missouri," continued the Republic, "doesn't believe in one man to hog everything in sight." Considering the strong sentiment for McKinley and contending that Lamb did not stand for reelection, Mitchell's Planet replied that, "it would have been a miracle had he (Lamb) succeeded himself." A disappointed Lamb confided in his diary on June 15 that Bowden's elevation was "an unfortunate appointment." After Bowden's election, the following committee assignments were made: Lamb (rules), Brady (resolutions), Bolling (permanent organization), R. T. Hubbard (notification of vice president), and J. S. Browning (notification of president).⁶

Edmund Waddill and Colonel R. T. Hubbard (1839-

⁵Lamb Diary, June 12, 13, 1896; "Politics at Norfolk: Bitter Attack at St. Louis upon ex-Congressman Bowden," Washington Post, June 15, 1896.

⁶Lamb Diary, June 15, 1896; "Virginia for Sound Money, Her National Committeeman Turned Down by a Rising Star," The Republic (St. Louis), June 16, 1896.

1921), a Buckingham County attorney, took the initiative in formulating final instructions for the Virginia delegation. For the vice president's nomination, Waddill proposed that Virginia present the name of a favorite son, Congressman James A. Walker, for the office. The idea was met with great enthusiasm. Despite the instructions adopted at Staunton in April, there remained a staunch Reed holdout among the delegates. Colonel Hubbard submitted a resolution that obligated his fellow delegates to cast their votes as a unit for McKinley on the initial and succeeding ballots. Unmoved by Hubbard's plan, the Reed man refused to surrender his vote.⁷

The convention formally opened its doors on June 16. William Lamb (rules) offered two preliminary resolutions which were adopted: 1) the convention would be governed by the rules of the last national convention until a permanent organization was adopted; and 2) during the roll call, the chairman of each state delegation would announce committee assignments and refer all resolutions

⁷"Walker for Second Place," June 16, and "To Capture One Reed Vote," June 17, 1896, in Washington Post. Although Lamb's stand on this issue was well known, he did not record a reaction to these instructions in his diary. I am unable to determine the identity of the Reed delegate. Biographical data on Hubbard can be obtained from The Times-Dispatch (Richmond), of September 29, 1921, and The Herald (Farmville), Today and Yesterday in the Heart of Virginia (Farmville: Herald, 1935), pp. 282-83, 385.

to the proper committee.

Virginia's delegation did not play a leading role in the famous gold plank controversy since her members did not belong to the party's highest echelon or hail from a crucial western state. When queried by the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, nineteen Virginians counted themselves in the gold camp, while the five other delegates voiced their approval of free silver. Brady of the resolutions committee was reported to be a sound money supporter, but he opposed the phrase 'gold standard' in the party platform. One of the convention's dramatic moments was the crushing defeat of Colorado Senator Henry M. Teller's free silver coinage amendment. After receiving the 812 1/2 to 105 1/2 result, Teller led a walkout of twenty-one pro-silver delegates. No Virginian left the noisy convention hall as Teller and his supporters made their exit. Protracted negotiations produced a final plank that committed the GOP to "sound money" based upon the existing gold standard. Silver could be adopted, but only after an "international agreement." The compromise straddled a longstanding, divisive issue and satisfied all except those on the party's extremes.⁸

⁸Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley, pp. 498-500; The Republic (St. Louis), June 17, 1896; St. Louis Globe-Democrat, June 16, 18, 1896.

In Canton, Ohio, William McKinley followed the final session of the convention on June 18 with a telephone hookup to his private library. The majority report and flexible gold plank with the silver clause were adopted by a convincing 812 1/2 to 110 1/2 tally. On the first ballot for president, Ohio's 46 delegates gave a gratified McKinley the margin of votes he needed to secure the nomination. Virginia gave 23 votes for McKinley while the stubborn Reed delegate cast his ballot for the Maine politician. Reed finished a distant second with 82 1/2 votes, followed by Quay (61 1/2), and Morton (58). New Jersey's Garrett A. Hobart (533 1/2 votes) also won a first ballot victory in the vice presidential contest over his nearest rival, H. Clay Evans (280 1/2) of Tennessee. Virginia cast all of her votes (24) for Walker, which gave the Ninth District representative fourth place in the balloting. On the following day, Hanna was named as the new chairman of the national committee.⁹

Shortly after Virginia's Republicans returned home from St. Louis, ratification rallies were held throughout

⁹Morgan, From Hayes..., pp. 501-02; Lamb Diary, June 18, 1896; David Magie, Life of Garrett Augustus Hobart... (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), pp. 64-70; The Republic (St. Louis), June 19, 1896; Washington Post, June 19, 20, 1896.

the Commonwealth. At Norfolk's meeting, Chairman Lamb read the St. Louis platform and offered resolutions of endorsement to the enthusiastic gathering. Four days later, Lamb wrote to McKinley and Hobart, promising the the full support of the state's Republican organization. Lamb then turned to the matter of a new executive committee. Under the provisions of revised party rules (refer to the Hine plan adopted at Staunton), the executive committee was now limited to four men with its membership to be chosen by the state committee. Not unexpectedly, the state chairman wanted to deny a seat to anyone not loyal to him. Lamb's plan was to have his trusted lieutenants, Martin and Libbey, placed on the committee to serve with two lesser known moderates. Wanting to preserve an element of surprise, Lamb decided to bring up the executive committee issue during the next state committee meeting on July 17 which had been scheduled for the purpose of announcing district nominating conventions.¹⁰

With a full slate of business at hand, the Republican state committee gathered at Norfolk's Hunter Woodis Hall on July 7 to begin a meeting that would ultimately last over twelve hours. At Edgar Allan's

¹⁰Lamb Diary, June 25, 26, 29, July 6, 1896.

request, Lamb presented the recurring Richmond chairmanship problem for the committee's consideration. Calling attention to the earlier decision made by the Staunton convention, the committee recognized Allan's faction "as the loyal Republican organization" of Richmond. The thorny Richmond difficulty surfaced again after Dr. Noble had recently published a statement in the Planet, claiming that he was still the city's official chairman. On the subject of nominating conventions, the state committee empowered the district organizations to hold meetings in order to select their congressional candidates and three members each for the new, but smaller state committee.

A veritable storm erupted when Lamb's friend William Craig offered a resolution opening the floor for executive committee nominations. Waddill, Bolling, Brady, and S. Brown Allen filed a written protest, objecting to this action since the state committee had ostensibly been convened to authorize district conventions. Waddill charged that the underlying purpose of the meeting had been to elect a new executive committee. In a demonstration of Lamb's influence, Craig's resolution was passed by a 30-16 vote. Lamb carried out his project with the election of Martin, Libbey, R. T. Hubard, and Shenandoah County clerk, Luther

S. Walker (1857-1907). Mitchell's Planet proclaimed the result as a "Waterloo" for Edgar Allan and Waddill. In an interview with the Richmond Dispatch, Edgar Allan told the Democratic daily that he considered Stith Bolling's removal as a tremendous loss of experience and a grave error given the party's current problems. In its edition of July 8, the Richmond Times predicted, "that the stormy scenes at the meeting will so widen the breach in the Republican ranks that it will be impossible for the party to come together for the fall campaign."¹¹

While the Republican state committee grappled with the selection of a new executive body, the state's leading silver Democrats attended their party's national convention. According to Professor Moger, "probably leaders from no state exercised greater influence at Chicago than those from Virginia." Senator Daniel served on the influential steering committee and was also named as temporary chairman. The Dispatch saw Daniel's honor as "flattering recognition of the prominent position Virginia's senior senator occupies among the silver

¹¹Lamb Diary, July 7, 8, 1896. The sketch of the state committee meeting was drawn from: "Republicans Gather," The Landmark (Norfolk), July 8, 1896; "A Republican Circus," The Times (Richmond), July 8, 1896; "Edgar Allan Talks," The Dispatch (Richmond), July 11, 1896; and Richmond Planet, July 11, 1896. Biographical information on L. S. Walker was obtained from The Times-Dispatch (Richmond), of August 17, 1907.

leaders of the country." As a member of the resolutions committee, Carter Glass, editor of the Lynchburg News, effectively sidetracked an endorsement of the Cleveland administration. The Old Dominion's leaders were in the forefront of the silver fight and after four rounds of balloting, Senator Daniel led the Virginians over to Bryan. Wanting to balance the ticket with an easterner, the convention chose Arthur Sewall, a prominent merchant from Maine, to be Bryan's running mate.¹²

While mindful of the need to maintain their identity as a separate party, many Populists saw their only hope for presidential victory resting with Bryan. Virginia's Populist leaders, General James G. Field and J. Brad Beverley led the way for a Bryan nomination at the party's national convention held in St. Louis in July.

In a maneuver executed in tandem with chairman William V. Allen, Field's motion to halt nominations and call for a voice vote was quickly adopted and won the party's agreement for the Democratic standard bearer. Bowing to the demands of Populist radicals, Georgia's Tom Watson was the choice for vice president. With no candidate in the presidential race, the Populist decision to support Bryan eliminated one danger to the Democratic

¹²Moger, Virginia, pp. 158-59; The Dispatch (Richmond), July 8, 1896.

cause in the Old Dominion.¹³

An alert Hanna was well aware of the serious threat posed by the strength of pro-silver feeling and Democratic-Populist cooperation. The electric appeal of Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech could not be denied. In an effort to take his appeal and considerable speaking skills directly to the American people, Bryan announced that he would tour the country. To counter the "Boy Orator of the Platte," Hanna established headquarters in Chicago and New York in order to implement an aggressive educational campaign, national in its scope. With the Midwest as his area, Henry Clay Payne of Wisconsin headed the Chicago campaign office. In New York, Hanna was ably assisted by the future vice president and the powerful eastern bosses. Although Hanna placed Manley and Quay on the executive committee and worked closely with the Reed and Platt organizations he remained firmly in command of the old establishment bosses through skillful management and planning.¹⁴

¹³Woolridge, "The Sound and Fury," pp. 101-02; Lawrence Goodwyn, The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America (Oxford University Press, 1978) pp. 260-61. General Field was the party's vice presidential candidate in 1892 and Beverley ran for lieutenant governor in 1893.

¹⁴Morgan, From Hayes..., pp. 508-09; Magie, Hobart, pp. 71, 97.

To win the Old Dominion for McKinley and Hobart, Chairman Lamb recognized the necessity of having a loyal and efficient organization behind him. With control of the incoming Republican state committee at stake, Lamb and his opponents carefully studied local political trends, since composition of the new body would be determined at the district level. Hoping to keep the scale tipped in his favor, Lamb planned to make personal visits to selected meetings. For example, Lamb attended the Eighth District convention on August 20, reported by the Richmond Times to be "one of the largest Republican gatherings ever assembled in Culpeper." Patrick H. McCaull, a loyal Lamb supporter, was nominated for Congress and the state chairman's 45-minute speech on Republican principles and sound money was well received. Lamb's personal triumph was crowned when three of his supporters were selected for the state committee and he received a resolution of endorsement.¹⁵

An essential aspect of Hanna's campaign strategy was to exercise strict control over the activities of the state committees. To achieve the coordination he desired, Hanna appointed trusted managers to oversee state organizations and provide him with field reports.

¹⁵Lamb Diary, July 21, 23, 27, 29, August 5, 6, 20, 1896; The Times (Richmond), August 21, 1896.

Unbeknownst to Lamb, Hanna selected Nathan Bay Scott (1841-1924), West Virginia's veteran national committeeman to coordinate Republican efforts in the Old Dominion. Taking this news as a personal affront, Lamb flew into a rage when he was informed of this development in a letter from Scott, received on July 29. Worn undoubtedly by months of party infighting, Lamb seethed when he read that the projected five-man campaign committee was to include himself, Bowden, Brady, Waddill, and Congressman Walker. Wanting to form a committee with a more equitable balance between his faction and Waddill's, Lamb journeyed to the New York headquarters, determined to hammer out a new arrangement.¹⁶

From August 3 to August 5, Lamb, Hanna, Hobart, Scott, General Osborne, and leading Virginia Republicans wrestled with the vexing campaign committee problem. Lamb accused the national committee of "discrediting" him and vented special fury on John S. Wise and Brady. During two days of heated discussion, Lamb and Wise nearly came to blows. Brady, Lamb recalled, was "so cowardly [that] he swallowed all I said." Lamb's original demand was for him to head a committee divided

¹⁶Croly, Hanna, pp. 213-14; National Cyclopaedia of American Biography XLX: 59; Lamb Diary, July 31, August 1, 3, 1896.

equally between four of his friends and a matching number of Waddill's (a total of nine, giving Lamb the deciding vote). Hanna and Hobart rejected this plan and said that they would accept Lamb with three of his men to serve with Waddill, Brady, Bowden, and Walker. Upon hearing this offer, Lamb stormed out of the meeting, but was stopped by Hobart who pleaded with him to reconsider. Lamb replied that he would telegraph his answer from Norfolk. Arriving home the next day (August 5), Lamb conferred with Martin and Libbey. Wiring Hanna that his executive committee accepted the proposal, Lamb named Park Agnew, Judge P. W. Strother, and S. B. Carney as his three friends for the committee.¹⁷

On August 8, the Virginia campaign committee consisting of Lamb, Agnew, Carney, Strother, Waddill, Brady, Bowden, and Walker assembled in New York for its first meeting. The Virginians met under the watchful

¹⁷Lamb Diary, August 3-5, 1896. Agnew was elected as Eighth District chairman at Culpeper on August 20. A loyal Lamb man, S. B. Carney was also from Norfolk and was known for his imposing physical presence, weighing about 250 lbs. A graduate of Columbian College (now George Washington University), Judge Strother (1839-1922) of Giles County served with the 13th Virginia during the Civil War and represented his district in the State Senate (1865-67) and House of Delegates (1875-77). Strother had sat as a judge for Giles and Bland Counties and was a delegate to the 1892 Republican National Convention. National Cyclopaedia of American Biography XIX: 371-72.

eyes of Scott, Osborne, and General Powell Clayton of Arkansas, who were determined to maintain the peace. With personal antagonisms still running high, the Virginia GOP presidential committee represented an uneasy alliance at best. Setting a negative tone for future meetings, Lamb confronted Waddill by reading him excerpts from a recent Richmond Times article. If Waddill had been correctly quoted, Lamb accused the Judge of being "a liar." Using Osborne as his intermediary, Waddill informed Lamb that no insult was given or intended. During the conference, Lamb was made campaign chairman, Waddill was selected as treasurer, and Brady was picked to be the committee's secretary. Perhaps seeing no need to worry his cousin, an optimistic Osborne wrote McKinley a few days later that, "we have got the matter in Virginia in good running shape and I think from present appearances we have an excellent chance of carrying the State."¹⁸

The pressing business of managing a presidential and congressional campaign prodded the Virginia GOP bosses occasionally to rise above their factional strife. During the contest, the committee opened its state

¹⁸Lamb Diary, August 8, 13, 1896; W. M. Osborne to William McKinley, August 11, 1896, in the William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

headquarters in Richmond at Ford's Law Building on August 20, launched a newspaper entitled The Campaign edited by W. P. Kent of Wytheville, allocated funds to meet district needs, and hosted a variety of speakers. Arrangement for speaking engagements eventually divided along existing party lines. Senator John M. Thurston was invited by Lamb to visit Richmond, where the Nebraskan gave a fiery speech at Ford's Hotel on September 8, before more than 5,000 spectators. Waddill scored the biggest coup, however, when his organization hosted Benjamin Harrison. The former president spoke at Richmond Auditorium on October 5. Sharing the rostrum and spotlight with Harrison were Waddill, Brady, Edgar Allan, and Kent of The Campaign.¹⁹

Republican effectiveness in Virginia was somewhat hampered by Lamb's regular clashes with other committee members. Lamb's intense dislike of his enemies led him to believe that Brady and Waddill were "misappropriating"

¹⁹Lamb Diary, August 8, 13, 20, 21, 27, 28, 31, September 3, 8, 1896; The Dispatch (Richmond), September 4, 1896; The Times (Richmond), August 21, October 6, 1896; The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), September 3, 1896. Lamb originally wanted the party headquarters to be located at Old Point, Hampton. Party discord even crept into the GOP Headquarters opening festivities. A misunderstanding between Lamb and Brady prompted the latter to leave the chairman's name off the announcement. Edited by Page McCarty, the rival Campaign Democrat espoused free silver and Bryan and was published in Norfolk by Paul C. Degge, Co.

party funds. Ever suspicious, Lamb wrote that Waddill was "capable of any low intrigue." On September 21, Lamb and Brady quarreled over the secretary's habit of locking up certain committee records. Walking away from the irate chairman, Brady ended this argument by loudly declaring that he would not sit with Lamb in another meeting. With dripping sarcasm, Brady told Lamb that he may now report his insubordinate conduct to the national committee. Some of Lamb's friends were also eventually swayed by the endless political tug-of-war. By mid-October, Agnew and Judge Strother had changed their allegiance and began voting with Waddill. Stung by this betrayal, Lamb punched an astonished Strother following a heated exchange at a session held on October 15. Rushing to Strother's rescue (Lamb was holding the Judge in an headlock), anxious committeemen had to separate the two combatants.²⁰

Throughout the campaign, via rail or steamboat, Virginia Republican leaders took their reports, complaints, and suggestions to New York. Lamb was a frequent caller at headquarters, where he consulted with Hanna, Hobart, and Scott. Not surprisingly, Waddill and other "conspirators" were Lamb's major concern. From

²⁰Lamb Diary, August 11, September 11, 21, October 9, 11, 15, 1896.

Hanna, Lamb managed to extract a promise of support in his difficult dealings with the Waddill faction, a pledge that was repeated by Hobart. In Lamb's estimation, Scott seemed to lean toward "the Brady-Waddill combine." Alvah Martin, Waddill, and Brady also paid visits to the national committee to give their views on campaign and party matters. William Thoroughgood of Norfolk's Third Ward, a black politician of some note, also traveled to New York to discuss where he would throw his support in the Second District dispute between Bowden and Lamb.²¹

Proclaiming to be the true guardians of traditional Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Democratic principles, the gold Democratic bolters were the last party to join the crowded political scene. In late August, three hundred "Gold Bugs" gathered in Richmond to hold their state convention. Denouncing the communism, radicalism, and socialism of Chicago, the gold men endorsed the Cleveland administration, embraced sound money, called for protective tariff rates, and upheld the nation's basic laws and institutions. The Virginia gold wing aligned with the "National Democrats" who held their convention

²¹Lamb Diary, August 24, 25, September 8, 1896; William L. Royall, Some Reminiscences (New York and Washington: Neale Publishing Co., 1909), p. 202; The Virginian (Norfolk), October 23, 1896; The Star (Portsmouth), October 23, 1896.

at Indianapolis in early September. Since President Cleveland declined to be considered for the party's nomination, the convention chose John M. Palmer of Illinois for president and Kentucky's Simon B. Buckner, a former Confederate general for second place on the slate. Sharing a common outlook and philosophy with the rebellious Democrats, Republican leaders applauded the emergence of a third party that could help the McKinley campaign. Hanna was prepared to lend a helping hand in states such as Virginia where the gold men could possibly deliver a telling psychological and political blow to their pro-Bryan brethren.²²

The Virginia gold organization presented an impressive outward appearance since the party was able to attract many of the Commonwealth's best known conservative Democratic leaders. The sitting governor and two of his predecessors were to be found in the pro-gold phalanx: Charles T. O'Ferrall (1894-1898), Fitzhugh Lee (1886-1890), and ex-Readjuster William E. Cameron (1882-1886). Joseph Bryan, publisher, and William L. Royall, chief editor, of the respected Richmond Times put their journal in the vanguard of the sound money forces, where they were joined by at least six other Democratic

²²Moger, Virginia, pp. 159-61; Morgan, From Hayes..., pp. 511-12.

papers. The wealthy Basil B. Gordon, a former Democratic state chairman, crossed over to the gold camp. General T. M. Logan, once a member of the Democratic executive committee, assumed the state chairmanship of the bolters. M. E. Ingalls of Cincinnati, president of the Chesapeake and Ohio, cast the influence and power of his railroad with the splinter faction. Although the urban-based gold men boasted a glittering array of famous names, a leading student of the Democratic rift has written that, "there was no split at all as far as party power structure was concerned," because O'Ferrell and other likeminded conservatives represented "the party's elderly and relatively impotent wing."²³

Recognizing the fact that the Palmer-Buckner ticket did not enjoy widespread support, gold Democrat leaders realized that cooperation with the GOP was the only way to help elect a president and congressional delegation who stood for most of the principles embodied in the party's platform. Given the divided character of the

²³Woolridge, "The Sound and the Fury," p. 103; Moger, Virginia, pp. 99, 160-61; Edward Younger and James Tice Moore, eds. The Governors of Virginia, 1860-1978 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1982), pp. 143-44. Unlike Ingalls, the president and the directors of the Norfolk and Western Railroad elected not to involve their company in the campaign. A coal agent for the N & W., William Lamb had requested assistance for the Republican cause, but was politely refused. See Lamb Diary entry for October 6, 1896.

Republican leadership, the important job of forging an effective working alliance was a challenging one for Ingalls. Assisted by his vice president, Decatur Axtell, Ingalls emerged as the major point of contact between the gold forces and Republican leaders in Virginia and New York.²⁴

Navigating the troubled Republican waters presented many obstacles for the Chesapeake and Ohio president. Ingalls and Lamb soon collided over the Waddill faction problem and congressional nominations. Ingalls quickly discovered that being a peacemaker or taking the middle path in this situation was nearly impossible. On September 21, Lamb had Ingalls promise that he would no longer supply the Waddill group with campaign funds. The next day, Ingalls, "went square back on his promise and took up for Brady and Waddill," saying that "I [Lamb] wanted to lose Virginia. We had a strong time but finally came to an understanding." In these meetings, Ingalls wanted the Republicans to back "National Democrat" candidates in selected districts, where he felt a Democrat might have a better chance in defeating a

²⁴Moger, Virginia, p. 161; Lamb Diary, August 31, 1896. As early as August 22 (before the state gold Democratic Convention), Lamb was contacted by one of Ingalls' special agents, B. Nelson Coffman, to discuss the formation of sound money clubs.

silverite opponent. This point added a new wrinkle to the gold Democrat and Republican negotiations. Originally, Ingalls and Axtell wanted Republican candidates to retire from the Third and Sixth Districts. This idea was met with stiff resistance from the GOP hopefuls, Judge L. L. Lewis of Richmond and J. Hampton Hoge. During a conference with Lamb, Hoge complained that no one had the authority to withdraw his name from the contest. In his home district, Lamb supported an old friend, Richard A. Wise (1843-1900) of Williamsburg. Lamb considered the late entry of sound money candidate W. M. Whaley into the race as a "breach of faith" on the part of Ingalls and "treachery" by Waddill and Bowden. Although Lamb did his best to keep frustrations to himself, he later felt moved to send statements in mid-November to the Richmond Dispatch and Norfolk Landmark, denying any rumors that he criticized Ingalls' efforts for sound money during the campaign.²⁵

²⁵Moger, Virginia, p. 161; Lamb Diary, September 10, 14, 16, 18, 21-23, October 10, 11, 21, 22, 28, 1896; The Dispatch (Richmond), November 18, 1896; The Times (Richmond), November 1, 1896, and December 21, 1900. During this period Lamb also had contact with Axtell and T. M. Logan. Richard A. Wise was an older brother of John S. Wise and son of Henry Alexander Wise (1806-1876), governor of Virginia (1856-1860). Lewis remained in his race, but Hoge retired in favor of a sound money Democrat "for \$200 per week & expenses as a National Canvasser." See Lamb Diary entry for September 9.

Also finding it rather difficult to work with Lamb, Joseph Bryan and William Royall of the Times eventually leaned toward Waddill and Brady. In September, Bryan and Royall accompanied Waddill and Brady on a visit to the New York headquarters in order to meet with members of the national committee. In his Reminiscences, Royall recalled that it was through his urgings that Hanna overcame his initial misgivings about providing aid to the gold bolters. During the campaign, Hanna gave the Palmer and Buckner movement extensive financial assistance, funding that the Richmond Dispatch called "the greatest corruption fund ever known in American history." Critical of their campaign reporting, Lamb met with Bryan and Royall in late September, demanding "fair reports" by the Times staff.²⁶

Beset by mounting pressures and problems, a tired William Lamb arrived in New York on September 26, with the intention of tendering his resignation as state campaign chairman. Hanna, Quay, Clayton, Scott, Manley, and Osborne gathered to give Lamb a hearing. Addressing the party's top leaders, Lamb stressed his strong loyalty for McKinley and expressed a desire "to part friendly"

²⁶Lamb Diary, September 29, 1896; Royall, Some Reminiscences, pp. 202-03; The Dispatch (Richmond), November 19, 1896.

despite callous treatment by the committee and Hanna's unkept promises of support. In reply, Hanna insisted that all promises made to Lamb had been honored and that the latter's resignation would probably lose Virginia for McKinley. Hanna wanted Lamb to work with the campaign committee, plan a speaking tour, and not involve the state committee in the canvass. Rising, Lamb said that he could not assent to the last point, because he believed it was his right to convene the committee at any time it was deemed necessary. After leaving the room, Lamb consulted further with Manley and Quay. Meeting with Hanna again, Lamb agreed to stay on as chairman after he learned the Bowden was the national committee's choice to be his replacement. Willing to go on the stump, Lamb made no pledges concerning the state committee.²⁷

Going against the expressed wish of Hanna, Lamb convened the state committee at Ford's Hotel on September 28. In the first meeting under the thirty-man format, the committee endorsed Lamb as chairman in a close 16 1/5 to 13 4/5 vote. Since Lamb was unable to win confirmation for his executive committee (elected in July) or seat Bahen-Mitchell committeemen, the Portsmouth

²⁷Lamb Diary, September 26, 1896.

Star termed these defeats as his "death on the political guillotine." Basking in their victory, Lamb's opponents gloated to reporters that the state chairman was forced to make "important concessions" to Waddill and Allan in order to hold on to his office. In his diary, Lamb denied newspaper stories stating that he lost his majority as "unfounded."²⁸

Lamb began his state tour in the first week of October, a move that provided a welcome "out" for both him and his opponents. This mutual parting of the ways was unofficial in nature, provided no public embarrassment, and allowed Lamb to demonstrate his talents as a campaign speaker. In Lamb's absence the Richmond Times reported that "the work of directing and conducting the campaign has [now] fallen on the shoulders of Judge Waddill [and] James D. Brady." To assist the committee in its work, Brady added townsman Colonel Asa Rogers to the support staff.²⁹

²⁸Lamb Diary, September 28, 29, 1896; "Colonel Lamb Slaughtered," The Star (Portsmouth), September 30, 1896; "Dead Against Lamb," The Virginian (Norfolk), September 30, 1896. These concessions were probably:

1) Lamb had to accept opposition committeemen; 2) Lamb had to agree not to call the state committee again during the campaign; and 3) Waddill and Brady would handle campaign administrative affairs while Lamb toured as a speaker.

²⁹"About the Republicans," The Times (Richmond), November 1, 1896. Lamb's last recorded attendance at a

From all accounts, Lamb's speeches were delivered before large, mixed race audiences and seemed well received by his listeners. Lamb's engagements took him to Roanoke, Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg, Winchester, Pulaski, Charlottesville, Lexington, and Alexandria. In his speeches and appearances with Republican candidates, Lamb called for tariff protection, promotion of local industry, and sound money, while promising future prosperity under a McKinley-Hobart administration. Hoping to drive his point home, Lamb blamed the recent depression on the repeal of the McKinley tariff, adoption of the lower Wilson-Gorman version, and insisted that the temptations offered by free trade and silver coinage would not solve fundamental economic problems.³⁰

During the campaign, Lamb paid close attention to events as they unfolded in the Second and Third Districts. To improve and increase his flow of current information, Lamb hired two detectives to watch over the Democrats and his opponents in these districts. In the Norfolk and Richmond areas, the Republican factions expended much time and energy in fighting amongst

campaign committee meeting was on October 15. During this session, Lamb and Strother came to blows.

³⁰Lamb Diary, October 14-16, 19, 20, 22, 26, 28-30, 1896; The Free Lance (Fredericksburg), October 20, 1896; The Gazette (Alexandria), October 31, 1896.

themselves. Lamb also maintained some contact with Fourth District candidate Robert T. Thorp (1850-1938), who faced silver Democrat Sydney P. Epes (1865-1900) for the U. S. House. Due to the strength of the Brady-Bolling-Rogers organization, Lamb found that his influence in Petersburg was severely limited.³¹

Richard A. Wise, the Republican candidate for the Second District House seat, received tremendous support from Lamb. A graduate of the Medical College of Virginia (1867), Dr. Wise once held a professorship at William and Mary College (1869-81), served in the House of Delegates (1885-87), and guided James City County Republican affairs as chairman for eighteen years. In his contacts with national committee members and various state figures, Lamb urged unwavering support for Wise. On October 22, Lamb fired a letter off to Hanna, demanding that Bowden support Wise for congress or be threatened with removal from his national and campaign committee posts. In mid-October, Whaley, the sound money nominee, entered the race with the blessing of Ingalls and Bowden's Tidewater Republican Association. Wise

³¹Lamb Diary, August 17, 26, October 11, 27, 1896; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 916, 1815. Lamb hired detectives E. R. Eastwood for the Third District and (first name not available) James for the Second.

frequently called on Lamb for advice and the two men made a number of joint appearances in Norfolk and Portsmouth. William A. Young (1860-1928), the silver Democrat candidate, stood to benefit from the addition of Whaley, who might be able to attract a sizeable block of anti-Lamb Republican votes. Although Lamb wrote on October 11 that Wise appeared "disheartened by the treachery of Bowden, Brady, & others," the confident Colonel "expect[ed] to triumph over all of them."³²

In the latest renewal of his conflict with Waddill and Allan in the Third District, Lamb once again turned to the reliable Mitchell and Bahen. In September, the two rival groups held separate nominating conventions. Stepping into the noisy scuffle, Lamb attended the Mitchell-Bahen meeting. Lamb endorsed this meeting's three nominees for the state committee (which included Mitchell and Bahen) pending a final decision by the state committee (defeated on September 28th). In an effort to raise badly needed funds, Lamb wrote a letter of introduction to Axtell for Mitchell, requesting that the

³²Lamb Diary, October 1-3, 10, 11, 22, 31, 1896; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, pp. 1946, 1970; The Public Ledger (Norfolk), October 26, 27, 31, 1896; The Virginian (Norfolk), October 25, 1896; The Star (Portsmouth), October 2, 3, 20, 26, 27, 29, 1896; The Times (Richmond), December 21, 1900. John S. Wise made a number of speeches with his brother during the campaign.

C & O vice president help the Planet editor obtain \$500.00. Judge Lewis, the choice of both factions, had Lamb's support, and faced silverite John Lamb (1840-1924) for the Third District seat. The Planet endorsed Lewis and on election eve Mitchell warned his readers not to be fooled by fraudulent ballots bearing his name for Congress.³³

In one of the most colorful and lively autumns since Readjuster days, the confident regular Democrats hardly affected by the gold bolt, waged an aggressive and smoothly run campaign. Senator Daniel and a host of other orators praised party unity, warned of the danger posed by black suffrage, and predicted that free silver would lift the United States out of its economic doldrums. William Jennings Bryan included Richmond on his 13,000-mile itinerary, speaking in the city before some 18,000 people, a gathering that included William Lamb, who was not impressed with the gestures or voice of the silver tongued, but hoarse "Great Commoner." The favorite target of gold Democratic invective, the Populist party, served alongside the silverites, working for a Bryan-Sewall victory. Pleased with the

³³Lamb Diary, September 9, 14, 17, 23, 25, October 21, 1896; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, p. 1257; Richmond Planet, October 31, 1896.

"earnestness and enthusiasm which I have never seen surpassed," Democratic chairman J. Taylor Ellyson predicted "an overwhelming triumph" at the polls.³⁴

The gold or sound money Democrats campaigned for a gold-backed currency, governmental restraint, and peace among the nation's social classes. In the same breath, they attacked Populism and denounced the regulars for whipping up race hatred. While he defended black voting rights, Chairman Logan dismissed the silverite claim that his party wanted to "negrofy" Virginia. This old tactic, Logan scoffed, was nothing but "a bald campaign scare-crow." The Richmond Times, leading paper for the gold Democrats, underscored the need for an honest ballot, free from cheating and manipulation. Although Palmer and Buckner spoke in Richmond during their swing through the South, the pair were never much of a factor in Virginia. The main struggles were for the state's ten congressional seats and the Bryan-McKinley contest.³⁵

As the 1896 campaign entered its final days, Republican leaders predicted a McKinley victory in

³⁴Lamb Diary, September 18, 1896; Moger, Virginia, p. 162; Woolridge, "Sound and Fury," pp. 104-05; Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, pp. 133-35; "Thinks They Will Win," The Times (Richmond), November 1, 1896.

³⁵Moger, Virginia, p. 263; Woolridge, "The Sound and Fury," p. 105; Morgan, Hayes to..., p. 512; The Times (Richmond), October 30, November 1, 1896.

Virginia. Hanna placed Virginia in the Republican column along with other states of the Upper South (Kentucky, Maryland, Tennessee, and West Virginia). "Even allowing for fraud," N. B. Scott told the Richmond Times on October 28, that Virginia should rally behind McKinley and the Republicans could capture five or six House seats. Emphasizing the "perfect harmony [that] prevails in the Republican ranks." Secretary Brady also believed that the Republicans could claim victories in five of the state's congressional districts.³⁶

Writing letters, distributing political literature, and making speeches, filled Lamb's busy schedule as the campaign drew to a close. Still angry and bitter, Lamb penned "confidential" letters to reporters S. A. Clark of the New York Tribune and Louis Garthe of the Baltimore American, complaining of his poor treatment in New York and "that the outlook in Virginia for McKinley was unpromising." After receiving some final information about Democrat W. A. Young from his detective, Lamb had circulars printed and distributed with the help of his brother Robert, throughout the Second District. As in his mayoral years (1880-86), Lamb made his final speeches on November 2, in Norfolk's Fourth Ward before 3,000

³⁶The Times (Richmond), October 29, November 1, 1896; New York Times, November 3, 1896.

people and in nearby Berkley. According to a Richmond Times observer, the clapping during Lamb's Fourth Ward speech "was so great that it was heard at Lambert's Point, two miles away." After relaxing at Alvah Martin's residence in Norfolk county, Lamb returned to "Kenmure," his Bute Street home, where he wrote to Quay, saying that Virginia was lost, but there was hope for at least four House seats.³⁷

In late November, the Board of State Canvassers met in Richmond to examine election returns. Out of a total vote of over 294,000 ballots, the Board registered a majority of 19,341 for Bryan. In a virtual sweep, silver Democrats were successful in capturing all but one of the Commonwealth's ten U.S. House seats. According to the Board, the lone GOP victor was James A. Walker, who won reelection to his Ninth District seat. With their extensive control of the voting process, the Democratic machine appeared to have engineered another impressive electoral landslide.³⁸

A number of recent students have demonstrated that

³⁷The Times (Richmond), November 3, 1896; Lamb Diary, October 23, 27, 31, November 1, 2, 1896; Known as one of Norfolk's finer homes, "Kenmure" was completed by the Colonel's father, William Wilson Lamb in 1845.

³⁸"Official Vote," The Times (Richmond), November 24, 1896; Warrock-Richardson Almanack for the Year 1898, p. 64; Moger, Virginia, p. 163.

election results in 19th century Virginia must be used with caution. With such evidence of known Democratic fraud and intimidation at the polls, the actual vote cast in most elections can never be known. Concerned Republicans and sound money leaders knew of or actually witnessed flagrant violations of voting procedures and rights. Aware of the tremendous odds against their success, Lamb, Waddill, Royall, and others still prepared to challenge the official election results.³⁹

³⁹Lamb Diary, November 3, 4, 1896; "Fraud Charged in Virginia," New York Times, November 6, 1896; Ronald Edward Shibley, "Election Laws and Electoral Practices in Virginia, 1867-1902; An Administrative and Political History," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1972), 190, 198-99; Richard J. Boudreau, "Two-Party Politics in Virginia, 1888-1896," (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1974), pp. 70, 71.

CHAPTER SIX

THE REPUBLICANS CHESS GAME CONTINUES: LAMB IN CHECK

During the next ten months (November 1896 to August 1897), Virginia's rival Republican factions focused their activities upon congressional contests, the battle for state committee supremacy, and patronage appointments. Hoping to weaken further the GOP by eliminating its Negro partner from state politics, Democrats in the General Assembly again placed a constitutional convention proposal before the electorate in May. In a rare moment of consensus, Chairman Lamb spoke for his party when he issued a lengthy statement that urged all voters to defeat the measure. Emerging as the most powerful piece on the Republican political chessboard, the state committee gathered in mid-August to consider Lamb's future as the party's chairman.¹

Gathering evidence of Democratic fraud on behalf of Republican congressional candidates failed to unite Lamb and Waddill in an important common cause. While Lamb assisted Dr. Wise in the Second District, Waddill and his men spread their efforts over a wider area. Shortly

¹The first referendum held to revise the Underwood Constitution was defeated in 1888.

after the election, Waddill and Brady met with national chairman Hanna in New York to discuss electoral irregularities uncovered in the Old Dominion. At home, Waddill's busy organization and allies offered their services to U.S. House candidates Jacob Yost (Tenth District), Robert T. Thorp (Fourth), and John R. Brown (Fifth).

On November 5, Waddill and Brady issued a statement from the Richmond campaign headquarters charging that the supposed Democratic victory was based upon widespread cheating. According to Waddill and Brady, the Democrats distributed a large number of bogus ballots and also succeeded through a variety of tactics, in shutting out over 10,000 GOP votes throughout the Commonwealth. Accompanied by two "prominent" sound money men, Waddill and Brady discussed Democratic fraud with Hanna in New York on November 9, where they were joined by John S. Wise. In its coverage of the New York talks, the Richmond Dispatch referred to Judge Waddill and Colonel Brady as "the acknowledged leaders" of the Virginia GOP. A disappointed Waddill told Hanna that he originally had hoped that the sound money party's presence could have helped guarantee "a fair count." Without fraud and intimidation at the polls, Waddill maintained that the Republicans could have captured Virginia for McKinley and

won more House seats.²

During the final week of November, the Board of State Canvassers assembled in Richmond to review official election returns. In the close Tenth District race, the Board initially determined that Democrat H. D. "Hal" Flood had narrowly edged Jacob Yost. Edgar Allan, William Royall, and Colonel Brady immediately took the case to the state Supreme Court of Appeals where they filed a petition requesting that the Buckingham county commissioners of election amend their returns to reflect the actual number of ballots received by Yost. In a clear case of deliberate ballot confusion, Yost's first name appeared in numerous forms, the petitioners were able to prove that many votes actually cast for Yost were not properly counted by the Democratic commissioners. On December 8, Judge Keith ordered the Buckingham officials to amend the county totals. the recount provided a majority for Yost and allowed him to take his oath as a member of the Fifty-fifth Congress.³

Hoping to unseat again the apparent Democratic

²The Dispatch (Richmond), November 10, 11, 1896; New York Times, November 6, 1896; New York Tribune, November 10, 1896.

³The Times (Richmond), November 26, December 8, 9, 1896; "Yost Wins a Legal Victory," Washington Post, December 9, 1896.

winner in the Fourth District as he did during the previous Congress, Robert T. Thorp challenged the election of Sydney P. Epes of Blackstone, a former newspaper editor. Colonel Brady served as Thorp's legal counsel. Thorp's case was based upon charges of alleged fraud, voting obstruction, and the selection of partisan election officials. In the House discussions that followed, Representative Walker became the leading spokesman for his fellow Virginian. The final debate and vote in the Thorp-Epes case was held on March 23, 1898. Using his speaking privilege as a former House member, Thorp provided the day's most dramatic moment. Waving a batch of official ballots, Thorp threw them to the floor, proclaiming, "here are the badges of the fraud." Although many Republicans absented themselves so as not to vote against Epes, Thorp was awarded his seat by a 151-130 result.⁴

The Fifth District contest matched John R. Brown

⁴The Times (Richmond), March 23, 1898; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 916, 1815; Chester Harvey Rowell, A Historical and Legal Digest of...Contested Election Cases in the House of Representatives...1789-1901 (Government Printing Office, 1901), pp. 537, 565-69; Lester J. Cappon, Virginia Newspapers, 1821-1935 (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century, 1936), p. 55. After the congressional election of 1894, Thorp successfully contested the seat held by William R. McKenney.

(1842-1927) and Democrat Claude A. Swanson (1862-1939), a talented politician who later won election as Virginia's governor (1906-1910). In Brown, the youthful Swanson faced an experienced opponent, a leading citizen who had made his mark in tobacco, banking, and district politics. Previously, Brown had served as Martinsville's mayor (1884-88) and was elected to the Fiftieth Congress. Aided by Edgar Allan, Brown claimed that Swanson's organization produced "double" ballots (see footnote #5), obstructed voting, practiced fraud, and manipulated the boundaries of local precincts. With barely two months remaining in the House term, the final debate and vote finally took place on January 19, 1899. In a decisive 138-79 vote, the House refused to consider the case. In deference to the popular Swanson, Republican attendance was small and 24 GOP members even cast their votes for the Democrat.⁵

⁵"More Irregularities," The Times (Richmond), November 27, 1896; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, p. 650; Rowell Contested Election Cases, pp. 578, 580; "Swanson Keeps His Seat," Washington Post, January 20, 1899; The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), January 19, 1899; Edward Younger and James Tice Moore, eds. The Governors of Virginia, 1860-1978 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1982), pp. 171-72. Brown and Allan claimed that "double" ballots were distributed in Pittsylvania County, presenting Swanson's name in two different forms, resulting in additional votes for the Democratic candidate.

Official returns from the Second District gave Democrat William Young a margin of more than 2,300 votes over Dr. Richard A. Wise. Angered with the "infamous frauds" they witnessed at the polls, William Lamb, Norfolk city chairman Waddy, and S. B. Carney provided the initial leadership for Wise's contest. Lamb assembled the district's city and county chairmen in Norfolk on November 12, 1896, where they decided to challenge Young. At the meeting, the chairmen agreed that there was sufficient evidence for a contest based upon: a) Democratic failure to register certain voters; b) "dilatatory tactics" at the polling places and c) providing illiterate voters with false instructions.⁶

When Young learned of the Republican plans he labeled the idea "ridiculous," telling the Richmond Dispatch that he "made a fair race and won it fairly." If Wise decided to contest, Young promised him "a red-hot fight." Over the next few months, Lamb took an active interest in Wise's contest by giving his friend constant encouragement, writing many letters, attending hearings, and making a personal court appearance in mid-April. While making political calls, Lamb urged

⁶"Dr. Wise Will Contest," The Times (Richmond), November 13, 1896; Lamb Diary, November 3-7, 12, 1896, in the William Lamb Papers, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

Congressman Yost, the Secretary of War, House Speaker Reed, and President McKinley to give their support to Wise.⁷

The evidence gathered by Wise and his supporters was submitted to the House, where it was examined by the Committee on Elections. As a former member of the Forty-Eighth Congress, John S. Wise provided his brother with the benefit of his House experience as well as legal expertise. After reviewing almost 4,000 pages of testimony, the committee's majority report recommended that Young give up his seat. The majority found that an amendment of the returns reversed Young's 2,399 margin into a 5,199 victory for Wise. The House approved the majority's findings and Dr. Wise was sworn in on April 26. Recalling the deep rift that divided the state's Republican leadership, the party's success in regaining three congressional seats was a remarkable achievement.⁸

While Lamb helped launch Dr. Wise's congressional contest, he also noted in his diary on November 12 that, "the air is filled with rumors of a conspiracy to dispose

⁷Lamb Diary, February 24, March 15, 24, 25, April 16, 19, 1897; The Dispatch (Richmond), November 11, 1896.

⁸Lamb Diary, March 18, 1897; Rowell, Contested Election Cases, pp. 569-74; Ronald Edward Shibley, Election Laws and Electoral Practices in Virginia, 1867-1902: An Administrative and Political History, (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1972), pp. 193-94.

me as Chairman." Concerning these troubling reports, the Portsmouth Star remarked that Chairman Lamb "puts very little credence in them." In reality, however, Lamb was extremely worried about a possible movement to remove him from the chairmanship. Lamb consulted extensively with members of his executive committee before formulating any kind of public response.⁹

Shortly after meeting with white and black supporters in Norfolk on November 21, Lamb issued a warning to members of the state committee. In his letter, Lamb stated that certain individuals on the present state committee planned to hold a meeting without his authorization. This illegal gathering, Lamb continued, was "irregular and unwarranted," and action that was "calculated to lead to disorganization and disruption of the party in Virginia." Lamb requested that the state committee members ignore this "irregular call." On November 24, an angry Alvah Martin telegraphed Quay, urging the Pennsylvania boss to contact Waddill and advise the judge against holding his meeting. Quay replied to Martin on the following day to let him know

⁹Lamb Diary, November 12, 19-23, 1896; The Star (Portsmouth), November 12, 1896.

that he wired Waddill as requested.¹⁰

Despite Lamb's strong objections, the state committee met at Ford's Law Building in Richmond on Thursday, November 26. S. Brown Allen called the meeting to order and Congressman Walker presided in the absence of Lamb. Concerning the presence of Lamb, the Richmond Times was informed that the state chairman had been duly notified. Based on the premise that Lamb's executive committee had been improperly elected, the state committee voted unanimously for new replacements, men all known to be in opposition to the party's leader: Waddill, Brady, Walker, and Agnew. A resolution of thanks was adopted for N. B. Scott, acknowledging his valuable role in the late campaign with the recommendation that he be given a place in McKinley's cabinet. No action was taken on the chairmanship issue, though Stith Bolling was identified by some attendees as Lamb's "logical successor." Another committee meeting was scheduled for December 17 in Norfolk.¹¹

A few days later, Lamb received the official

¹⁰Lamb Diary, November 21, 23-25, 1896; "To the Members of the Republican State Committee of Virginia," of November 21, 1896 (Mss 3R2997 a37) in the Virginia Republican Party papers, 1896-1926, at the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond. Hereafter cited as VRPP.

¹¹The Times (Richmond), November 22, 27, 1896.

proceedings of the session from S. Brown Allen. Greatly discouraged, Lamb gave much thought to resigning and told his many concerned friends that he would not "waste the time" in fighting Waddill, Brady, and Bowden. After reading the proceedings, Lamb was convinced that "the Campaign Committee evidently used the funds sent to them to bribe the State Committeemen to keep them [selves] in power." Colonel Hubbard suggested that Lamb reorganize the party by having those who attended Waddill's meeting removed from the Republican ranks.¹²

For the second time within a month, the state committee gathered, determined to confront its chairman. The men assembled at Norfolk's Hunter Woodis Hall on December 17, bringing the fight to Lamb's native city. Before entering the hall, Lamb met with Martin, Hubbard, and Libbey, all of whom pleaded with the chairman to call off or postpone the meeting. Lamb told his friends that this was not possible, and the three men immediately tendered their resignations as members of the old executive committee. Although the press was excluded, it was not difficult for the Richmond Times to ascertain that the committee had now been tilted to Waddill's faction "by long odds." With virtually no control over

¹²Lamb Diary, November 27, 28, 30, December 1, 1896.

this transformed body, Lamb merely called the gathering to order. The chairman watched helplessly as the committee endorsed its action of November 26 and unseated pro-Lamb Second District committeemen. When Lamb informed the committee that Martin, Libbey, and Hubard had stepped down, he was told that they had been removed in November and it was not necessary to take notice of their resignations.¹³

Waddill and his supporters celebrated their rout of Lamb at Bowden's Tidewater Republican Association. The victors issued a statement to the press, declaring that the state Republicans were gratified and "very jubilant" over recent party developments. As a result, Democratic hopes "to take advantage of Republican discord" had now "fallen flat." Looking ahead to the governor's race, congressional hopeful Thorp said that James A. Walker should be the party's choice in 1897. At the same time, "a Lamb conference" of 50 leading supporters chaired by Alvah Martin characterized the state committee meeting as "unprecedented, revolutionary, and unjust," while comparing the 800 or so deserters to their thousands of loyal Republicans. The disgruntled Lambites muttered the

¹³Lamb Diary, December 16, 17, 1896; "How the Lamb was Shorn," The Times (Richmond), December 18, 1896; "Lamb is a Figure-head," Washington Post, December 18, 1896.

serious charge that the present state committee had been bribed by misappropriated funds. Although the Richmond Times found the colorful GOP squabbling interesting, the newspaper recognized that the important struggle was over control of federal patronage.¹⁴

The Virginia patronage problem posed a difficult dilemma for the McKinley administration. Would the president work with the party's current chairman, a respected figure popular with the Republican masses or the smaller circle of men headed by Waddill who were McKinley's original supporters in the Old Dominion? This was the important question asked by the Norfolk Public Ledger and other state newspapers. The Richmond Dispatch predicted that Colonel Lamb would not wield much influence with federal patronage since he appeared "to have but a slight grip upon the affections" of McKinley and Hanna. While Lamb's opponents were frequently mentioned for various federal appointments, the Norfolkian's many years of dedicated party service seemed to be "unappreciated and unrewarded." "This," concluded the Dispatch, "is not treating the Colonel right."¹⁵

¹⁴The Times (Richmond), December 18, 1896; Washington Post, December 18, 1896.

¹⁵The Public Ledger (Norfolk), November 7, 1896; The Dispatch (Richmond), November 11, 1896.

With thousands of men and women competing for Virginia's large number of treasury, post office, court, army support, and Portsmouth Naval Yard positions, the appointment process would ultimately require many months to complete. The importance of patronage control was burned into the collective memory of Virginians who only had to recall that master politician, Senator William Mahone at the height of his power in the 1880s.¹⁶

Lamb and his opponents began furious lobbying efforts not long after the McKinley-Hobart victory. Through letters and personal visits, Lamb urged influential politicians to approve his supporters for patronage jobs. For example, on March 29, Lamb wrote to the Secretary of War and Secretary of the Navy requesting that they give the Second District's extensive patronage to Dr. Wise. For another close friend, Patrick McCaull of Culpeper, Lamb met with Treasury Secretary Lyman J. Gage about an internal revenue collectorship. Prospects for Lamb's candidates were never very bright. In a conference with Richard Wise on April 20, the doctor told Lamb that "the Administration is poisoned against me & believes with me that Hanna is keeping the promise made

¹⁶Nelson M. Blake, William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond, Va.: Garrett and Massie, 1935), p. 211.

to Waddell [sic] & Bowden by McKinley." Lamb's fears were gradually confirmed as appointment after appointment was given to members of the Waddill faction. An early indicator of the administration's direction was Park Agnew's appointment as internal revenue collector for Virginia's western district. Once counting Agnew as an ally, Lamb reacted to the news on April 3 by saying that "this is [Agnew's] reward for deserting me." In their visit to the White House, Congressman Walker and Yost were told by McKinley that Agnew's appointment was not an endorsement of any faction.¹⁷

Lamb's involvement with patronage and party matters led him to meetings with the country's most powerful men. In mid-July, Lamb conferred with Hanna who assured the uneasy state leader that he had not interfered with Virginia patronage affairs and promised that he had no such intentions in the future. Lamb also discussed the state GOP situation with President McKinley at the White House on a number of occasions in the spring and summer of 1897. In his visit of March 24, Lamb requested that McKinley aid Wise and other GOP candidates in their House contests. Lamb also asked that the President "reward"

¹⁷Lamb Diary, March 25, 29, April 3, 20, May 25, June 10, 11, 16, 24, July 8, 1897; "The Collectorship," The Gazette (Alexandria), April 3, 1897.

the defeated Republican candidates. Before leaving, Lamb made a special plea, hoping to secure a federal position for McCaull.¹⁸

As approved by the Democratic-controlled General Assembly in 1896, a constitutional convention proposal was put before the state's voters on May 27. For a brief period, the current Republican trouble faded into the background as the GOP fought the thinly veiled attempt to reduce black participation in political life. On May 17, Chairman Lamb wrote to the ten GOP congressional candidates, requesting their help in voting down the convention idea. Two days later, Lamb issued an address to the party, warning that the latest Democratic ploy was "to stem the swelling tide of Republican progress in our State." Called by A. W. Harris and James H. Hayes, worried black leaders gathered in Richmond on May 18 to form a "Negro Protective Association" and discuss their race's future in the state GOP. The association announced that their guiding principles would be "betterment of the Negro," loyalty to the GOP, and a steadfast refusal to be ousted from the party or political scene. Joined by a sizeable block of Democrats who feared extensive tampering with the state's basic

¹⁸Lamb Diary, March 24, July 19, 1897. Lamb also met with President McKinley on June 9th.

laws, white and black Republicans struck down the convention proposal for the second time in nine years, 84,435 to 38,326.¹⁹

The months of party strife took a heavy toll on Lamb's health and patience. If he could find a suitable replacement for the chairmanship, Lamb was determined to step down and retire from the political area. Revealing his growing disgust with the Waddill side, Congressman Walker established contact with Lamb and Dr. Wise in the last half of April. Walker gradually won Lamb's confidence and on July 24, the chairman revealed his new plan to Martin and Waddy. If Walker were elected as chairman by the state committee at its next session in Lynchburg in August, Lamb would step aside. Lamb's other condition was that the committee must agree to hold a nominating convention in order to choose a full ticket (governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general) for the approaching state election. In a discussion with McKinley only three days earlier, Lamb and the President both agreed that the able Walker was the man who could probably unite the badly divided state GOP. The president wanted Lamb to attend the upcoming Lynchburg

¹⁹Lamb Diary, May 17, 19, 1897; Andrew Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1902-1965 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), pp. 13, 14; Washington Post, May 19, 21, 1897.

meeting and finally help overcome the major stumbling block to Republican unity.²⁰

Colonel Lamb's intention of simply resigning from his battered post was soon dashed. On August 7, Lamb received a letter from Wray T. Knight of Richmond, a staunch Waddill supporter, who informed the chairman that his removal would be demanded in Lynchburg. Enclosed was a list of charges, accusing Lamb of incompetency as a party leader, creating discord among members of the presidential campaign committee, and misrepresenting N. B. Scott. Well aware of the danger and possible embarrassment for their friend, Dr. Wise and Colonel Waddy advised Lamb against making the trip. After overcoming lingering doubts, Lamb finally decided on August 15, "to be on hand when the State Committee meets."²¹

Republican leaders, an army of correspondents, and the curious began descending upon Lynchburg on August 17. Excited talk of Lamb's political future, Walker as a gubernatorial candidate, and a possible alliance with the Populists filled the town. Walker told the Lynchburg

²⁰Lamb Diary, April 22, June 9, July 8, 16, 18, 20, 21, 24, 31, August 2, 6, 1897.

²¹Lamb Diary, August 2, 7, 15, 1897; The Times (Richmond), August 19, 1897.

News that he favored holding a nominating convention so the party could decide the chairmanship issue and choose a state ticket. If fair elections could be held, Walker predicted a decisive GOP triumph of over 20,000 votes for the Republican slate. Lodged at the Arlington Hotel, Lamb correctly sensed the committee's hostility and he then decided not to attend the execution planned by the "political birds of prey." Scribbling a quick note to the committee, Lamb declined their invitation to attend on the grounds that he considered their meeting to be "illegal."²²

The state committee gathered in the crowded dining room of the Carroll Hotel on August 19. Lamb's note of the previous day was read and the meeting commenced without the party's leader. Immediately taking up the chairmanship issue, Edgar Allan arose and reviewed the charges of incompetency, disloyalty, and disorganization against Lamb. In reply, Walker spoke in Lamb's defense, requesting that the removal of Lamb be delayed with the final decision to be made by the party assembled, in a state convention. Even though Congressman Yost strongly backed Walker's solution, the committee quickly ousted

²²Lamb Diary, August 18, 1897; "Republican Leaders Here," The News (Lynchburg), August 18, 1897; The Landmark (Norfolk), August 18, 1897; The Dispatch (Richmond), August 20, 1897.

Lamb with a 27-2 vote. Walker and Yost cast the only ballots for Lamb. Alexandria's Park Agnew was then elevated to the party's highest office. Suffering a similar fate, the nominating convention idea also went down before a crushing 26-4 defeat. Claiming that honest elections were impossible to hold in Virginia, Waddill's faction went on record against holding a state convention or participating in the governor's race.²³

In an interview with the Washington Post, the newly elected state chairman said that he accepted his position with great reluctance. For the good of the party, Agnew commented that Lamb should have resigned instead of waiting for the committee to remove him. With Lamb's departure, Agnew believed that the party could now begin to heal its deep wounds. Looking ahead, Park Agnew was also confident that the district and local Republican organizations would adhere to the committee's action and not agitate for a nominating convention.²⁴

Ex-chairman Lamb told eager reporters that he considered the state committee meeting to be insurrectionary in nature and that he "did not care to

²³Lamb Diary, August 18, 1897; "Committee Deposits Lamb," The News (Lynchburg), August 19, 1897; "Lamb is Decapitated," Washington Post, August 19, 1897.

²⁴"Agnew and His Party," Washington Post, August 20, 1897.

make a fight before a packed jury." Waddill's puppet committee, Lamb believed, would soon be mired in "a very embarrassing situation" since the party's rank and file still gave him their loyal support. According to Lamb, the Brady-Bowden-Waddill ring's aim was to control and distribute the state's extensive political patronage. To this end, the Colonel claimed that the plotters had spread lies about him to members of the national committee and the Administration. Before leaving for Norfolk, Lamb told the newspaper reporters that he was determined to have a nominating convention and that true Republicans would challenge for state offices in the coming election.²⁵

Waddill gained unquestioned control of the state committee by mid-November and he used this influence to deal another stunning political blow to his main adversary. Reflecting upon this sharp turn of fortune, Colonel Lamb was thoroughly convinced that Waddill and Brady had set aside campaign funds received from the Republican national committee to purchase the votes of committee members. However the Judge achieved his rather sudden mastery of the committee, Waddill gained the upper

²⁵"Col. Lamb Talks with Freedom," Washington Post, August 19, 1897; "Colonel Lamb Talks," The Times (Richmond), August 20.

hand by replacing the old executive committee with his picked men, stripped Lamb of the chairmanship, and officially committed the GOP to a boycott of the gubernatorial campaign.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE 1897 CAMPAIGN: PEOPLE AGAINST THE RING

Although he lost the chairmanship to Park Agnew, Colonel Lamb was still considered to be the true GOP leader in the hearts of many Virginia Republicans. The callous manner of Lamb's sudden removal from power shocked his large number of followers, many of whom called upon or wrote him to express their anger and offer pledges of support. The visits and correspondence bolstered Lamb's sagging spirits and made him more determined to hold a state convention. An interested observer of Virginia affairs, the Baltimore American, was the first paper to endorse Lamb's plan for GOP action. In its lead editorial of August 20, the American reminded Old Dominion voters that their best chance for honest election legislation was to "make a fight" through the nomination of Republican candidates.¹

While Lamb appeared to have the enthusiastic backing of the party's rank and file, some of his closest lieutenants advised him against holding a

¹Lamb Diary, August 19-21, 1897, in the William Lamb Papers, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia; "Make a Fight in Virginia," The American (Baltimore), August 20, 1897.

convention. On August 25, Dr. Wise, Alvah Martin, and Carney told the Colonel that they felt a more prudent course would be to assemble "representative" Republican leaders and then attempt a general reorganization of the limping GOP. On the following day, Lamb met with E. B. Wilson of Salem who represented dissatisfied Populists wanting to break with their party's policy of cooperation with the Democrats. These Populists, Wilson revealed, wanted an alliance with the Republicans and hoped to attend Lamb's convention. After giving careful consideration to Wilson's proposal, Lamb declined the idea of a political union with a faction of the People's Party. Aware of "considerable talk of a fusion between the Republicans and the Populists," the Culpeper Exponent warned unsuspecting Democrats to "be on the alert."²

Two weeks after his ouster, Lamb issued the call for a state convention at Richmond's Opera House on September 1. Republican delegations from all interested cities and counties were asked to gather in Lynchburg on October 5, where the party would select its candidates for the state election. Congressman Walker, Dr. Wise, Hubbard, Carney, and Alderman Bahen were among those in attendance. Joining Lamb's leadership circle in Richmond

²Lamb Diary, August 25-27, 1897; The Exponent (Culpeper), September 17, 1897.

was Warren S. Lurty of Harrisonburg who ran for attorney general in 1889 on the Mahone ticket.³

An imaginative feature of Lamb's push for the convention was his launching of the now forgotten Republican Review, a bi-weekly newspaper that appeared in mid-September. As a veteran journalist whose own editorial experience dated to the antebellum Norfolk Southern Argus (1856-1861), Lamb believed that a campaign newspaper could help carry the convention idea across the Commonwealth. In the fortnight following the Richmond announcement, Lamb gathered material for the Review and gave the job to a printer in Washington, D. C. Consisting of four pages the 2¢ paper urged support for the convention, dispensed practical advice on "How to Get a Mass Meeting" to elect delegates, and reprinted editorials and letters calling for aggressive Republican activity. Since the State committee had removed Lamb and "sat down very hard on General Walker" for his opinions, the Review also claimed that the Agnew faction had no use for Confederate veterans. In praising the Review, Mitchell's Planet called the new publication's defense of

³Lamb Diary, September 1, 1897; Nelson M. Blake, William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond, Va.: Garrett and Massie, 1935), pp. 244, 250.

Colonel Lamb "one of its most gratifying features."⁴

To keep his dream of a convention from fading, Lamb was forced to grapple with an acute scarcity of funds, wavering support, and the active opposition of the Agnew-Waddill organization. On September 23, Lamb recorded in his diary that local Republican leaders were writing him, asking for money to finance the Lynchburg trip and related expenses. A week earlier, Lamb noted his deep disappointment in not having "the support I expected from Martin and Libbey." In the month before the convention's opening, numerous diary entries show Lamb's grave concern over the strong resistance to his convention as generated by Chairman Agnew and Waddill. As the Review found its way into Republican hands, Agnew issued a circular to city and county chairmen "warning against [Lamb's] call." By October 1, Lamb remarked that he was "completely

⁴Lamb Diary, September 2, 13, 14, 17, 18, 1897; The Republican Review, September 15, 1897, in Section 6, Folder 2 (Mss 3R2997 a65), in the Virginia Republican Party papers, 1896-1926, at the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond; "Ex-Confederates Not Wanted," The Dispatch (Wytheville), September 24, 1897; The Planet, September 25, 1897; Lester J. Cappon, Virginia Newspapers, 1821-1935, (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century, 1936), p. 141. Not listed by Cappon, the only issue of The Republican Review known to this writer is at the Virginia Historical Society as cited above.

broken down with the work & anxiety."⁵

"Owing to the active opposition" manifested by the Agnew-Waddill wing, Lamb wrote on September 21, that the delegate selection process was moving rather slowly. Progress was slow because the Lamb-Waddill split was often replicated at the local level. In Culpeper, the McCaull faction elected delegates to Lynchburg, while the pro-Agnew rally passed resolutions against having a state ticket. Roanoke Republicans experienced a similar rift, with J. Hampton Hoge leading the Agnew supporters and city treasurer J. S. Pattie's group selecting a Lambite delegation that included two black members. Weary of the seemingly endless bickering, Rappahannock County Republicans called on Lamb, Agnew, "and other conflicting chairmen" to step down. Offering their view on the GOP's current condition, the Rappahannock meeting of September 25 passed resolutions that proposed McCaull for the chairman's spot and suggested the state committee membership be divided evenly between Lamb and his opponents.⁶

⁵Lamb Diary, September 8, 13-15, 17, 23, 27-30, October 1, 1897.

⁶Lamb Diary, September 21, 1897; The Exponent (Culpeper), September 24, October 1, 1897; "Two Factions in Roanoke," Washington Post, September 24, 1897; "Rappahannock Co., Va." file in Section 6, Folder 5 (Mss 3R2997 a705), Virginia Republican Party papers (VRPP).

Perhaps timed to deal a death blow to the Lamb convention effort, a letter written by Hanna appeared in the Washington Post of September 24. In this letter, dated September 20, from Cleveland, Hanna congratulated Agnew on his recent election as the new GOP chairman and requested party men to "acquiesce in what has been done and loyally support the organization." Noting that Waddill's faction was distributing the Hanna letter, the Richmond Planet remarked that the party's basic conflict was rooted in the "alleged rights" of the small anti-Lamb ring "to assume the dictatorship for Virginia." Initially worried about the letter's possible "chilling effect [on] the enthusiasm which I have worked up," Lamb was soon relieved to discover that "the friends of the convention" were still determined to hold their gathering. Recalling Hanna's and the President's earlier assurances of neutrality, Lamb told the Washington Post that he felt betrayed and regarded the shift of position as "remarkable."⁷

By the time Lamb's convention finally opened its

⁷Lamb Diary, September 24, 25, 1897; "Indorsed by Hanna" September 24, and "Lamb Talks Emphatically," October 5, 1897, in Washington Post; Richmond Planet, October 2, 1897. Neither Hanna's September 20th letter nor the Virginia GOP strife is mentioned in Herbert Croly, Marcus Alonzo Hanna: His Life and Work (New York: Macmillan, 1912).

doors in early October, the Democrats had already launched their campaign after having the luxury of ample preparation. Held in Roanoke on August 11-12, the Democrat state convention was the lively scene of an intense struggle between the conservative machine of Senator Thomas S. Martin and the progressive independents. Led by politicians such as J. Hoge Tyler (1846-1925) and Andrew J. Montague (1862-1937), the independents wanted to loosen the Senator's grip on the party and introduce needed reforms. The anti-Martin forces captured the opening round by naming Lexington's Greenlee Letcher to the post of temporary chairman over the Senator's choice, William F. Rhea. The popular Tyler, a former lieutenant governor (1890-1894), was named by noisy acclamation to carry the Democratic standard into the governor's race. Unable to match Tyler's superiority in delegates, J. Taylor Ellyson, a Martin associate, withdrew his name from consideration.⁸

The nomination for lieutenant governor provided much excitement and unusual interest since a Populist was also

⁸William Larson, Montague of Virginia: The Making of a Southern Progressive (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), pp. 57, 58; Edward Younger and James Tice Moore, eds. The Governors of Virginia, 1860-1978 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1982), p. 151. Larson provides a detailed account of the Democratic state convention.

in the running. At the Populist convention held in July, the party's leaders had decided to present the name of Edmund R. Cooke for the second spot on the Democratic slate. With hopeful Populist representatives looking on, Cooke's chances for "fusion" quickly evaporated after a good showing in the early balloting. Merritt T. Cooke of Norfolk and Staunton's Edward Echols eventually emerged as the leaders in the lieutenant governor's contest that originally began with seven men. In the end, the pro-Martin Echols won the nomination with a 803-682 vote. Rounding out the strong Democratic ticket was Montague, the "Red Fox of Danville," who defeated Francis R. Lassiter for the attorney general's nomination.⁹

The conservative-progressive clash continued in the platform committee, where Martin views gradually prevailed. As finally adopted, the Democratic platform's major planks echoed Chicago by featuring appeals for free silver, a revenue tariff, stricter business regulation, and the federal income tax. As Martin's faction planned, state issues were watered down, with general statements regarding efficient state government, quality education, pensions, and the Democratic record of achievement.

⁹Larson, Montague, pp. 58, 59; William DuBose Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion: Virginia Farm Politics, 1885-1900 (Princeton University Press; reprint ed. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967), pp. 139-42.

Amendment of the state constitution, a fair election law, and the popular election of U.S. Senators did not find a place in the final platform. Senator Martin's closest call came on the direct vote issue that was initiated by Congressman William A. Jones of Warsaw. Convinced that the proposal was an unwarranted attack on his fellow senator, John W. Daniel asked the assemblage to defeat the plan. Moved by Daniel's appeal, enough delegates joined the conservatives to vote down the idea.¹⁰

The Lamb convention attracted national attention because the gathering was being held against the known opposition of the Republican state committee, its chairman, and presidential advisor, Marcus Hanna. As hundreds of white and black delegates arrived in Lynchburg, Lamb and other leaders met on October 5 to discuss general convention strategy. At this time, Lamb asked Colonel Hubbard to serve as temporary chairman and Congressman Yost to accept the permanent post. In his diary entry for October 5, Lamb makes no mention of a picked slate of candidates. The most conspicuous absence was that of James A. Walker who was reported to be in California. As observed by the Richmond Dispatch,

¹⁰Larson, Montague, pp. 59-60; Younger and Moore, Governors of Virginia, p. 151; Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), pp. 166-68.

Walker's gubernatorial nomination was now considered to be "rather improbable." Although Walker had fought hard for the convention and defended Lamb before a hostile forum, his subsequent statement accepting the state committee's actions had angered many of the Colonel's loyal following.¹¹

After this meeting, Lamb and his lieutenants met with Louis Garthe of the Baltimore American, Henry L. West of the Washington Post and other interested reporters at the Carroll Hotel. Regarding the governor's race, Lamb told the newspaper men that he honestly did not know who the nominee would be since this important decision properly belonged to "the unpurchasable material" of the state GOP, the delegates who had heard the convention call. Lamb went on to emphasize that he would not accept reelection as chairman, telling West he hoped "that my withdrawal may aid in restoring harmony to the party." Defiant and confident, W. S. Lurty, one of the favorites for the ticket's top place, told the Washington Post that, "we are going to make a fight and

¹¹Lamb Diary, October 4, 1897; "Lamb Convention," The Dispatch (Richmond), October 5, 1897. In addition to the papers cited elsewhere, the Chicago Tribune, October 6, the Indianapolis Journal, October 6, the New York Times, October 6, The News and Observer (Raleigh, N.C.), October 5, 6, and The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), October 8, also reported on the Lynchburg convention.

uphold the Republican banner." Unwilling to back down before the so-called regular Republicans, Lurty informed the correspondents that he was ready to take on the Democrats "no matter what kind of letters Mr. Hanna may write."¹²

On Tuesday, October 5, the Lamb Republicans assembled at Lynchburg's Opera House, where the 800 delegates were called to order by Colonel Hubbard. The Baltimore Sun remarked that the total "number of delegates was a surprise to the most sanguine Lamb supporters," while also noting the many blacks who were in attendance. Amid shouts of "you are our legal chairman!" and "prolonged cheers," Lamb addressed the convention, informing his supporters that he would not be a candidate for reelection. Reminding the delegates that this was "no gathering of pie-hunters," Lamb applauded their decision "to put our flag in the field and fight for our principles" by steering from "the cowardly policy of inaction." William F. Wickham (1860-1900) of Powhatan was chosen as the Lamb faction's new state

¹²"Talk with Colonel Lamb," The Sun (Baltimore), October 5, 1897; "Devoted to the Party," Washington Post, October 5, 1897. For more information on "Harry" West who spent 44 years with the Post, see Chalmers M. Roberts, The Washington Post: The First 100 Years (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977). West's excellent reporting gave the Post outstanding coverage of Virginia politics.

chairman.¹³

Only one disharmonious incident marred the convention's selection of three men to represent the party on the "Independent Republican" ticket. In a close first ballot, Lurty failed to secure the gubernatorial nomination by a slim 502-486 vote to McCaull.

"Dreadfully disappointed," as Lamb recalled, a furious Lurty then made "a most unfortunate speech" to the convention. The Washington Post praised McCaull, calling him "a good mixer in politics, an effective stumper, and very popular." McCaull possessed "fair abilities, tireless energy and great force of character," noted the Petersburg Index-Appeal, adding "as a campaigner and a rough, roll and tumble debater on the stump he has few equals and probably no superior in the state." An accomplished lawyer, O. B. Roller of Harrisonburg was picked for lieutenant governor and Richmond's James Lyons, a politician of "good standing and considerable ability," completed the slate. The selection of Alvah Martin, Hubbard, J. S. Pattie, and Turner K. Hackman of Harrisonburg to the executive committee reflected a good sectional balance. The party's new organization was

¹³Lamb Diary, October 5, 1897; The Sun (Baltimore), October 6, 1897; "McCaull the Nominee," Washington Post, October 6, 1897; Richmond Planet, October 9, 1897.

complete with the selection of a state committee composed of thirty members.¹⁴

After passing a resolution denouncing George E. Bowden for giving "aid and comfort" to the Democrats in the 1896 election and recommending his replacement on the national committee with Hubbard, the convention approved the final Independent Republican platform. The initial planks pledged the party's loyalty to Republicanism, the 1896 St. Louis platform, and endorsed the McKinley administration. "A fair election law" was demanded and Lamb's call for a convention over the state committee's decision was praised since his brave action was "in response to a widespread demand." The final planks recommended more economy in state government and asked that a liberal pension policy be extended to disabled Confederate veterans. Highly satisfied with the large attendance and results, Lamb considered the convention to have been a great success, writing that he "had no idea that I had so many warm friends throughout Virginia."¹⁵

¹⁴Lamb Diary, October 5, 1897; Washington Post, October 6, 1897; The Index-Appeal (Petersburg), October 7, 1897; Larson, Montague, p. 63; William C. Pendleton, Political History of Appalachian Virginia... (Dayton, Va.: Shenandoah Press, 1927), p. 399. Editor of the Tazewell Republican, Pendleton broke with Mahone in 1888 over the unit rule issued and sided with Lamb in the 1895-97 rift.

¹⁵Lamb Diary, October 6, 1897; The Virginian (Norfolk), October 6, 1897; Washington Post, October 6, 1897.

By their bold course of action, the Independent Republican convention earned the praise of some leading Democratic newspapers in Virginia. The Lynchburg News admired the convention's enthusiasm and predicted that the McCaull ticket "will impart new life in the campaign." While praising the qualifications of the Republican candidates, the Petersburg Index-Appeal stressed the need for a strong two-party system for the survival of genuine democracy. After speaking "to those who have visited the various counties" in Virginia, it was the observation of the Richmond State "that this convention represents the opinion of the large majority of the Republican voters."¹⁶

Looking ahead to November, other Democratic papers warned their party about the dangers of apathy and overconfidence or gave little importance to the Lynchburg outcome. Recognizing that the Lamb convention "changes the situation," the Charlottesville Daily Progress on October 11 urged Democrats to "fight for a victory of overwhelming proportions" in order to discourage a flow of campaign money from the Republican national committee. A few days later, an alarmed Daily Progress claimed

¹⁶"The Campaign Opening," The News (Lynchburg), October 7, 1897; The Index-Appeal (Petersburg), October 7, 1897; "The Republican Situation," The State (Richmond), October 8, 1897.

Democrats courted "disaster" because the overconfident party was "lulled by a false sense of security." "If the Lynchburg ticket should call forth support of an aggressive kind," wrote the Norfolk Landmark, "the only result would be to draw out thousands of Democrats who might be otherwise apathetic." The Norfolk Virginian blamed its famous townsman for the Republican rupture and predicted a "disastrous defeat" in the fall. Simply seeing the convention as the latest chapter in the "deadly fight" between the "sadly divided" GOP factions, the Winchester Star felt that the Lambites were destined to lose both the election and the patronage battle.¹⁷

Approval for the Lamb convention was also heard beyond the borders of the Old Dominion. The Baltimore American was "more than glad that the agitation begun in this paper for a Republican ticket in Virginia has produced such satisfactory results." Concerned citizens "who believe in fair elections and good government," concluded the American, must follow the example of the Lambites and "not stay out of the battle." GOP participation in the election noted the Concord (New Hampshire) Evening Monitor was not only the best "remedy"

¹⁷The Daily Progress (Charlottesville), October 11, 14, 1897; Norfolk Landmark, October 7, 1897; The Virginian (Norfolk), October 8, 1897; The Star (Winchester), October 8, 1897.

for Democratic control and fraud, but could "furnish a rallying point for the disaffected Democrats" who were also tired of corruption and dishonesty. Since "the [present] situation will never be corrected voluntarily by the Democratic party," the Philadelphia Press believed that "the plan to carry on a campaign in Virginia agrees with the wishes of the great majority of the Republicans throughout the country."¹⁸

The Independent Republicans were characterized as "disgruntled office-seekers" by the men who firmly controlled Virginia's regular GOP organization. Colonel Brady told Garthe of the American that "no man in the whole country has haunted the executive mansion office during President McKinley's administration more than Pat McCaull." Judge Waddill dismissed the "mere rump convention" as "non-representative a gathering as could possible be gotten together." Vowing to fight the Lynchburg ticket, Edgar Allan called the convention a colossal failure. On the subject of honesty and fairness in elections, Allan told the Richmond State that the Lamb Republicans could well begin with themselves since Lurty had been cheated out of his nomination. An old associate

¹⁸The American (Baltimore), October 6, 9, 1897; Concord (New Hampshire) Evening Monitor, October 8, 1897; The Press (Philadelphia), October 7, 1897.

of Lamb's from the Readjuster movement, General V. D. Groner of Norfolk said the deposed leader called his convention out of frustration because he had been unable to work effectively with other GOP managers.¹⁹

In a joint appearance, Democratic candidates Tyler, Echols, and Montague opened their campaign at Richmond on September 23. Setting the tone for the Democratic effort, the nominees concentrated on broad national issues, extolling the prosperity that would abound through the adoption of lower tariffs. Although Democratic speakers usually skirted state problems, Montague and other candidates enjoyed reminding their listeners that a reported \$160,000 had been funnelled to Virginia in 1896 by Hanna and his cronies. During the campaign, Democratic speakers also made it a point to avoid debates with the Independent Republicans. McCaull shadowed his opponents, who constantly refused to share the platform. In mid-October, Senator Daniel declined to debate with McCaull at Louisa Court House. Later in the campaign, McCaull was also unsuccessful in having a public discussion with Tyler in Fredericksburg. During the canvass, Montague lived up to his well-deserved

¹⁹"Will Oppose State Ticket," The American (Baltimore), October 7, 1897; "They Ridicule Lamb's Work," The State (Richmond), October 6, 1897; "General Groner for Agnew," Washington Post, October 5, 1897.

reputation as one of the finest Democratic speakers. At Staunton, however, in later October, Montague "promptly declined" a challenge to debate the issues with McCaull, who had no choice but to address a smaller, less enthusiastic audience. In rarely deviating from national issues and keeping debates with Republicans to a minimum, the Tyler ticket helped smooth over recent party antagonisms and denied any political advantage to their opponents.²⁰

Less than a week after the Lynchburg convention ended, Chairman Wickham opened his state headquarters on October 11 "in a bright suite of rooms" located at 917 Bank Street in Richmond. Wickham's chief assistant, James W. Tierney of Norfolk had been "closely associated with Col. Lamb for many years." Over the next few weeks, Tierney would share his valuable administrative experience with the thirty-seven year-old Wickman, "a new man in State politics." Adding to the occasion was the receipt of a letter from Congressman Walker who promised Wickham his support for the Lynchburg ticket. The letter finally clarified Walker's position which was of interest

²⁰Larson, Montague, pp. 63-65; "Montague in Staunton," The Times (Richmond), October 26, 1897; Washington Post, October 12, 1897; Thomas Edward Gay, Jr. "The Life and Career of J. Hoge Tyler, Governor of Virginia, 1898-1902," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, (1969), pp. 131-33, 135.

to political observers since he was still a member of Agnew's executive committee.²¹

Wickham gathered his top leaders together for a conference at the Ebbitt House in Washington on October 13 to map out their campaign strategy. Flanked by McCaull, Roller, Lyons, members of his executive committee, and John S. Wise, who came down from New York, Wickham planned a speaking schedule and decided to meet with McKinley in order to gain the latter's "moral support" for the Lynchburg ticket. The leaders also agreed to work for the election of Republicans running for seats in the House of Delegates and State Senate, even if some of the candidates were known to be in the Agnew camp. On October 15, Wickham, the Lynchburg nominees, and the executive committee called on McKinley, who gave the Virginians a sympathetic hearing, patiently listening to their version of GOP affairs in the Old Dominion. While not asking them to withdraw from the campaign, McKinley also did not give Wickham the endorsement he had hoped for. Normally sympathetic to the GOP, the Petersburg Index-Appeal considered the White House visit to be "a foolish mistake."²²

²¹Washington Post, October 12, 13, 1897.

²²Washington Post, October 13-15, 1897; The Gazette (Alexandria), October 14, 1897; The Evening Star

Due to his poor health and the fatal illness of his sister Margaret, Colonel Lamb did not take an active role in the final weeks of the campaign. Incapacitated with his lingering illness, Colonel Lamb twice wrote Tierney that he would be unable to help out with party matters in Richmond. In the absence of Lamb, Wickham emerged as a capable political leader. Wickham's correspondence reveals him to be an energetic leader totally dedicated to his cause, but not blind to the tremendous problems inherited from Lamb: the serious lack of available funding and unhealed party division. On the matter of funding, Wickham wrote executive committeeman Hackman on October 21, saying that "if we had one quarter of last year's fund we would sweep the State notwithstanding the efforts of Waddell [sic]." Unable to forward money for political expenses, Wickham instead offered hearty encouragement to J. H. Wilson of Bridgetown, writing "the campaign is one of principles...The People vs. the Ring." Frowning on the latest news about the bitter factional fight then raging in Danville, Wickham promised W. R. Robinson "justice to all," pleading with the divided city GOP immediately to "suppress all personal prejudices and

(Washington, D.C.), October 14, 1897; The Index-Appeal (Petersburg), October 16, 1897.

work" in unison for a Republican victory.²³

The strongest opposition to the Lynchburg candidates came not from the traditional opponent, but from their own Republican brethren on the state committee. Like the independent faction, the Agnew-Waddill organization also wanted a fair election law enacted in Virginia, but did not believe participation in the statewide contest could achieve this goal. The regulars took the position that Republicans should vote for any candidate who would support the honest election fight in the legislature. In his conversations with McKinley, Waddill told reporters that the President "approve[d] the course pursued by him." Regarding the problem posed by the presence of the rival faction, Agnew issued an address on October 12 to the GOP voters, stating, "it is conceded that a Republican, either in voting for the nominees of the Lynchburg meeting or refusing to vote for them will neither jeopardize nor forfeit his claim or position in the Republican party."²⁴

²³Lamb Diary, October 11, 13, 25, 27, 29, November 2, 1897; Lamb to Tierney, October 19, 1897, and Lamb to Tierney, October 21, 1897, in Section 1, Folder 3, Wickham (WFW) to Hackman, October 21, 1897 in Section 2, Letterbook (LB), p. 123, WFW to J. H. Wilson, October 29, 1897, LB, p. 292, WFW to W. R. Robinson, October 19, 1897, LB, pp. 65, 66, VRPP.

²⁴Pendleton, Political History, p. 399; Washington Post, October 13, 29, 1897; "Judge Waddill Back," The

In writing about the campaign, editor-historian William C. Pendleton remembered that "the announced neutrality of the regular organization was very soon brazenly violated...the authority and force of the regular organization was actively asserted to prevent Republicans from voting for the Independent Republican candidates for State offices and for the General Assembly." In a letter to G. T. Beamer of East Radford, Chairman Wickham expressed his worry over the "many Republicans [who] are working Night & Day to keep our vote from coming out." Keeping John S. Wise abreast of developments, Wickham wrote that the Lynchburg ticket's chances were being hampered "by the underhand methods of certain factionalists." After giving McCaull an overview of the political situation, Wickham noted in his October 21 letter that "the other side is trying to knife us in many localities." In its summary of the campaign, the Washington Post observed that in fighting "tooth and nail," the Agnew faction was "doing all that is possible to minimize the strength of McCaull."²⁵

Times (Richmond), October 14, 1897.

²⁵Pendleton, Political History, p. 399; WFW to G. T. Beamer, October 29, 1897, LB, pp. 289-90, WFW to J. S. Wise October 22, 1897, LB, p. 132, WFW to McCaull, October 21, LB, p. 126, VRPP; "Easy for Democrats," Washington Post, October 31, 1897.

Virginia's black Republicans were also divided in their loyalties between the factions of Wickham and Agnew-Waddill. Seeing his struggle as the last defense of his race's right to participate in state politics, John Mitchell was the most vocal black defender of the Lamb-Wickham cause. Pendleton accused the Agnew organization of "industriously" distributing "circulars addressed to the colored voters denunciatory of the Independent Republican candidates," with the intention of "excit[ing] race animosities." As the campaign neared its end, A. W. Harris of Dinwiddie and other prominent anti-Lamb black leaders signed a circular asking "colored people who have any instinct of manhood [to] arise and put down this spurious breed of Republicans." Elsewhere in this notice, Lamb was charged with having opposed black delegates for St. Louis and charges of racial prejudice were aimed at McCaull and Yost.²⁶

Prospects appeared dim for the Independent Republicans and another Democratic landslide seemed to be on the horizon. On November 1, Wickman wrote Lamb to "express the hope that the Election tomorrow may prove a triumphant vindication of the manly and honorable course

²⁶Pendleton, Political History, p. 399; Lamb Diary, October 19, 1897; Richmond Planet, November 13, 1897; "Bombshell for Lamb," Washington Post, October 30, 1897.

pursued by you." Chances for a victory were poor continued Wickham, because of the "lack of campaign funds, the underhand work of certain Republicans, and the machinery of the Democracy." In interviews with the Washington Post, Wickham stated that McCaull would probably receive more votes than the public expected, but the damage done by the regular organization also had to be taken into account. Concerning the legislative races, Wickham said that 66 of the Old Dominion's 100 counties had nominated anti-Democratic candidates. In some areas, Wickham was aware of cooperation between Populists and the two Republican factions.²⁷

Hampered by party strife, general voter apathy, and low Negro turnout, the divided Republicans proved no match for the Democrats. Tyler easily won the governorship with 109,655 votes to 58,860 votes for McCaull. Echols captured his office with a comfortable margin over Roller and Cooke. In a far cry from 1893, the Populist Cooke only managed to poll 7,000 votes. Montague defeated Lyons for attorney general in a decisive victory, in which the GOP hopeful could only lay claim to three counties. The General Assembly also

²⁷"Apathy Among Voters," October 29 and "Strength of Candidate McCaull," November 2, 1897, in Washington Post; "Virginia Forecast," The Times (Richmond), October 31, 1897; WFW to Colonel Lamb, November 1, 1897, LB, p. 310, VRPP.

belonged to the Democrats who swept all the Senate seats and took 94 of 100 places in the House of Delegates. In his study of the 1897 state election, Ronald E. Shibley stated the obvious when he wrote, "a more complete domination of the state than that enjoyed by the Democrats is difficult to imagine." Pendleton blamed the revised Walton election law, calling it "the most dangerous weapon they used to defeat the Republicans." Crushed at the polls, the Republican factions now entered the last phase of the two-year conflict. Calling at the White House, the competing chairmen both took their respective claims for recognition to President McKinley.²⁸

²⁸Larson, Montague, p. 65; Younger and Moore, Governors of Virginia, p. 152; Sheldon, Populism in the Old Dominion, pp. 142-43; Shibley, "Electoral Practices," p. 186; Pendleton, Political History, p. 400.

CHAPTER EIGHT

OVERTHROW OF THE "BIG THREE"

The Agnew-Waddill triumph and the departure of William Lamb from the scene did not solve the Virginia Republican party's fundamental problems or lead to a new era of factional peace and political recovery. With the eventual support of President McKinley, Chairman Agnew's organization was able to maintain a firm hold on the state GOP's highest offices and control the awarding of federal patronage. During Park Agnew's chairmanship (1897-1905), opposition to the "administration" wing remained strong, a development that kept the party seriously divided. At the same time, while wanting to keep the black man's valuable vote, the white leadership steadfastly refused to share real power with Negro politicians, a policy that greatly discouraged the latter. Internal dissension, the lack of a genuine partnership with the Negro, and Democratic control of most election boards promoted the spread of voter apathy throughout the demoralized GOP. As a result, the Virginia Republicans were never able to mount a threat to the powerful Democratic machine or the exploit the rift then dividing Senator Thomas S. Martin and the

progressive independents.

Unlike 1888 or 1897, the greatly weakened GOP was unable to muster the votes required to defeat a third referendum held in May 1900 on the constitutional convention question. By 1900, in contrast to the earlier ballots on the issue, more Democrats were now in favor of adopting a new constitution that would eliminate the Negro as a political force and make state government more efficient. Although the Negro electorate was already under virtual control in the Black Belt and reduced elsewhere by apathy, Negro disfranchisement by legal means was viewed by most Democrats as the only way to restore a healthy political climate in Virginia. For anti-Martin Democrats, the convention also represented an opportunity to attack the Senator's source of strength by phasing out patronage jobs in state, county, and city governments. Shaped by a convention dominated by Democrats (88 delegates to twelve Republicans), the new constitution was adopted in July 1902. With suffrage and literacy provisions aimed at the foundation of the GOP, the whites of the Southwest and the Negroes, the delegates fashioned a document that would prevent a Republican revival.¹

¹Agnew Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1902-1965 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press,

Agnew guided the Virginia Republicans until January 1905. At that time, Agnew and his associates on the state committee were asked by President Roosevelt to step down and surrender party leadership to Congressman Campbell Slemple of the Ninth District. Slemple's talented son, C. Bascom, was then elected as the party's new state chairman. With this change, party leadership now shifted from the eastern urban centers to the Southwest. Later known as "Mr Republican," C. Bascom Slemple soon emerged as the GOP's acknowledged chieftain, a distinction he held until the early 1930s. As the Slemple family rose to power within the party, death claimed many of the GOP's experienced leaders, leaving a vacuum that was ably filled by the father and son. This final chapter of the study will present an overview of Republican developments under Agnew and discuss the significance of the Virginia Republican rift.

As Virginia's Democrats celebrated another decisive victory, the two rival factions of the state GOP brought their respective claims for recognition to the White House. Writing the President a few days after the election, Chairman Wickham asked McKinley "to hear both

1967, pp. 14-16; Charles E. Wynes, Races Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1961), pp. 50-60.

sides of the question," while reminding him that "I have at least 50,000 voters behind me." To a supporter in Lynchburg, Wickham wrote on November 9, that the recognition issue was "a fight for the People and the People are going to win." Over the next few days, various GOP leaders called on McKinley, hoping to win his support for their particular faction. Wanting a comment from Agnew, Bowden, and Brady after their November 10th call upon McKinley, a Washington Evening Star correspondent noted that, "none of these leaders would discuss the criticism of General Walker that they had knifed Col. McCaull in the recent election." Curious reporters soon learned that McKinley would not rule on patronage or the chairmanship for the moment due to the "tangled" condition of the Virginia GOP organization.²

Congressman Yost and Walker, former supporters of Colonel Lamb, also met with the press to discuss their reactions to the election. Taking "the machine, the administration, the influence of patronage," and reduced Negro participation into consideration, Yost felt that

²William F. Wickham (WFW) to President McKinley, November 8, 1897, pp. 316-17, WFW to E. O. Carroll, Lynchburg, November 9, 1897, p. 323, in Sect. 2, Letterbook (LB) in the Virginia Republican Party papers, 1896-1926 (VRPP), at the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond; "At the White House" column of The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), November 6, 9, 11, 13, 1897.

over 50,000 recorded ballots had amply "vindicated" Lamb's Lynchburg convention. Looking ahead, Walker believed that the factional fight was now over and he urged Republicans to "get together" again. Walker's "scheme" for reunification was "to hold a convention" and "refer the whole thing back to the people." At this gathering, the "people" could decide if they wanted the Agnew committee or the Wickham group to lead the party. Of course, if the GOP rank and file "want[ed] neither, they could name an entire new committee and a new chairman in the convention," Walker concluded.³

By the spring of 1898, the McKinley administration has bestowed its approval upon the Agnew camp by selecting its leaders to fill key patronage positions in the Old Dominion. George E. Bowden assumed customs collector duties for the busy port of Norfolk; James D. Brady was named as a district Internal Revenue collector, and S. Brown Allen was appointed as U.S. Marshal for the western district. Agnew's grip on the GOP reins became undisputed when Edmund Waddill was elevated to a United States Court of Appeals judgeship. Given McKinley's answer in these terms, the Wickham forces withered,

³"Walker and Yost on the Republican Situation," The Exponent (Culpeper), November 12, 1897. Recall that Yost and Walker were the only state committeemen who voted against Lamb's removal as chairman.

although lingering opposition to Agnew would remain strong in the Second and Third districts, the Southwest, and among some black political leaders. In less than a year, Waddill and Agnew had toppled William Lamb from the chairmanship, captured majorities on the executive and state committees, and assumed stewardship of Virginia's federal patronage system.⁴

As revealed in a November 9th letter to a Mt. Jackson supporter, Wickham expressed his "hope [that] the President will consider us although I am rather doubtful." For his part, a few months of retirement did not salve William Lamb's deep wounds. On January 18, 1898, the former GOP leader informed some friends that "he had retired in disgust from all political affairs on account of Hanna & his scalawag following in Virginia." When Lamb learned of Bowden's appointment, he wrote in his diary on February 11, that the selection "shows the President prefers to reward his personal following, [instead of] securing the success of Republican principles!" The passage of three decades did not lessen a prominent Republican editor's dim view of the Agnew circle. In his Political History of Appalachian Virginia

⁴The Dispatch (Richmond), March 11, 1898; Washington Post, March 7, 11, 1898; "Col. J. D. Brady Has Passed Away," The Times (Richmond), December 1, 1900.

(1927), William C. Pendleton characterized the Agnew men as "chronic place-hunters" who wanted to "promote their own interests" by keep[ing] control of the party in the State and of the Federal patronage." While Pendleton's recollection seems rather harsh, it was a belief shared by many of his fellow Republicans.⁵

During his turbulent term as state chairman, Park Agnew was not able to unite the struggling GOP and mold a revitalized party capable of effectively challenging the Democrats. Enfeebled by inner decay, voter apathy, Democratic electoral laws, and widespread fraud, the Herculean task of a Republican rebirth in Virginia was probably impossible to achieve. The opposition to Agnew continually surfaced at state conventions and proved to be a formidable barrier to party harmony. The fractured condition of the organization was also illustrated by the appearance of rival GOP congressional candidates in various districts. In this weakened condition, the Virginia Republican party compiled a dismal record at the polls in local, state, and national elections. With an

⁵WFW to Honorable R. J. Walker, Mt. Jackson, November 9, 1897, p. 321, in Section w, LB, VRPP; Lamb Diary, January 18, February 11, 1898, in the William Lamb Papers, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia; William C. Pendleton, Political History of Appalachian Virginia, 1776-1927 (Dayton, Va.: Shenandoah Press, 1927), pp. 398, 418.

inability to capture control of the General Assembly or the governorship, the GOP had no hope of revising the existing electoral system. With the death of Richard A. Wise in December 1900, Republican representation in the state's congressional delegation was reduced to the Ninth District seat held by Campbell Slemp.

Over the years, the Agnew faction weathered bitter fights at Republican state conventions. At the stormy Norfolk gathering of April 1900, the Agnew managers orchestrated the reelection of their chairman, controlled all committees, and secured instructions for the national convention delegates to vote for Bowden as Virginia's national committeeman. All contesting district delegations loyal to Congressman Richard A. Wise were turned away by the credentials committee. Rising to protest these decisions, Alvah Martin's "opening sentence was drowned in hoots." After leaving the Academy of Music, the angry pro-Wise delegates met and passed a resolution denouncing the "arbitrary" actions of the Agnew dominated body.⁶

Similar discordant scenes erupted at the state conventions of 1901 and 1904. At the Roanoke convention

⁶Washington Post, April 11, 12, 1900; "Wise Faction Gets No Quarter," The American (Baltimore), April 11, 1900.

in August 1901, anti-Agnew delegates rallied around General James A. Walker, but the chairman's "following completely crushed their opponents, who wanted to wrest the party machinery from them." An interesting development at this convention was the defection of Edgar Allan from the Agnew faction over a sharp dispute between contending Richmond delegations. The March 1904 convention at Norfolk was the scene of a confrontation between the Agnew forces and the movement led by Congressman Campbell Slemph. After a hard contest, the Agnew clique remained in "supreme control" of convention proceedings. This latest round of GOP sparring led the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot to observe that the convention had

failed utterly to show any realization that there is a chance for the Republican party to become a formidable factor in State affairs [and was] without definite plan or serious purpose as an organization [being] more concerned with factional broils than with the fight against [the] Democracy."⁷

Instances of rival factions running their own congressional candidates not only illustrated existing divisions at the district level, but also had the effect of splitting the available vote already severely limited

⁷The Dispatch (Richmond), August 22, 1901 (source of first quotation); The Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk), March 3, 4, 5, 1904.

by electoral laws and fraud. Factional troubles were most prevalent in the Second and Third districts. In the 1898 Second District race, Richard A. Wise faced Bowdenite W. S. Holland as well as the Democratic choice. Two years later, the continual upheaval in the district attracted the attention of Marcus Hanna, who ordered Bowden's organization to support Wise in his bid for the United States House. In the Richmond (Third) district, the state committee wing and the "outs" of Edgar Allan each ran their own congressional candidates during the 1902 and 1904 contests. Another example of GOP unrest was the course of action followed by dissatisfied black Republicans who nominated independent candidates for the 1898 Fourth and Sixth district races.⁸

During the Agnew era, disappointed black politicians learned early that they would be denied an expanded role within the party. While James A. Walker and other GOP leaders made eloquent speeches extolling party harmony, denouncing discriminatory election laws, and the need to

⁸The Times (Richmond) October 30, 1898; The Dispatch (Norfolk), November 10, 1898; Washington Post, November 4, 1900, November 3, 1902, November 10, 29, 1904. In 1902, racial relations became especially strained in the Fourth District when the Republican leadership backed a white independent Democrat, R. T. Vaughn, after declining to nominate a candidate for the U.S. House. Vaughn was viewed as a "Lily White" politician by many Negroes and few blacks bothered to vote. See Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics p. 43.

protect the voting rights of all Virginians, important party posts and national convention delegate slots were reserved for whites. Although they were unable to reverse this trend, vocal black leaders vigorously protested the policy of exclusion. When James Hayes of Richmond learned that blacks were not to be named to the national convention delegation of 1900, the activist lawyer arose and loudly asked, "What in the name of God, gentlemen, are you trying to do? Are you trying to drive us from the party?" Conditions for meaningful Negro participation in party decisions worsened with time and a Washington Post reporter recorded in April 1901 that "the Republicans have been eliminating the Negro faction from their state convention this year." At the 1904 state convention, A. W. Harris of Dinwiddie, a veteran black politician, urged the assemblage to seat more men of his race, warning that "if you don't do us justice now we must part company, and when we go we take the backbone and sinew of the Republican party with us."⁹

Considering the ironclad lock on the electoral process maintained by the Democrats and the disarray of the Republican leadership, it was not surprising that apathy continued to spread throughout the GOP during the

⁹Washington Post, April 11, 1900, August 20, 1901, March 4, 1904.

Agnew years. Available evidence suggests that the GOP leaders accepted the status of being a minority party. In early September 1899, the state committee issued an address to the party declaring that the GOP would not nominate candidates for the legislative election because "we do not suppose any Republican voter in Virginia believes that we could be a factor in changing the existing state laws." Astonished at this policy of resignation, the editor of the Washington Evening Star asked his readers, "What cause was ever won by such tactics?"¹⁰

If years of party turmoil and lack of direction weakened the Republicans, the inability to increase membership in the GOP also represented a serious problem. In a letter dated December 20, 1902, to President Roosevelt's personal secretary, Campbell Slep commented, "It seems that our organization has not adopted any method by which it can register its vote and deliver the same - I imagine the want of registration occasioned our greatest fall off in this state in the last campaign." According to a leading Republican editor, William C.

¹⁰The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), September 5, 1899; Washington Post, September 5, November 9, 1899. Ignoring the 1899 state committee proclamation, a number of Republicans entered the legislative campaign, with four GOP men winning seats to the House of Delegates.

Pendleton, the Agnew men were polished practitioners of masterly inactivity, being "more eager to promote their own interest than to foster growth of the party."¹¹

Much noted by contemporary newspapers, light voting diminished Republican strength in Virginia. Shackled by Democratic electoral manipulation and loss of hope for advancement within the state GOP, apathy was most evident among black voters. A student of post-Reconstruction race relations in the Old Dominion, Charles Wynes, has concluded that black Virginians "evinced less and less interest in the larger political issues, as the Negro increasingly lost all hope of advancing himself either socially or politically." "The Absent Negro Vote" in the 1901 gubernatorial election was attributed by the Richmond Dispatch to the Negro having been "ignored" at the recent state convention and because the GOP hopeful, J. Hampton Hoge, failed to place himself "in accord with the President as to the Booker [T.] Washington dining incident."¹²

¹¹Pendleton, Political History of Appalachian Virginia, p. 418; Campbell Slemple to George E. Cortelyou, December 20, 1902, in Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division (MD), Library of Congress (LC), Washington, D.C.

¹²"Vote is Generally Light," Washington Post, November 6, 1901; "The Absent Negro Vote," The Dispatch, (Richmond), November 7, 1901; Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, p. 53. On October 17, 1901, Booker T.

Prior to the adoption of the new state constitution on July 10, 1902, the GOP under Agnew performed poorly at the polling booth. During the Agnew era, the Republicans never had a chance to revise the existing electoral laws since the party was unable to capture control of the General Assembly. In the state elections of 1899, 1901, and 1903, the Democrats easily managed to hold their large majorities in the Senate and the House of Delegates. The 1901 attempt to win the governor's mansion also failed with J. Hampton Hoge polling 81,366 votes to Montague's 116,682, a far cry from Republican efforts in 1885 (136,510) and 1889 (121,159). Reducing the electorate by half, the constitution further hobbled the crippled GOP by striking at the party's strength, namely the blacks and poor whites. The devastating effect of the 1902 constitution upon the GOP was aptly demonstrated in the 1905 governor's race when Judge Lewis

Washington was a dinner guest at the White House, an incident that stunned the Virginia GOP, because the state leadership had been trying to shed the "black Republican" label. Not long after the Roosevelt-Washington dinner, J. Hampton Hoge gave up the governor's race. See William Larson, Montague of Virginia: The Making of a Southern Progressive (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), pp. 111-12; and Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), pp. 124-25.

was only able to garner 45,795 ballots.¹³

Another indication of Republican decline during the Agnew era can be obtained from an examination of congressional and presidential election results. After the congressional contest of 1896 in which the Republicans tallied 124,327 votes out of a total of 301,695, the GOP did not reach the 100,000 mark again during the Agnew chairmanship. In 1898, the GOP total vote tumbled to 66,213, climbed to 98,730 in 1900, but plummeted to 37,878 two years later, showing the dramatic effects of the new constitution. In the final congressional campaign under Agnew, the party made a modest gain of about 6,000 votes (43,852). The presidential election of 1900 brought out 115,865 Republicans, about 20,000 fewer than in 1896 (135,388). In the Roosevelt-Parker contest of 1904, only 47,885 Republican votes were counted in Virginia. While Republican returns should be used with care, it is evident that Democratic control of election machinery, GOP apathy, and the 1902 constitution took their toll on

¹³The Times (Richmond), November 9, 1899; Washington Post, November 7, 1901 and November 7, 1903; Nelson M. Blake, William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1935), pp. 131-32, 250; Warrock-Richardson Almanack for the Year 1903, p. 50; 1906, p. 70.

the party of Park Agnew.¹⁴

As the date for the constitutional referendum neared, Chairman Agnew placed the Republicans on record as being against holding a convention. He urged fellow Republicans to "show this attempted outrage under," by voting down the convention proposal. Reflecting the sentiments of most white Democrats, the Richmond Times warned on May 24, 1900, that a Republican victory would "be a triumph for the Negro voters and they will understand it as such." While favoring disfranchisement of most blacks, the Times believed that the ballot should be reserved for the few "intelligent, law-abiding, property-owning colored men."¹⁵

The shattered GOP was in no condition to outvote the Democrats on the convention question. Over 77,000 votes were recorded for the convention and 60,373 against revising the state's basic laws. While many blacks did not bother to vote, the convention's most notable support came from the cities and the Black Belt. In the heavily black counties, Negroes experienced various irregularities and their actual vote will never be known.

¹⁴Warrock-Richardson Almanack for the Year 1903, p. 64; 1899, p. 68; 1901, pp. 36, 40; 1904, p. 68; 1905, p. 74; 1906, p. 70.

¹⁵The Times (Richmond), May 11, 24, 25, 1900.

The "most remarkable feature noted the New York Times was "that the Negro seems doomed to lose his right to exercise suffrage by the counties and districts in which his race have three to one votes of the whites." The strongest opposition to the convention surfaced in the Southwest and parts of the Valley, areas with few black residents.¹⁶

Delegates to the convention were chosen in special elections conducted during April and May, 1901. Of the one hundred delegates elected to the body, eighty-eight were Democrats. With only twelve Republicans filling the remaining seats, the final outcome, unfavorable to the political future of the GOP, was expected. The convention began its proceedings on June 12, 1901, and over the following months, the debate centered mostly around how to disfranchise the state's Negro voters. After a year of labor, the constitution went into effect on July 10, 1902. Although the GOP state committee had issued a resolution on June 17, 1902, opposing the new constitution, a large number of black Republicans doubted the sincerity of their leaders. After all, exclusion policies at Republican meetings had been practiced for a

¹⁶Wynes, Races Relations in Virginia, pp. 58, 59; Washington Post, May 25, 1900; The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), March 25, 1900; New York Times, May 25, 1900.

number of years. By eliminating the Republicans as a political threat and reducing the black vote by almost ninety percent, the 1902 constitution opened a new era in the history of the Old Dominion.¹⁷

By March 1903, Campbell Slemp (1839-1907) of Lee County, representing the Ninth District, was Virginia's only Republican congressman. Initially, he had hoped to work with the GOP leadership and "make a square effort to unite" the party's stubborn factions. Slemp soon discovered that he was to receive little help or encouragement from the "Big Three" bosses: Chairman Agnew, Bowden, and S. B. Allen. When he realized that Agnew and his lieutenants would not cooperate with him in reviving the party, Slemp presented his views to President Roosevelt. For taking the dispute outside of the Old Dominion, Slemp drew the wrath of the "Big Three." Although the Agnew organization won a dramatic showdown at the 1904 state convention, Slemp's reelection to the House in November convinced President Roosevelt

¹⁷Buni, the Negro in Virginia Politics, pp. 36, 41, 42; Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, pp. 89-91. A good introduction to the convention and its accomplishments can be found in Wythe W. Holt, Jr. "The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902: A Reform Movement Which Lacked Substance," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 76 (January 1968): 67-102. For a discussion of legal measures taken against the 1902 Constitution, refer to Chap. III in Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics.

that the aggressive congressman was Virginia's leading Republican.¹⁸

Learning that Slemp had been picked by Roosevelt to direct the Virginia GOP, Park Agnew convened the state committee at Lynchburg's Carroll hotel on January 21, 1905. At this meeting, Agnew and his top supporters resigned their posts. In his letter of resignation, Agnew promised to support the new chairman but denied that his organization had ever been defeatist in its outlook or policies. Following acceptance of the resignations, C. Bascom Slemp, thirty-four year-old son of the congressman was unanimously elected as the party's next chairman. This development, observed the Alexandria Gazette, allowed the elder Slemp to "become the power behind the throne and virtually the chairman of the Republican party without resigning his seat in Congress."¹⁹

With the Slempts guiding the destiny of the GOP, Virginia's "citadel of Republicanism" became the Ninth

¹⁸Slemp to Cortelyou, December 20, 1902, in Theodore Roosevelt Papers, MD, LC; Pendleton, Political History of Appalachian Virginia, pp. 502, 503, 513; "Slemp Wins by 3,000" Washington Post, November 10, 1904.

¹⁹Washington Post, January 21-23, 1905; Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk), January 23, 1905; The Gazette (Alexandria), January 23, 1905; Pendleton, Political History of Appalachian Virginia, p. 513.

District. The victim of a stroke, Campbell Slemph died on October 13, 1907, while serving his third consecutive term in the Congress. Winning the special election held in December to fill his father's unexpired term, Bascom Slemph would hold the Ninth District seat until March 1923. He declined renomination in 1922. Even while serving on Capitol Hill, Slemph kept a close hand on GOP affairs in his home state by retaining the chairmanship until 1918, resigning to accept a place on the national committee. Respected for his views, Slemph was an advisor on southern affairs for three GOP presidents: Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover. Slemph acted as Coolidge's private secretary from the fall of 1923 until March 1925. When Slemph retired from active politics in the early 1930s, party leadership in Virginia was assumed by Richmond's Henry W. Anderson, GOP gubernatorial candidate in 1921, and Henry A. Wise of Accomac.²⁰

²⁰Washington Post, October 14, 1907; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 1706; Virginius Dabney, Virginia: The New Dominion (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 474, 499, 500. For a full treatment the younger Slemph's public life, see Guy B. Hathorn, "The Political Career of C. Bascom Slemph." (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1950). The first decade of the new century saw death claim nine of the GOP's major leaders, including Campbell Slemph (1907). James D. Brady, William F. Wickham, and Richard A. Wise died in 1900. The deaths of James A. Walker (1901), Edgar Allan (1904), George Bowden (1908), William Lamb (1909), and Park Agnew (1910) marked the passing of

CONCLUSION

Although the significance of the state Republican party rift has been overlooked by most students of Virginia's past, a careful study of the split will contribute to a more complete understanding of the Commonwealth's political history. The purpose of this work has been to examine the bitter fight for supremacy that erupted in the Virginia Republican leadership after the death of William Mahone and to offer the findings as an addition to the interpretive framework that is used to explain the decline of Virginia's two-party system.

In contrast with the ruling Democrats, the Virginia GOP has received little scholarly attention, leaving a large gap in our knowledge of this period. Discussion of Republicanism slackens after Mahone's 1889 defeat for the governorship and usually reappears with mention of the Slemps, who became the GOP's dominant family after early 1905. By treating the Republican rupture and its

the party's old guard. Edmund Waddill died in April 1931, giving him enough time to have met with Nelson M. Blake, author of Mahone. As a result, Waddill's influence is strong in this biography and William Lamb's close collaboration with Mahone still remains to be told. The Lamb Diary is the most significant primary source in this regard.

aftermath, this thesis restores a needed balance to the historical record.

As seen through the eyes of the Republican participants, this study has described how the men Mahone left behind failed to provide effective stewardship for a party that had the potential to challenge Democratic rule. The unfortunate Lamb-Waddill clash divided the Republicans and consumed much of the party's vital energies and talents. At stake was the political future of Virginia's second major party.

In its debilitated condition, however, the GOP could not realistically threaten the Democrats, who had serious problems of their own, namely the sound money or "gold bug" defection as well as the division between Senator Thomas S. Martin and the progressives. For the eventual collapse of a viable two-party structure in Virginia, the GOP leaders must accept a proper share of the responsibility. Even with the controversial Mahone laid to rest, the Republican forces under Lamb or Agnew would prove unable to break the iron grip on state government maintained by the Democrats. Without control of the General Assembly, reversal or revision of the Anderson-McCormick Election Act (1884), Walton Election Act (1894), and the Parker Law (1896), would not be possible.

After Mahone's death, most northern and Virginia

Republicans expected the popular and experienced William Lamb of Norfolk to succeed his friend as head of the state organization. In the weeks before the state committee gathered to vote for the party's new leader, Judge Edmund Waddill, Jr., of Richmond, initiated private discussions with Lamb, proposing that the two men share the chairmanship and national committee seat.

Representing a changed political climate, Waddill spoke for the growing McKinley movement and for men who wanted to break with the old Mahone style of leadership. Since a presidential election was in the offing, it was in the interest of the McKinley supporters to increase their influence regarding the party's future. Not willing to make a deal with the Judge, Lamb's reply was to let the state committee decide the matter. Knowing of Lamb's personal influence with the party elders and his expressed willingness to accept both offices, Waddill's reaction can be imagined.

The state committee vote (November 1895) that elected Lamb to fill the offices vacated by Mahone was not satisfactory to Waddill and his followers. Edgar Allan, Richmond city chairman and a Waddill lieutenant, later told reporters that Lamb had acquired his "unsought" positions through some "unseemly" maneuvering, choosing not to exclude some of Mahone's former opponents

in the process. Angered at this bold display of disloyalty, Lamb attempted to strip Allan and another Waddill boss from the Richmond and Norfolk chairmanships. Lamb's futile effort to purge the party of these "revolutionists" was the opening shot in a deadly political fight that became an insurmountable barrier to Republican advancement.

Continual infighting between Lamb and his enemies not only deprived the Virginia Republicans of the leadership they desperately needed, but the split also weakened the party because it spread to many of the city and county organizations. While most of the rank and file remained loyal to Lamb, Waddill and his allies outflanked the chairman by gaining control of the state committee. After deposing Lamb's hand-picked executive committee in late 1896, the state committee ousted Lamb in August of the following year and at the same meeting, voted down the proposed convention that was to nominate a ticket for the governor's race. By the time he was removed from office, Lamb had already discussed his willingness to resign the chairmanship with President McKinley. Understandably, Lamb wanted to leave on his own terms and his choice to lead the GOP was Congressman James A. Walker. Unhappy with this setback, Lamb was thoroughly convinced that Waddill and James Brady had

skimmed funds from the presidential campaign treasury, using this money to bribe the state committeemen.

The Republican struggle in Virginia attracted national press attention and was of great concern to President McKinley and his closest advisor, Marcus Hanna. When the Lamb faction ignored the state committee decision not to hold a nominating convention, Hanna placed his support behind Park Agnew, the new chairman. Hanna's backing of the "regulars," however, did not deter the Lambites from entering a slate of candidates for the 1897 governor's contest. In spite of party division, Negro apathy, and Democratic control of the electoral process, the Independent Republicans still managed to poll over 58,000 ballots.

After the election, the Republican factions each sought recognition for their organizations from the White House. By placing Virginia's federal patronage in the hands of Agnew, President McKinley gave his final answer to the pro-Lamb Republicans. Unwilling to give up control of the party machinery, Agnew never took Congressman Walker's convention idea, offered to settle the chairmanship dispute, under serious consideration.

With William Lamb's departure from politics, the Republicans lost the valuable services of an able and proven leader. Relying upon the friendships that he and

Mahone had formed with northern GOP bosses in earlier days, Lamb moved in the party's highest circles at the beginning of his term as chairman. When the rift at home worsened, Lamb's effectiveness was greatly reduced as the Waddill camp gradually gained control of the state committee. With McKinley's election, Waddill's standing in the party rose, and Lamb was destined to face more pressure from his opponents.²¹

As later events would reveal, Lamb's alliance with John Mitchell, Jr., the Richmond Planet's "fearless editor," also proved to be the last real hope for the state's blacks to exercise a meaningful voice within the party. Hundreds of black Virginians journeyed to Lynchburg in order to attend the convention called by Colonel Lamb. During the Agnew era, Negro voting strength suffered a drastic reduction through the suffrage sections of the 1902 state constitution and black morale was dealt a painful blow when the Republicans adopted an exclusion policy toward their

²¹In the year before his death, Colonel Lamb was honored at the 1908 GOP state convention. Named as permanent chairman, Lamb was "presented with a magnificent bouquet of roses- one for each year [he had] served as a Republican." See the Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk), April 9, 1908.

former associates.²²

Knowledge of the 1895-1897 schism provides the background needed to understand subsequent developments in the Virginia GOP during the Agnew chairmanship (1897-1905). The retirement of William Lamb and President McKinley's endorsement of Agnew did not sweep away the lingering bitterness engendered by two years of party strife. Agnew's Pyrrhic victory left him with a demoralized, divided, and much weaker party. Led by James A. Walker, Campbell Slemple, Richard A. Wise, and Alvah Martin, opposition to the chairman remained strong and continually surfaced at state conventions. During the Agnew years, the Negro Republicans had to contend with the party's growing "Lily White" faction. Determined to eliminate corruption in Virginia politics, these white Republicans believed that elimination of the Negro was the answer.

Dissatisfied with the chaotic condition of the GOP, Congressman Campbell Slemple turned to President Roosevelt for assistance when he found that the "Big Three" bosses

²²Luther P. Jackson, Negro Office Holders in Virginia, 1865-1895 (Norfolk: Guide Quality Press, 1945), p. 58. Negro disgust with the GOP reached a climax in 1921, when the "Lily Black" Republicans entered a protest ticket in the state election, with Mitchell as the nominee for governor. See Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics, pp. 84-89, for a good account of the 1921 campaign.

would not work with him in the rebuilding of a strong Republican party. Following Slemp's reelection to Congress in 1904, Roosevelt decided that it was time for a change of leadership in Virginia. In January 1905, at Roosevelt's insistence, Agnew and his supporters resigned from the state committee and a new chapter in the Republican story began. For Republican prospects in Virginia, Slemp considered the Ninth District to be the party's "guiding star" and he was proud of his association with the former Rough Rider.²³

The Virginia Republican split emerged after the death of longtime leader, William Mahone of Petersburg, one of the state's most remarkable politicians of the post-Civil War era. The inability of William Lamb and Edmund Waddill, Jr., to devise a power-sharing compromise led the GOP along a path of self-destruction. Any hope for a Republican revival was dashed by the intensity and length of the struggle, a conflict that served only to help clear the road for one-party rule. In reviewing the causes that led to the decline of the democratic process in the Old Dominion, the historian should include the 1895-1897 Republican split along with the Democratic

²³C. Bascom Slemp, compiler, Addresses of Famous Southwest Virginians, T. W. Preston, ed. (Bristol, Va.-Tenn.: King Printing Co., c. 1939), pp. 485-86, 489.

election laws, widespread voting fraud, the 1902 state constitution, and GOP abandonment of the Negro.

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