

## The Road to Secession: Antebellum Society and Politics

### Introduction:

North Carolina waited longer than any other state except Tennessee to secede from the Union and join the Confederacy. This is not to say that the Old North State had no secessionists. Rather, North Carolinians had conflicting ideas about leaving the Union. Although staunch supporters of slavery, many North Carolinians hesitated when it came to taking such a significant step as secession. Some felt it better to stay in the Union and enjoy the Constitutional protections offered there, rather than give up those protections to embark on a new journey. However, when Confederate forces fired upon Fort Sumter and President Abraham Lincoln asked for troops from North Carolina to put down the rebellion, the state acted swiftly and decisively. North Carolina seceded from the Union on May 20, 1861, and the state's involvement in the Civil War began. The following narrative details North Carolina's antebellum political, economic, and social circumstances that led up to this decision.

### Antebellum North Carolina

Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, North Carolina became more vibrant and progressive. Largely due to a number of political reforms and **internal improvements** promoted by the dominant Whig Party, it finally began to emerge from the political, social, and economic stagnation that earned it the reputation as the "**Rip Van Winkle**" state. Western politicians and business leaders had lobbied for many of the changes for years. In order to institute this much needed change, the state constitution, adopted in 1776 and which limited the power of the assembly, needed to be amended or replaced. Prominent citizens David Swain of Asheville and William Gaston of New Bern led the delegates at the 1835 Constitutional Convention. The convention structured representation in the state legislature in a way that pleased both easterners and westerners. Easterners

retained an advantage by keeping representation in the Senate based on wealth. Only those who owned fifty or more acres of land could vote for Senators. Westerners obtained relief by having representation in the House based on county population. The governor would be directly elected by the voters instead of being selected by the legislature. The new constitution allowed Catholics in the state to hold office, but continued to deny the right to Jews and atheists. At the same time, however, it removed **suffrage** from free blacks and Native Americans. This was but one more move toward clamping down on the rights of free blacks in the wake of **insurrections** such as the **Nat Turner Rebellion** in 1831. Insurrections fueled Southern fears of northern abolitionist movements which advocated slave rebellions and runaway activity.

In the 1830s and 1840s, North Carolina was a two party state. **Democrats**, led by Nathaniel Macon, controlled most of the eastern part of the state, while **Whigs**, led by Archibald Murphey and John Motley Morehead, held sway in the west. Whigs gained control of the state after 1840 and pushed for public education and internal improvements. They created the state's first public school system in 1839. By 1845, every county had at least one school. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill continued to thrive. Under David Swain's leadership, it tripled its enrollment and expanded its curriculum. Many of the state's religious denominations also founded colleges during this time period, including Davidson College in 1837 by the Presbyterians, Baptist Literary Institute in 1834 (later Wake Forest College), New Garden Boarding School in 1837 by the Quakers (later Guilford College), and Trinity College in 1838 by the Methodists (later Duke University). Each major denomination also established a college for women in the 1840s, including Greensboro Female College (Methodist), St. Mary's in Raleigh (Episcopalian), Salem Female Academy (Moravian), and Chowan Baptist Female Institute.

Railroads were the primary form of internal improvements during the antebellum period, with more than \$1 million in state funds committed to

construction. The first state-sponsored lines were the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad and the Raleigh & Gaston line. Later, the North Carolina Railroad, begun in 1849 and completed in 1856, made an enormous impact on the state. This railroad connected the western counties with the rest of the state, eventually running from Charlotte to Goldsboro, stopping at many points in between. The North Carolina Railroad unified the state in a number of ways. It ended the west's isolation, allowing people and supplies to move across the state with ease. Improved transportation expanded agriculture and encouraged Piedmont farmers to grow surplus crops, which could be shipped to eastern markets at lower costs. Towns grew up along the railroad, as well as businesses, factories, and trade, further diversifying North Carolina's economy. Towns that were bypassed by the railroads often tried to make up the difference by building plank roads that would connect them to railroad towns.

The enthusiasm for education and railroads continued well into the 1850s, but the two-party system gradually changed. The Whig Party dissolved on a national level. Still, westerners and some Tidewater residents continued to vote for former Whigs in state elections. By the 1850s, however, the Democrats had regained control and were steering North Carolina's course. Democrats continued many of the reforms of the 1830s. They also supported reforms not always advocated by Whigs, including **universal white manhood suffrage**.

Gold mining, as an industry, developed after the first recorded discovery of gold in North America in 1799 at the farm of John Reed ([Reed Gold Mine](#)) in Cabarrus County. By the 1820s and 1830s, mining became firmly established and continued to grow in North Carolina. By 1837, the federal government, recognizing North Carolina's importance to the industry, established a branch of the U. S. Mint at Charlotte. Textile mills emerged in the 1840s as an important industry in the state. Leaders in these endeavors included the Battle family of Rocky Mount and the Holt family of Burlington. Textile operations also developed along the Cape Fear River and its tributaries.

### *Agriculture in Antebellum North Carolina*

Despite this growth in manufacturing and industry, the state's economy was still primarily based on agriculture. By the 1850s, North Carolina had developed two **cash crops**, tobacco and cotton, which drove the state's economy. The development of bright leaf tobacco resulted in a huge increase in tobacco production from 12 million pounds in 1850 to 33 million pounds in 1860. During this same period, cotton production nearly doubled to 145,000 bales. Farmers grew other crops, such as wheat, corn, and rice, but these were grown as **staple crops** and did not bring in high profits like cotton and tobacco. Other commodities such as timber and naval stores rounded out North Carolina's agricultural contributions to the economy.

Despite this increased agricultural production, North Carolina never developed an extensive plantation system quite like that of her neighbor states, South Carolina and Virginia. In 1860, more than two-thirds of the farms in the state contained fewer than one hundred acres, where the owner and his family did the majority of the labor. If financially able, they may have purchased a few enslaved people to work along side them. However, a closer look at the social classes in North Carolina reveals that while the majority of white people did not own slaves, one-third of the population was enslaved.

### *Social Classes in Antebellum North Carolina*

By 1860, there were six fairly distinct social classes in North Carolina. The **gentry** or **planter class** consisted of owners of large plantations with more than twenty slaves, high public officials, and well-to-do professional men, such as lawyers, doctors, and business leaders. Although smallest, with only about 6 percent of the white population, this class controlled much of the state's government and business and included men such as **Josiah Collins, III** of **Somerset Place** at Creswell and **Paul Cameron** of **Stagville** plantation near

present-day Durham. With their large enslaved populations, Somerset and Stagville were exceptions rather than the rule. In 1860, 28 percent of the white population owned slaves, but only 3 percent of these slave-holding whites would have been considered in the planter class. The vast majority of slave-owners owned fewer than ten slaves.

The 25 percent of slave-owning whites that did not belong to the planter class belonged to the **middle class**. This group was made up of small merchants and manufacturers, lesser public officials, professional men of moderate income, and small farmers owning fewer than twenty slaves and more likely owning only one or two. Examples of men in the middle class included [John Harper of Bentonville](#) and [Zebulon Vance of Asheville](#). This middle class held many of the same ideals of the gentry and even aspired to move into that higher class.

The remainder of the white population, sometimes classified together as **common whites**, made up the third and fourth social classes. The **yeomen farmer/skilled labor class** was the largest white class in North Carolina. It constituted about 60 to 65 percent of the white population. The yeoman farmers were smaller land owners who farmed their land independently. They did not own slaves and grew crops or raised livestock for their own use, with any surplus going to settle debts or barter for goods. Others in this class included naval stores workers, miners, mechanics, overseers, **artisans**, and tradesmen. [James Bennett](#) of Orange County was a good example of a Piedmont yeoman farmer. Generally satisfied with their lot in life, these folks had a decent standard of living and, in terms of political rights, had a status equal to the higher classes. A few may have envied those in the gentry, but most admired them and aspired to be like them.

Approximately 5 to 10 percent of the white population fell into the fourth class. **Poor whites** were landless tenant farmers and poor laborers who went from job to job as available. The majority of this class was illiterate and performed the lowest level of jobs. Although excluded from the ranks of the

social, political, and economic elite, poor whites, like yeomen, supported the basic social **hierarchy** established by the planter class because it protected their position as higher than that of the enslaved. Many common whites not only verbally supported the slave system, they also served on slave patrols and county militias that guarded against slave revolts and tracked down runaways. When the time came for war, this class filled the Confederate ranks and fought to defend the very system that kept them at the bottom of the white social order.

North Carolina had a rather large population of free African Americans - 30,463 in 1860 - who constituted the fifth social class. Approximately 10 percent of the black population fell into this category. The most sizable free black communities were in Wilmington, New Bern, and Halifax. Over two-thirds of this class was mulatto, that is, persons of mixed race. Although some blacks traced their freedom back to the Revolution, or even before, most obtained liberty from **manumission** or **emancipation** by their owner. In the wake of Nat Turner's rebellion and fears of other insurrections, freedom by emancipation became more difficult by mid-century, with new laws restricting where freed slaves could live and setting high costs to the owner for freeing them. Some enslaved people purchased their own freedom or freedom for family members. Owners sometimes hired out trusted slaves, allowing them to keep a portion of their salary. If an enslaved person could save enough funds and the owner was agreeable, freedom could be purchased.

Being a free black in North Carolina was better than being enslaved, but there were still many restrictions and much discrimination against them. Common whites saw free blacks as direct competition for jobs and trade, leading to even more tension between the races. Increasing legal restrictions prevented true freedom of movement by free blacks and prohibited their associations with enslaved blacks. Despite these restrictions, many free blacks, such as skilled cabinet maker **Thomas Day** of Caswell County or businessman **John Caruthers Stanly** of New Bern, lived productive lives. Some, like Stanly, even owned

slaves themselves, often, but not always, family members. Other free blacks farmed, much like their counterpart white yeoman farmers.

The sixth and lowest social class was that of the **enslaved persons**. Slaves made up nearly one-third of the state's total population in 1860. Most served as agricultural labor on farms and plantations. They were found in every county in the state, with a greater concentration in the eastern areas that had the most suitable soil for growing cash crops, especially cotton. Some businessmen simply saw slavery as an **investment**, a place to put their capital, which would increase in value. Owning slaves was a sign of wealth, prestige, and power in the entire South and in North Carolina, both east and west. Western counties that produced fewer cash crops had fewer slaves. [\[Insert link to map\]](#) Although the mountain climate and terrain prevented the development of large plantations, such as those in the eastern part of the state, slavery was, nevertheless, a vital part of the mountain economy. The major distinction in slavery in the west was the diversity of economic activity it supported. Enslaved men and women often worked alongside the mountain farmer/owner, in thriving tourist businesses such as hotels and resorts, in mines, and in livestock endeavors.

### *The Life of a Slave*

Slavery, by its very nature was dehumanizing, as people were considered property and their worth was primarily valued by the amount of work they could do. Most slave owners provided the mere basics for their slaves, as any extra consideration would cut into their profit margin. The average slave dwelling was very basic, usually rough log, one-room houses with dirt floors and a fireplace for heating and cooking. Most windows contained no glass, only a wooden shutter to close out harsh elements of rain, wind, and cold. There were exceptions, such as the housing at [Horton Grove](#) on Stagville plantation, where Paul Cameron provided some of his slaves with two-story, four room quarters, with wood floors. These buildings housed four families, with each family

getting one room. Despite being crowded, these dwellings were nonetheless considered of higher standard than most houses for the enslaved population.

Owners usually provided the most basic food rations, including some meat - usually fat pork - cornmeal, and molasses. Enslaved people often supplemented this meager diet with vegetables grown in a community or household garden, which they tended only after their day's labor for the owner was completed. Slaves also improved their diet by hunting and fishing when possible.

Even within the enslaved community, there was a social hierarchy. On large plantations, the personal servants, household servants, slave drivers, and black overseers held a higher status than the vast majority of slaves that worked in the fields. Owners sometimes allowed enslaved craftsmen and artisans more freedom of movement than others. Slaves who worked the naval stores industry and maritime trades had tremendous freedom but were nonetheless, by all legal accounts, still enslaved. Some owners even allowed well trusted slaves permission to travel and visit family members on nearby plantations or towns. At [Somerset Place](#), Josiah Collins granted a holiday so that several of his slaves could travel to Edenton to visit family. [[Link to document](#)] Enslaved people in the western part of the state often led livestock over long drives to market in South Carolina and Georgia. This relative independence stands in sharp contrast to the tight control by overseers over field hands on large plantations. One might wonder why slaves simply did not leave and never return if they were granted such freedom of movement. Many did. Even those held under tight control on eastern plantations made attempts to escape. Records of runaways and the efforts employed by slave owners to secure their return are part of the historical record. [[Link to NC runaway announcements](#)] Many slaves escaped via the waterways and swamps of eastern North Carolina but it was a frightening and treacherous journey filled with threats from man and nature. The story of [Harriet Jacobs](#) of Edenton highlights what one woman would

endure in her quest for freedom. She not only secured her freedom in 1842 but wrote about it and published *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* in 1861.

Discipline and punishment within the institution of slavery was varied. Certainly there were despicable slave owners who whipped and abused their slaves without conscience. The majority most likely did not treat their slaves in a brutal fashion. After all, enslaved people were legally considered property and it was in their owners' best interests to keep them healthy enough to work. Nevertheless, even the kindest master could resort to harsh disciplinary measures when necessary, in order to maintain control of his or her labor force. Whipping was often used as a means of punishment and also as a means of intimidating others to behave and work diligently lest they be whipped next. As the voices of abolitionists in the North grew louder, white southern fears of slave revolts grew stronger, causing owners to exercise ever more control over their property.

Perhaps the most effective means for controlling the enslaved population was simply the threat of being "**sold South.**" Demand for slaves in the lower South grew with the expansion of cotton cultivation at a far greater pace than in North Carolina. A very active slave trade developed between the upper and lower South after the international slave trade ended in 1808. Between 1830 and 1860, North Carolina exported about 100,000 slaves to states in the lower South. Such sales often resulted in the break up of an enslaved family. In fact the dissolution of families was one of the hardest circumstances of a slave's life. This is evident in the poetry of [George Moses Horton](#), a Chatham County slave who wrote and sold poems to students at the University of North Carolina. Changes that occurred in the master's life, such as marriage, death, or simply relocating, often had ripple effects on the lives of enslaved property. If the master suffered an economic or financial crisis, he often quickly sold off some of his slaves to obtain ready cash. Thus, for the enslaved, there was no guarantee each morning that they would see their loved ones later that night.

### Political Response to Slavery

Such horrors had caused the issue of slavery to be a hotly debated issue throughout the nation's history. The United States government went to great lengths to try to pacify both pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions within the country. This resulted in a series of compromises that began with the **Three-Fifths Compromise** in the United States Constitution, but the debates became more heated beginning in 1820. In that year the **Missouri Compromise** was passed, maintaining the balance between slave states and free states. Missouri was admitted to the Union as a slave state and, as a counterbalance, Maine was admitted as a free state. From that point forward all territory below the line of 36° 30' was to be slave and all territory above it free. This proved to be a temporary compromise, as the expansion of the United States into the southwest territories resurrected this balance of power issue.

In North Carolina, the two major antebellum political parties, Whigs and Democrats, spearheaded the defense of slavery and southern rights. Though both parties agreed that southern rights should be defended, each approached that defense in its own way. Further, each argued that its method of defending southern rights was the best, and that the opposing party was not doing the job effectively. The political defense of southern rights came to the forefront in the 1840s and 1850s.

In 1844, **James K. Polk** became President. A Democrat from Tennessee, he was born and spent much of his childhood in North Carolina. Polk campaigned on an expansionist platform that invoked questions of slavery and its extension into new territories. Shortly after taking office, he signed a bill to organize the Oregon Territory, and North Carolina's Democrats supported it. Whigs, however, attacked the bill, saying it was hostile to southern rights because it excluded slavery from the territory. Democrats argued that they expected few, if

any, slave owners to move to the territory and that it lay well north of the 36° 30' line set by the Missouri Compromise.

The annexation of Texas (1845) and the Mexican War (1846-1848) proved to be even more important in the slavery debate. Democrats cheered President Polk's decisions to annex Texas and subsequently go to war with Mexico, while the Whigs felt that the war was nothing more than Democratic **imperialism**. Though the two parties disagreed on these issues, northern efforts to limit slavery in the new territories acquired from Mexico forced each party to focus on the defense of slavery and southern rights. The Democrats chose to fight against the **Wilmot Proviso**, a provision, which northern Congressman David Wilmot attached to a war funding bill. The proviso outlawed slavery in any territory acquired as a result of the war. The proposed legislation divided the Congress along sectional lines. Northern Democrats and Whigs supported the proviso while southern Democrats and Whigs opposed it and agreed that disallowing the expansion of slavery into the territories was a denial of southern rights and put southern whites on an unequal footing with northerners. Some North Carolina Whigs opposed the acquisition of territory altogether in order to avoid the inevitable conflict over the expansion of slavery.

Though both parties portrayed themselves as the defenders of southern rights and southern equality, the Whigs gained the upper hand in the election of 1848. The party nominated Zachary Taylor, a retired general and one of the heroes of the Mexican War. Taylor, a Louisiana plantation owner, supported the Whig view in the debate over the defense of southern rights. The Democrats nominated Lewis Cass, a northerner that the Whigs portrayed as a supporter of the Wilmot Proviso and the choice of the abolitionists. With Taylor's election as president, the Whigs supported the extension of the Missouri Compromise line at 36° 30' to the Pacific Ocean and opposed legislation to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. Throughout the late 1840s and early 1850s, North Carolina

Whigs enjoyed much greater success than did the national party and continued their strong support of President Taylor's policies.

After the discovery of gold in California, the limits on the expansion of slavery set by the Missouri Compromise became apparent once again. As settlers poured into the territory, the petition for statehood came earlier than many anticipated. And once again the question regarding slavery reared its ugly head. To settle the issue, Congress passed the Compromise of 1850. The compromise called for California to enter the nation as a free state and the Utah and New Mexico territories to be created, allowing the question of slavery therein to be decided by **popular sovereignty**. The institution of slavery was given the protection of a stronger fugitive slave law nationally, which required all Americans to return escaped slaves to their masters. A final provision of the Compromise of 1850 abolished the slave trade in the District of Columbia.

Throughout the 1850s, southerners continued to be wary of northern politicians' abolitionist sentiments and the threat imposed on southern rights by the federal government. The slavery issue simply would not be put to rest. As settlers moved into the mid-west, the need for territorial governments arose. In 1854, Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois introduced legislation to create the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Despite the fact that both of these territories lay north of the Missouri Compromise line, the bill declared that popular sovereignty would decide the question of allowing slavery or not, just as in Utah and New Mexico. This, in effect, negated the Missouri Compromise. Northern abolitionists were outraged and vowed to block any territory that appealed for admission as a slave state. Antislavery and pro-slavery forces battled in Kansas with such violence that the territory earned the nickname "Bleeding Kansas." In the end, pro-slavery forces met in Lecompton, Kansas, drafted a state constitution and appealed for admission to the Union as a slave state. Congress rejected this bid and southerners realized that the northern states held the greater power. The South felt more and more threatened.

This issue also threatened the national Whig party. The northern arm of the Whigs became more antislavery and less concerned with keeping the party together by compromising ideals to satisfy the southern arm. This resulted in an official break in 1854, with the establishment of a new political party that only existed in the **free states** – the **Republican Party**. The Republican Party drew antislavery Whigs and Democrats as members.

### *The Rise of Abolitionist Movements and Southern Reactions*

Although most North Carolinians supported slavery, a significant portion of the population was either ambivalent about the institution or firmly on the side of the abolitionists. The Quakers in the Piedmont had always opposed slaveholding and, as early as 1816, had formed the North Carolina Manumission Society to raise money to purchase slaves and give them their freedom. The University of North Carolina dismissed Prof. Benjamin Hedrick from his position because he openly supported Republican John C. Frémont for the presidency in 1856. Hedrick not only lost his job but was also run out of the state because of his anti-slavery views. In 1857, the publication [\*The Impending Crisis of the South\*](#), written by [\*\*Hinton Rowan Helper\*\*](#) of Davie County, inflamed the proslavery advocates in North Carolina. Helper argued that slavery should be abolished because it was detrimental to the livelihood of the poor white population in the region. According to Helper, the South would continue to be backward and lag economically as long as slavery existed. Like Hedrick, Helper soon realized that he was not welcome in North Carolina because of his views. Despite the significant abolitionist sentiment in the state, slavery had become a thoroughly entrenched and defended institution in North Carolina by the late 1830s, and this stance grew ever stronger as the next two decades passed.

Two other events drove home the fears of southerners that a federal government dominated by northerners, Republicans, and abolitionists would strain the bonds of union to the breaking point. In 1857, the decision issued by

the U.S. Supreme Court in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* stated that Congress did not have the authority to forbid slavery in the territories and that a slave could not sue in court. Furthermore slaveholders could not be denied their property without **due process of law**. Southerners were elated at this decision, but Republicans in Congress refused to accept the ruling. They continued to thwart efforts to expand slavery into the territories, and southerners saw that even the Supreme Court could not protect their rights. Later, in 1859, a more frightening event took place at **Harpers Ferry**, Virginia. An abolitionist named **John Brown** led a raid on the federal **arsenal** located there, in an attempt to seize guns and arm slaves for insurrection. Federal troops responded to the threat and captured Brown, who was later tried and hanged. This made Brown a **martyr** for the northern abolitionist cause and filled southerners with fear of further rebellions. In North Carolina, stricter control over the enslaved population was instituted to protect slaveholder property rights and guard against threats of violence to the white population in general. The fear and intimidation that southerners felt was only to get worse as a result of the upcoming elections.

### *The Presidential Election of 1860 and Its Aftermath*

The presidential election of 1860 proved to be cataclysmic for the United States. North Carolina split its votes in the election almost evenly between the Southern Democrat, John C. Breckenridge, and the Constitutional Union Party candidate, John Bell. Democrat Stephen A. Douglas received minimal votes in North Carolina and Republican **Abraham Lincoln** received none, as he did not appear on the ballot. Though Breckenridge ran second in the general election, he fell far behind Lincoln, who became the sixteenth president of the United States. This sent shock waves through North Carolina and the entire South. The rise of the Republican Party to power in both the presidency and in Congress jeopardized the institution of slavery, and many in the South felt secession was their only recourse.

Immediately following Lincoln's election, North Carolina's **Unionists** proved influential in defeating a motion by North Carolina **Gov. John W. Ellis** to hold a secession convention. The Old North State adopted what was called the "**Watch and Wait**" policy to see if Lincoln could find a peaceful solution to the divisiveness and sectionalism plaguing the country. Though Unionists supported the federal government initially, they did not want to see any harm done to the institution of slavery or military action taken against any southern state. In the meantime, on December 20, 1860, the state of South Carolina seceded. Shortly after, six other southern states, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and Mississippi, joined South Carolina to form the **Confederate States of America**. The **Union** was finally broken over the issue of slavery but North Carolina remained reluctant to leave it.

North Carolina's fate was sealed on April 12, 1861, when troops in South Carolina fired on **Fort Sumter** as the Union was attempting to resupply the garrison there. President Lincoln called for volunteers from every state still in the Union to "put down the rebellion." With that call for troops, Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee left the Union, refusing to bear arms against their fellow southerners. North Carolina held its secession convention on May 20, 1861 and joined the Confederacy the next day. The groundwork for this decision, laid in the early part of the century had at last culminated in a complete rending of our union.

## North Carolina as a Civil War Battlefield

### Introduction

Military actions in North Carolina during the Civil War can be divided into three phases. The first phase encompasses the period of time from North Carolina's secession until the late spring or early summer of 1862. It begins with the Union assault on the fortifications at Hatteras in fall 1861 and continues through the Burnside Expedition of spring 1862 during which Roanoke Island, New Bern, Beaufort, and Fort Macon were captured. This resulted in Union control of both the Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds and the occupation of much of eastern North Carolina. The second phase is the period from summer 1862 through fall 1864 when military action in the state was at its ebb. Even so, there were significant military actions that occurred within this time span, including the Union's strengthening of its naval blockade of the coast and raids by Gen. John G. Foster and Gen. Edward Potter. The Confederates countered these actions with a number of attempts to recapture New Bern, a raid on a Union gunboat in the Neuse River, and the retaking of Plymouth. The final phase covers the Confederacy's demise in North Carolina, beginning in fall 1864 and ending with Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's surrender at Durham Station in April 1865. Most of the state's major military actions occurred during this phase of the war, including the battles in the Cape Fear region, the fall of Wilmington and Sherman's Carolinas Campaign.

### Phase One: Early War Action, May 1860 – April 1862

In the war's first few months, North Carolina garnered little attention from the **Union** military. The state was largely forgotten by the Confederates as

well, and most of the troops raised were organized into **regiments** and sent elsewhere in the Confederacy. Aside from small **garrisons** at a handful of coastal **fortifications** there was little military presence in the state. President Lincoln ordered a **blockade** of all southern ports in April. The Confederate response of **blockade running** into and out of the state's ports began to attract the attention of the powers in the North, and the Union set out to eliminate the lucrative trade. To that end, forces under **Gen. Benjamin F. Butler** and Commodore Silas Stringham converged at Hatteras Inlet in late August 1861 to attempt the closure of that passageway to the sea. Acting in concert, the Union army and navy successfully captured Forts Clark and Hatteras, and effectively closed the inlet to blockade running on August 28-29. The operation at Hatteras was viewed as an important victory at a time when the Union was desperately in need of a military success.

In order to completely control the waters of northeastern North Carolina, the Union organized the Burnside Expedition. Again, a joint army-navy operation, the Burnside Expedition lasted from late January through late April 1862 and resulted in the occupation of much of eastern North Carolina. Led by **Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside** and Flag Officer Louis M. Goldsborough, the expedition's first target was **Roanoke Island**. Capturing the island would ensure Union control of both the Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds. This would give the Union military an effective foothold in the eastern part of the state from which to base future operations. Roanoke Island fell to Union forces on February 8. The US Navy then turned its attention toward destroying North Carolina's small, fledgling navy, nicknamed the **Mosquito Fleet**. The Mosquito Fleet was destroyed at the Battle of Elizabeth City on February 10, and the town of Winton was burned on February 19.

Burnside's next target was the state's former capital of **New Bern**. By March 12 the Union forces were in position to strike the Confederates defending the town. Union gunboats began shelling the riverbank on March 13, in

preparation for landing troops. After a brief defense, the Confederates retreated upriver to Kinston, and by the end of the day on March 14, Burnside controlled New Bern. Some of North Carolina's best known Civil War personalities participated in the Battle of New Bern including Confederate officers **Lawrence O'B. Branch**, **Robert F. Hoke**, and **Zebulon B. Vance**. From New Bern, Union troops followed the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad southeast, capturing Havelock, Carolina City, and Morehead City. By March 24, Union forces had occupied the port town of Beaufort and began planning their assault on **Fort Macon**, a masonry fortification on Bogue Banks that guarded the Beaufort Inlet.

Union troops were ferried to Bogue Banks from March 29 to April 10. Once on the island, they erected gun **emplacements** and prepared to lay siege to Fort Macon. Col. Moses J. White commanded the fort. He was hampered by old, smoothbore **artillery** pieces that lacked the range and accuracy of the Union guns and a garrison of only 300 men that were fit for duty. On April 25 the Union guns opened fire on the fort from land and sea. The older masonry fortification was no match for the Union's rifled artillery, and soon it became apparent that the fort's walls and powder magazines could be breached under heavy fire. Colonel White was forced to surrender Fort Macon.

By late April 1862, the Union thoroughly controlled the coast of North Carolina from the Virginia border to the White Oak River. Occupation forces remained in coastal North Carolina, at such locations as Roanoke Island, Plymouth, New Bern, and Beaufort. Beaufort became a coaling station for the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, thereby making it less difficult for the Union to conduct interior raids, refuel the blockading force and supply troops. New Bern became the military and political center for the Union in North Carolina. Roanoke Island and New Bern also became home to two large **freedman's colonies**, as thousands of slaves flocked to these locations in order to escape bondage and enjoy the protection of the Union forces. However, the capture of Fort Macon and the end of the Burnside Expedition marked the last

major military action in the state for over two years, as the Union turned its attention to other theaters of the war, such as Virginia, South Carolina, and the Mississippi River.

*Phase Two: Contested Ground, Contested Waters, May 1862 – November 1864*

While there were numerous small skirmishes in eastern North Carolina throughout the remainder of the war, no major Union military assaults took place until the First Battle of **Fort Fisher** on Christmas of 1864. However, there were some Union pushes into the interior of the state and some offensive actions by the Confederates as well. Foster's Raid and Potter's Raid highlight the Union efforts, while important Confederate actions were the repeated attempts to dislodge the Union from New Bern and the recapture of the town of Plymouth.

In December 1862, **Gen. John G. Foster**, commander at New Bern, organized a raid to Goldsboro to burn the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad bridge there. Foster's force of 10,000 **infantry**, 640 **cavalry**, and 40 artillery pieces left New Bern on December 11. On December 14, Foster's army engaged the Confederates just outside of Kinston in the Battle of Southwest Creek (or the First Battle of Kinston). Outnumbered, the Confederates withdrew and Foster continued his march. The Union forces again encountered Confederate resistance on December 15 and 16 at Whitehall (now known as Seven Springs). The Confederates were at work building the ironclad ram **CSS Neuse**. Though the hull was hit by several shot and shell, Union attempts to completely destroy the unfinished vessel were unsuccessful. Following the two days of fighting, Foster continued on toward his objective. Reaching the railroad bridge on December 17, Foster's forces battled Confederates and eventually were able to set fire to the bridge. Foster ordered his troops from the field of battle and returned to New Bern, calling his raid "a perfect success." Unfortunately for Foster, the damage to the bridge was only superficial and the Confederates managed to rebuild it within a few weeks. The following summer, the *Neuse* floated

downriver to Kinston where it was outfitted with engines, cannons and **iron plating**.

Foster's chief of staff, **Gen. Edward E. Potter**, led another expedition into the interior in mid-July 1863. His force of cavalry left New Bern, and, on July 19, arrived in Greenville. Finding no Confederate resistance, he looted the town and burned the Tar River Bridge. Continuing on, Potter split his force, sending a detachment to Rocky Mount while he led the rest of the troops to Tarboro. On July 20, Potter's men reached Tarboro and destroyed a Confederate ironclad under construction as well as other military and civilian property. Upon learning that the Confederates were closing in on him, he decided to return to the safety of New Bern on July 21. Potter reunited with the detachment he had sent to Rocky Mount, and they reported having destroyed a great deal of property as well. The pursuing Confederates finally caught up with Potter's force and fought a two-day long running skirmish until the Union soldiers reached New Bern on July 23. Potter's Raid was a tremendous success as he returned to the Union stronghold having cut Confederate lines of communication, destroyed vast quantities of supplies and an ironclad, and brought back 100 Confederate prisoners, 300 horses or mules, and 300 "**contrabands**".

The Confederates developed plans to take offensive action of their own. There were two major attempts to expel the Union forces from their stronghold at New Bern. The first such attempt was made in late January and early February 1864. **Gen. George H. Pickett** was sent to eastern North Carolina with approximately 13,000 men and a cooperating naval force under **Cdr. John Taylor Wood**. The army was split into three columns, each to attack the city from a different vantage point, while the 250-man naval detachment descended the Neuse River from Kinston. It was hoped that the sailors and marines could capture one or more Union gunboats in the river and use them to offer support for the army's operation. Unfortunately, due to Pickett's poor leadership and the failure of two of his subordinates to carry out their duties, the attack on New

Bern failed. Only Gen. Robert F. Hoke, a North Carolinian, had executed his part of the plan. The naval detachment was much more successful, as Wood's expedition captured and burned the *USS Underwriter* before heading back to Kinston.

Undaunted by the setback at New Bern, Hoke made plans to recapture the town of Plymouth on the Roanoke River and returned to North Carolina in April 1864. Also planned as a joint army-navy expedition, the naval element consisted of the ironclad ram *CSS Albemarle* which had been built by the Confederates at Edwards Ferry. Nicknamed the "Cornfield Ironclad" because it was literally built in a cornfield, the *Albemarle* was destined to play a major role in the assault on the Union stronghold. Skirmishing outside of the town began on April 17. Arriving on April 19, the *Albemarle* encountered two Union gunboats, the *USS Miami* and *USS Southfield*. In the ensuing battle, the Confederate ironclad rammed the *Southfield* and sent it to the river bottom, and Cdr. Charles Flusser was killed on board the *Miami* when an artillery round bounced off of the *Albemarle's* iron casemate and back onto his ship, exploding near him. Hoke's men went on the offensive as the *Albemarle* shelled the Union position from the river. On April 20, Gen. W.H. Wessells, who was completely surrounded, surrendered to the Confederates. The defeat at Plymouth forced the Union to evacuate nearby Washington on April 27 but not before sacking the town.

The success at Plymouth prompted Hoke and his men to again turn their attention toward New Bern. Hoke had been disappointed at the failure of the operation there a few months earlier and was determined to succeed. This time he enlisted the aid of another ironclad ram, the *CSS Neuse*, almost completed at Kinston. Hoke also requested the assistance of the *Albemarle*. The Union fleet was waiting for the Confederate ironclad when it emerged into the Albemarle Sound. The *Albemarle* fought well, but sustained enough damage to force it back upriver to Plymouth for repair. The *Neuse* encountered difficulty as well, running aground on a sandbar only a half-mile from its dock. Unable to get free,

the *Neuse* would be of no use to Hoke in his assault. Skirmishing around New Bern began on May 4 and continued on May 5. Hoke's attack, though promising, was halted by an urgent message from Richmond, ordering his return to Petersburg to help meet a threat from Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. After Hoke's withdrawal, New Bern never faced another Confederate assault.

The Confederate success at Plymouth was short-lived. On the night of October 27, 1864, the CSS *Albemarle* was sunk at its dock during a daring raid led by naval **Lt. William B. Cushing**. As a result, Plymouth was retaken by the Union on October 31 and Washington shortly thereafter, reestablishing Union dominance in the area.

### *Phase Three: Late War Action, December 1864 – May 1865*

By winter 1864 the Union was poised to strike North Carolina from several vantage points. **Gen. William T. Sherman** completed his **March to the Sea** in late December and turned his attention northward to the Carolinas. The Union high command also turned their attention to the Cape Fear region, particularly Fort Fisher and Wilmington, long neglected in favor of numerous failed attempts to subdue Charleston, which the Union viewed as the very seat of secession. The Confederate Army of Northern Virginia entrenched around Petersburg and Richmond, and the Union determined to force it to abandon its fortifications by cutting off their main source of supplies through Wilmington.

In December 1864 the Union assembled a joint operation to reduce and capture of **Fort Fisher**. The plan called for the navy to bombard the fort, while the army landed a force to the north. Once the naval bombardment had effectively damaged the fort, the infantry would begin their assault. Commanding the expedition were **Adm. David Dixon Porter** and **Gen. Benjamin F. Butler**. The First Battle of Fort Fisher took place on Christmas, with the navy opening its bombardment on December 24. On Christmas Day, as Porter anxiously awaited the ground attack on the fortification, Butler's force

instead retreated. The navy's artillery fire had been largely ineffective and had not dismounted enough of the fort's heavy guns to allow for an assault without heavy casualties. The weather had taken a turn for the worse, and Butler also learned that Gen. Robert F. Hoke's division of 6,000 men had arrived in Wilmington and would soon be to the rear of his troops. Porter was incensed and blamed the failed attempt to take the fort on Butler's lack of courage and mismanagement.

Following the Christmas debacle, the Union high command replaced Butler with [Gen. Alfred H. Terry](#) and sent the expedition back to Fort Fisher for a second attempt. On January 13, 1865 the Second Battle of Fort Fisher began as the navy once again shelled the fort. Gunners on board all of the vessels in the fleet were ordered to concentrate their fire on the fort's gun chambers in order to maximize the bombardment's effectiveness. The plan of attack this time also made provisions for a naval landing party, supported by marines to be put ashore and attack the fort from the beach, at its northeast **bastion**. Terry would land his force north of the fort as before and make the ground assault while putting troops in position to protect his rear from possible reinforcements from Wilmington. Manning this defensive line were [United States Colored Troops](#), African American soldiers, under the command of Gen. Charles J. Paine. After two days of bombardment, many of the fort's land face guns had been disabled, making an assault much easier. As sailors and marines stormed the northeast bastion of the fort, they were slaughtered by murderous Confederate gunfire from inside the fort. However, as many of the Confederate troops and officers were distracted by the sailors' charge, Terry's main assault breached the western **salient** of the fort at the River Road **sally port**, giving the Union a foothold inside the fortification. The Union soldiers methodically fought their way across the length of the land face and down the interior of the fort. Both [Gen. W.H.C. Whiting](#) and [Col. William Lamb](#), Fort Fisher's commander, were wounded and captured. The fort was overwhelmed and forced to surrender. Though some

Confederate sailors were able to escape across the Cape Fear River, most of the fort's garrison was captured. Meanwhile, General Hoke's troops waited at Sugar Loaf, north of Fort Fisher, for an order to attack the Union troops from behind. Instead they received orders from **Gen. Braxton Bragg** in Wilmington to retreat, leaving Fort Fisher to its fate. On January 15 Fort Fisher was officially in Union hands and the lifeline of the Confederacy was cut.

Following the fall of Fort Fisher, the Union Navy entered the Cape Fear River. The fortifications at the mouth of the river were abandoned and troops relocated to **Fort Anderson** on the opposite side and upriver from Fort Fisher. The Union split its forces into two wings, one which moved north up the peninsula from Fort Fisher toward Wilmington and the other crossing the river to capture Fort Anderson. **Gen. Jacob D. Cox** and **Gen. John M. Schofield** led a 6,000 man force against Fort Anderson, which was defended by less than half that number. Operations against Fort Anderson were also assisted by navy gunboats as had been the case against Fort Fisher. The vessels had to proceed with caution, in order to avoid the line of **torpedoes** or underwater mines that had been placed in the river by the Confederates. On February 17 and 18 Union gunboats shelled Fort Anderson. The fort's commander, **Gen. Johnson Hagood** began evacuating his troops on the night of February 18, knowing he could not defend the position. Fort Anderson fell into Union hands the following morning. While Union gunboats shelled artillery batteries on the riverbank south of Wilmington, the army fought skirmishes at Town Creek in Brunswick County and at Forks Road, just outside of Wilmington. These were the Confederates' last efforts to defend the port city. Bragg ordered the city evacuated, and Wilmington fell to Union forces on February 22.

As Union forces were securing their hold on Wilmington, Gen. William T. Sherman was marching into North Carolina from the south, after having captured Columbia, South Carolina. He sent Jacob Cox's force to New Bern to make an advance against Goldsboro. Cox started for Goldsboro on March 6 with

approximately 13,000 troops and met Confederate resistance two days later at Wyse Fork, east of Kinston. On the first day of battle, the Confederates held their ground, and Robert F. Hoke captured most of the 15<sup>th</sup> Connecticut regiment. After two more days of battle, Confederate forces evacuated Kinston and moved to Goldsboro to join forces with **Gen. Joseph E. Johnston**. The ironclad ram CSS *Neuse* was ordered into action to cover the evacuation. The gunboat spent most of March 11 firing on the Union army. Following the evacuation, the crew of the *Neuse* **scuttled** the gunboat and retreated behind the army, leaving Kinston to the Union forces.

On March 11, as the Confederates were evacuating Kinston, Sherman marched into Fayetteville and took possession of the **arsenal** after minimal resistance. The retreating Confederates removed most of the arms, munitions, and equipment prior to leaving the town, and Sherman ordered that the arsenal be destroyed. Sherman continued his march, splitting his 60,000 man force into two wings. The right wing of Sherman's army encountered Confederate resistance under Gen. William J. Hardee on March 15-16 at the **Battle of Aversboro**. This resistance simply delayed the left wing of the Union force, which eventually caught up with the rest of the army at Bentonville.

The delaying action at Aversboro was exactly what General Johnston, commanding all Confederate forces in North Carolina, needed. Knowing that Sherman's army was nearly twice the size of his own, Johnston hoped to catch the Union force divided. Johnston positioned his troops along the Goldsboro Road near the village of Bentonville and awaited the arrival of one wing of Sherman's powerful army. The **Battle of Bentonville** was fought March 19-21 and was the largest battle fought in the Old North State. Initially, the Confederates broke through Union lines but failed to completely crush the enemy. When the two wings of the Union army united, it ensured Johnston's defeat. The armies battled for two more days, but on March 21, Union forces under Gen. Joseph A. Mower advanced to within 200 yards of Johnston's only

avenue of retreat. Though the Confederates managed to drive them back, Johnston withdrew his force from the field that evening and retreated to Smithfield. Sherman did not pursue, but continued to Goldsboro and re-supplied his weary troops.

From March 28 through April 26, 1865, Union **Gen. George H. Stoneman** led a destructive raid from Tennessee through western North Carolina and southwestern Virginia. The main purpose of the raid was to disrupt both the North Carolina and Piedmont Railroads. On March 28, troops in Boone burned the jail and destroyed the county records, while at Patterson, a cotton mill was burned and stores of bacon and corn were confiscated. From April 3-10, Stoneman's force was in southwestern Virginia, but it returned to North Carolina on April 10. In order to hit multiple targets, Stoneman frequently divided his force. On April 10, the towns of Salem and Winston surrendered and were spared from harm. The Piedmont Railroad bridge over Reedy Fork was burned, as was another bridge over Buffalo Creek. The 3<sup>rd</sup> South Carolina Cavalry was routed and a portion of the North Carolina Railroad was cut. Finally, at High Point, a depot containing 1,700 bales of cotton was burned. One of Stoneman's main targets was the town of Salisbury because of the **Confederate prison** located there. Salisbury was captured after token Confederate resistance on April 12, and, on April 12-13, the public buildings and military stores there were burned.

Stoneman turned westward and arrived in Statesville on April 13. Confederate stores, a **depot**, and the offices of the *Iredell Express* were burned. On April 16, a detachment of Stoneman's force occupied Lincolnton, crossed into South Carolina, and burned a railroad bridge over the Catawba River. Stoneman returned to Tennessee on April 17, via Blowing Rock and Boone, while sending Gen. Alvan Gillem on to Asheville. On April 18, Gillem encountered Confederate resistance near Morganton, but was able to overcome it and occupy the town. Gillem was confronted by a much stronger Confederate force led by

Gen. James G. Martin at Swannanoa Gap on April 20. Knowing that Martin's force would prove difficult to defeat, Gillem rerouted his men to Rutherfordton, crossed the Blue Ridge, and approached Asheville via Hendersonville. Having heard of the ongoing negotiations between Generals Johnston and Sherman, Martin's men refused to fight. On April 24, General Martin met with General Gillem and arranged for the Union force to be supplied from Confederate stores and have safe passage back to Tennessee. Stoneman's Raid ended on April 25 when Gillem's force occupied Asheville. After leaving an occupying force the following day, Gillem began the journey back to Tennessee.

Aside from Stoneman's Raid, major military actions ceased once **Gen. Robert E. Lee's** surrender became widely known. **Raleigh** was surrendered to Union forces on April 13. Generals Sherman and Johnston met in April at the farm of **James and Nancy Bennett** near Durham Station to work out the details of Johnston's surrender. This agreement was finalized on April 26, 1865 and officially ended the Civil War in North Carolina.

The final shots of the war in North Carolina, however, had yet to be fired. Skirmishing continued in the mountains of western North Carolina following Stoneman's Raid. Union **Col. George W. Kirk** raided Franklin and Waynesville in early May 1865. His detachment of cavalry engaged a small Confederate force belonging to **Thomas' Legion**, a military organization partially made up of Cherokee tribesmen from the mountains. This action, of little consequence, but it was the last engagement of the war in North Carolina.

## Wartime North Carolina

### **Introduction:**

**The outbreak of the war and the occupation of the coast by Federal forces early on, led to dramatic changes for the people of North Carolina. Black refugees, seeking freedom, flocked to Union lines. White slave owners, with their slave property in tow, sought safety by heading west to the Piedmont. Conscription policies created tensions between the state and the Confederate government. Desertion and discontent became very real problems for Gov. Zebulon Vance. The Union blockade of the coast caused shortages of goods, which were felt across the state, and inflation was rampant. These were the consequences of war, and all of them impacted the civilian population.**

### Wartime Politics

The Lincoln administration, once it had a Union beachhead along the coast, attempted to reestablish North Carolina as a loyal state. The president appointed **Edward Stanly**, a former Whig and native of New Bern, as the military governor. Stanly attempted to control the occupied parts of the state, but not necessarily the citizens of North Carolina, who elected their own governor. Lincoln, Stanly, and Gen. Ambrose Burnside, who commanded the Union military in North Carolina, incorrectly believed that Unionist sentiment stood ready to sweep the state back into the Union. Beginning in April 1862, Governor Stanly pursued a conservative policy, assuring North Carolinians that Lincoln had no plans to free the enslaved population, and attempting to provide civil government and security in the territory he administered. After a poor voter turnout for U.S. congressional elections on January 1, 1863, Stanly resigned in dismay as the **Emancipation Proclamation** became an official aim of the

administration, and civil government by the Union in eastern North Carolina ceased until 1865.

Though **John W. Ellis** and **Henry T. Clark** both served as governor early in the war, politics in North Carolina during the conflict was dominated by the tenure of **Gov. Zebulon B. Vance**. A popular Buncombe County attorney and legislator, Vance served as colonel of the 26<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Regiment prior to running for governor in the 1862 election. Vance took office on September 8, 1862 and refused any effort at cooperation with the Union military governor in the east, Edward Stanly. From the beginning, he fought a constant battle to maintain a balance between his support for the Confederacy and his duty to attend to the needs of his state. Furthermore, in the midst of war, Vance had to deal with a **peace movement** and reelection campaign. The stances that Governor Vance took on all these issues had consequences for North Carolina's civilian population.

**Conscription** proved one of the most troublesome issues in the Confederacy and placed Vance in conflict with the Richmond government on many occasions. For example, conscription laws exempted certain persons from service, including some state officials. Vance likely shielded more men from conscription than any other southern governor by interpreting the exemptions very broadly, thereby allowing lower level officials to escape Confederate service. Still, Vance worked diligently to enforce conscription laws and apprehend deserters. Later in the war, he relaxed his standards of exempting state officials and also agreed to allow the **Home Guard** to serve outside of North Carolina's borders in an effort to shore up the depleted Confederate forces. This was a significant step, as Home Guard troops were usually young boys and older men who were raised to defend and keep order within the state. They were almost always exempt from service outside of North Carolina.

Confederate conscription policies caused a great deal of tension within the state. Many felt that the conscription policy of the Confederate government was

unconstitutional since it forced men to join the army against their will. Many, who had the means to do so, hired substitutes to go in their places. However, the government attempted to conscript some of these men again. State courts defended these men against conscription and eventually the Confederate government relented. Regardless, most North Carolinians could not afford to hire a substitute, and many families saw their husbands, brothers, and sons go off to war without any choice in the matter. This left women, children, and elderly men to tend to the farms and businesses of the state. As the war continued, resentment over conscription grew.

Opposition to conscription policies also produced two types of protest: draft resistance and **desertion**. Draft resisters simply refused to join the army when called. Many hid out in the swamps of the eastern part of the state or in the mountains. Family members often assisted these men in their efforts to resist. Deserters joined the army, but later left without permission and either returned home or hid like draft resisters. Some whites defiantly showed their opposition to the Confederacy by joining Union regiments raised in Union occupied areas along the coast and in the mountains.

Draft resisters and deserters had various reasons for their actions. Some held Unionist views and disagreed with the war. Some were simply apathetic towards the war effort and felt compelled to stay home to care for their families. Others resented the planter class and felt they were fighting a war so that rich men could keep their enslaved property. Incidents of resistance and desertion were highest in the western Piedmont area known as the **Quaker Belt** and in the mountains, although instances of both could also be found in the northeastern part of the state.

As the war dragged on, some of these men formed armed bands that preyed on the local civilian population. These lawless groups often perpetrated crimes against **civilians** and clashed with both Union and Confederate military forces. One instance of this type of activity was the **Shelton Laurel Massacre** in

February 1863. Confederate military forces rounded up and killed a number of men believed to be deserters and Union sympathizers, after the sympathizers had allegedly raided the town of Marshall in Madison County to obtain salt. The sympathizers were reported to have broken into several stores and pillaged the private residence of a Confederate officer. Governor Vance ordered the incident investigated after reports that Confederate Lt. Col. James A. Keith and his force had brutally murdered thirteen old men and young boys without establishing their guilt. Brig. Gen. Henry Heth, who commanded Confederate forces in western North Carolina, allowed Keith to resign his commission on grounds of incompetence, but Keith was not further punished for the incident at Shelton Laurel.

Vance and many other North Carolinians certainly felt slighted by the lack of opportunity for the state's military leaders. North Carolina provided approximately 125,000 troops to the Confederacy, more than any other southern state, and suffered over 35,000 dead. Despite supplying the largest number of troops to the cause, the Old North State was underrepresented in the officer corps, with only thirty-seven generals in the army.

Aside from these military slights in the field of battle, Vance became agitated with Confederate appointments of outsiders to certain posts within the state. The Confederate medical director at Raleigh was from Maryland and a South Carolinian was appointed to oversee the **Salisbury Prison**. Particularly vexing to Vance was the appointment of Col. Thomas P. August, a Virginian, to oversee the conscription of soldiers in North Carolina.

### Blockade Running

One of Vance's greatest successes as governor was his initiation of state-sponsored **blockade running**. Blockade running was a financial venture whereby government owned and privately held ships eluded the Union blockade and smuggled goods, both military and consumer, into the

Confederacy. Wilmington became the favorite southern port for blockade runners as other southern ports were gradually closed by the Union.

The state-owned blockade runner *Advance* made eight successful runs between Bermuda and Wilmington between July 1863 and August 1864. The state also owned 25percent interest in four other blockade runners owned by Alexander Collie and Company of England. Through successful blockade running and skillful management of smuggled goods, North Carolina's soldiers were likely the best equipped in the army. Vance did more than any other southern governor to bring supplies into the Confederacy from Europe and later recounted that North Carolina's blockade running enterprise accounted for

*Large quantities of machinery supplies; 60,000 pairs of handcards; 10,000 grain scythes; 200 bbls. blue stone for wheat-growers; leather and shoes to 250,000 pairs, 50,000 blankets, gray woolen cloth for at least 250,000 suits of uniforms, 12,000 overcoats (ready made), 2,000 best Enfield rifles (with 100 rounds of fixed ammunition), 100,000 pounds of bacon; 500 sacks of coffee for hospital use, \$50,000 worth of medicines at gold prices, large quantities of lubricating oils, besides minor supplies of various kinds for the charitable institutions of the State. Not only was the supply of shoes, blankets and clothing more than sufficient for the supply of North Carolina troops, but large quantities were turned over to the Confederate government for the troops of other states.*

But even this endeavor brought him into conflict with the Confederate administration in Richmond. A prime example of this conflict occurred in January 1864 when the Confederate government tried to claim one-third of the space on the private vessel *Don*, then docked at Wilmington. *Don* was one of the vessels jointly owned by the state and Alexander Collie and Company. Vance argued that such Confederate interference reduced the owners' profits and incentive to participate in blockade running.

### Wartime Hardships

Though blockade running was crucial in supplying North Carolina's troops in the field, the Union blockade left the civilian population drastically undersupplied in daily necessities. Even though the blockade was only partially effective for most of the war, the state and Confederate governments wanted to ensure that the majority of cargo being imported via blockade running was military supplies. Therefore, many civilian goods became scarce, if available at all. As the blockade became more effective towards the end of the war, the goods became even harder to get. Because goods were scarce, prices soared. Between 1862 and 1865 the price of a barrel of flour rose from \$18 to \$500. Corn, the staple of the southern diet, increased from \$1 per bushel to \$30 per bushel. The need to clothe soldiers also created a scarcity of textiles. State and Confederate issued paper money was almost worthless, because there was no hard specie (i.e. gold or silver) behind it. This made the purchase of goods even more difficult. Merchants did not want to accept Confederate paper money as payment for goods because they were not ensured of being able to exchange that money for hard specie at face value.

This scarcity of goods and the absence of men forced civilians and the government to become creative in seeking solutions to problems. One of the most important products of the day was salt. Salt was used to preserve meat, and, without it, feeding the army would have been difficult. The state established a salt works at Wilmington to distill salt from seawater, and numerous private operations sprang up all over the coast to help supply the state as well as private citizens. Many of these salt works eventually became targets of Union military operations.

Women Were often left to manage family farms or plantations, while others tried to find work where they could in order to help support their

families. Some worked as nurses in hospitals, while others worked in shops making clothing and bandages or manufacturing ammunition for the soldiers. A number of counties tried to provide as much aid as possible to destitute women and children. Some women took quasi-political action, participating in bread riots in Salisbury and Raleigh. On countless occasions, poor men and women petitioned Vance for relief from high prices and shortages and threatened violence as an alternative. Such instances occurred even in Bladen County, an area of the state that was very supportive of the Confederacy. Hardships endured by the civilian population, along with other factors, led to various forms of population upheaval within the state.

### Population Upheavals

Numbers of enslaved people took the opportunity afforded by early Union victories in eastern North Carolina to run away from their masters and find safety and freedom inside the Union lines. Once under Union protection, formerly enslaved African Americans continued their journey toward freedom. Refugee camps or **Freedmen's Colonies**, established by the military, grew at **Roanoke Island** and at **New Bern**. Women and children attended schools, men discussed politics, and families went to their own churches together. In the refugee camps, blacks built upon existing political and communal networks to create a forceful vision of the meaning of freedom. Before the Lincoln administration's gradual embrace of emancipation, African Americans in North Carolina refugee camps demanded full equality in politics and military service. Eventually, former slaves were recruited to serve in the four regiments of U. S. Colored Troops that were raised in North Carolina.

Union officials in eastern North Carolina, particularly around New Bern, also found themselves helping poor southern whites who came into the Union lines looking for assistance as well as whites seeking to serve the Union cause.

Many white planters in the coastal plain, particularly in those areas under Union occupation, moved their families, farming operations, and slave property inland to areas that were securely held by the Confederates. **Josiah Collins** of **Somerset Place** moved his family to Hillsborough and started farming at a plantation called Hurry Scurry. This put quite a bit of financial stress on the family and its resources. The Collins family hired out a number of their slaves to help build fortifications around Wilmington, illustrating that black labor was very important to the state's war efforts. Many enslaved persons were put to work in aid of the Confederacy, in effect furthering the goals of those who sought to keep them enslaved.

Some enslaved persons, free blacks, and white women took part in the subversive activity of **espionage**. **Abraham Galloway**, a fugitive slave and abolitionist, returned to North Carolina during the war, serving as a spy for the Union in the coastal regions of the state. **Rose O'Neal Greenhow** of Wilmington and **Emeline Pigott** of Carteret County both served as spies for the Confederacy. Spying was dangerous work, and both Greenhow and Pigott suffered the consequences of their actions. Greenhow drowned in the ocean off Fort Fisher while trying to make it to shore in a small boat, after the blockade runner on which she was a passenger went aground. Pigott was captured and imprisoned in New Bern for a short time before being released due to lack of evidence.

### *The Peace Movement*

Because the term of governor in North Carolina was only two years, Vance faced a reelection campaign in 1864, which was made more difficult by the emergence of a peace movement within the state. The peace movement was led by former Vance supporter turned political opponent, **William W. Holden**. Supporters of the peace movement wanted North Carolina to negotiate a separate peace with the Federal government, something Vance refused to consider. In order to win the election, Vance knew that he would have to

demonstrate his support for the Confederacy to keep the conservatives happy, while showing peace movement supporters that he was not a servant of the Richmond government. This was the great **dilemma** of Vance's tenure as governor, played out in his campaign for reelection.

Vance highlighted a number of issues in order to placate both sides of the political spectrum. For the conservatives, he highlighted his cooperation with Confederate policies on conscription and dealing with deserters, support for the war effort, and overall concern for North Carolina's troops in the field. To defuse the peace movement, he demonstrated his repeated disagreements with the Richmond administration on suspension of the **writ of habeas corpus**, his defense of North Carolina citizens against Confederate **impressments** of supplies, and his pre-war anti-secessionist views.

**Peace advocates opposed the suspension of habeas corpus, impressment, tax-in-kind legislation, and conscription, denouncing these laws as unjust and unconstitutional. When possible they evaded or refused to obey them. The best developed of the peace societies was the Order of the Heroes of America, which was active in North Carolina. As Confederate morale declined, the strength of the peace parties increased despite efforts by the Confederate military to suppress them. Their influence played a strong role in the Confederate Congress' reluctance to suspend habeas corpus for extended periods and also boosted support for peace advocates in government. Their protection of deserters and conscripts denied the army thousands of able-bodied men when they were critically needed.**

Always a masterful politician, Vance successfully appealed to both factions and won reelection by a wide margin. Following his reelection, Vance sensed that the Confederacy's days were numbered. He continued to run the state as efficiently as possible. He exerted all of his power and influence in support of the Confederacy. He rounded up deserters, arranged for provisions and supplies for the army, and continued normal governmental functions. He

halted many of these efforts only when it became clear that the Federal army was advancing on the state. Vance ensured that all of the state government papers were moved to safekeeping in advance of the arrival of enemy troops. He worked tirelessly to sustain the Confederacy, in an effort to maintain his credibility and personal honor as well as that of the State of North Carolina.

Politics, military operations, and Union occupation of much of the coastal plain combined to cause great hardships to the citizens of North Carolina, black and white, enslaved and free. These hardships, in turn, caused a tremendous amount of upheaval amongst the population. Families were torn apart as men went off to war. Others were forced to relocate to avoid danger or persecution. Some enslaved people escaped to freedom, while others remained in bondage throughout the conflict. Many people took on vastly different roles in society than those to which they were accustomed. In one way or another, the war affected everyone in the state.

## War's End and Reconstruction in North Carolina

### Introduction:

As the Confederate troops left Orange County after the Johnston's surrender at the Bennett farm, they marched home to an uncertain and incomprehensible future. War weary and homesick, they would soon find that the life they knew prior to the war no longer existed. A shattered economy, social upheaval, and a new era of politics awaited them. Many would struggle against these changes. In the few years it took to wage the war, thousands of people who once held positions of power, authority and influence found themselves in a state of poverty and politically and economically destitute.

The formally enslaved freedmen and women would struggle as well. Trying to find their place in the new society, most African Americans briefly tasted freedom and citizenship for the first time. They also experienced the more enduring backlash of southern white fear and anger.

From 1865 until 1877, North Carolina underwent reconstruction as imposed by the victorious North. Profound changes took place in the state as North Carolina once again found her place in the Union.

### *Impact of the War on North Carolina*

North Carolina suffered terrible human losses from the Civil War. More than 35,000 troops died, almost half from battle deaths and the rest from disease. Untold numbers were wounded or disabled by injury. There were human costs at home as well. With the majority of white men off fighting the war, the women struggled to maintain farms and families. The results often included impaired health and even death of the elderly and weak.

Economic costs were also staggering. These included millions of dollars of property destroyed or looted across the South; millions spent by the Confederate government to wage the war; and the abolition of slavery, which cost slaveholders nearly \$200 million in capital investment. Worthless currency, **repudiated war debts**, and few avenues for credit caused many individuals, institutions, and businesses to declare bankruptcy. During the war many colleges closed, factories shut down, and banks collapsed. Almost none were in any condition to re-open after the war.

The end of the war brought a social revolution to North Carolina and to the entire South. The destruction of the institution of slavery, and the caste system it entailed, resulted in an upheaval never before experienced in the state. Persons previously of wealth and affluence either lost their lands by **confiscation** or simply abandoned large amounts of land for lack of a labor force to cultivate it. Newly freed slaves embarked on a journey to find their place in an ever-shifting society. Most had their freedom but little else. They, along with poor whites, fell into **sharecropping** on land the enslaved population had previously tended. Others migrated to refugee camps set up by the federal government to start their new lives as freedmen and women. Most whites grudgingly agreed to give blacks rights that they had not previously possessed as enslaved property, but they did not agree to legal and social equality.

### **Presidential Reconstruction**

Prior to his assassination, President Lincoln planned how he wanted the South reconciled to the Union. He did not believe in a harsh punishment of southern leaders. He wanted a constitutional amendment to abolish slavery but did not support citizenship and suffrage for the newly freedmen and women. Congress, on the other hand, felt the South should be punished severely and that only those who swore an oath of loyalty that they had never opposed the Union should be allowed the rights of full citizenship. Lincoln knew that sectional strife

led to the war, and he felt harsh treatment would only lead to more sectional strife. However, he didn't live to see his plan implemented. His assassination on April 14, 1865 at the hands of a southern **partisan** actor, John Wilkes Booth, added fuel to the issue. Vice Pres. **Andrew Johnson** became president and generally attempted to fulfill Lincoln's desires.

At the end of the war, the political system in North Carolina was in shambles. Both the state and local governments collapsed in early 1865. Before leaving the state, General Sherman left Gen. **John M. Schofield** in charge of the state, with orders to maintain law and order. Thus, North Carolina, like most of the south, came under military rule. It was under these circumstances that President Johnson took over the task of bringing the rebellious states back into the Union. He issued two proclamations on May 29, 1865. The first applied to all southern states, and the other applied to North Carolina. The Amnesty Proclamation offered a pardon to all southerners, except those in positions of leadership and extreme wealth, provided they swore an oath of loyalty to the United States and the U. S. Constitution. It also allowed those who swore allegiance to retain all their property, except for slaves.

The second proclamation appointed **William W. Holden** as the **provisional governor** of North Carolina. Johnson ordered Holden to call a state convention to restore North Carolina to the Union. Johnson's plan required that the convention repeal the May 20, 1861 **Ordinance of Secession**, ratify the **Thirteenth Amendment**, and cancel the Confederate war debt. The convention would also provide for the election of a new governor, state legislators and U. S. congressmen, thereby reestablishing civil government in the state. This convention was set to convene on October 2, 1865.

Three days before, on September 29, another meeting took place at the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Raleigh. The **Convention of the Freedmen of North Carolina** was led by **James Hood**, a missionary from Connecticut, **Abraham Galloway** of Craven County, and **James H. Harris** of

Wake County. This group consisted of approximately one hundred men, some free before the war, some newly freed, and northerners, like Hood, who came to North Carolina to help the freedmen adjust to their new status. Since the freedmen were barred from participation in the constitutional convention scheduled to take place in a few days, they took this opportunity to express their desire for three constitutional rights for blacks: the right to vote; the right of judicial equality in the form of admission of black testimony in court; and the right to seats on a jury. Overall, they expressed their interest that all races be treated equally. This was the first statewide assembly of African Americans in North Carolina. The resolutions passed by the Freedmen's Convention were submitted to the constitutional convention, where they were promptly ignored.

Before adjourning, the Freedmen's Convention resolved to form itself into the North Carolina **State Equal Rights League** and scheduled a second Freedmen's Convention for the following year. At the 1866 Freedmen's Convention, a main focus was the right to equal access for education. **[Insert link to Freedmen's Convention minutes regarding education reference page 12; <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/freedmen/freedmen.html>]** Clearly, the freedmen gathered in Raleigh in 1865 and 1866 saw education as the avenue toward social, economic and political equality.

The constitutional convention met October 2, 1865 as planned and adopted the provisions outlined by President Johnson in his proclamation, with the issue of the war debt being hotly debated. The convention approved the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery and the legislature ratified the amendment on December 4, 1865. The convention also set state elections for November. **Jonathan Worth**, the provisional treasurer of the state and an opponent of **repudiation** of the war debt, immediately announced his intention to run for governor. Holden, the provisional governor and supporter of debt cancellation, also declared his candidacy. Worth won the election despite Holden's claim that North Carolina would not be re-admitted to the Union if

Worth was elected because of his stand on the debt. It turned out his claim was well founded, though for a different reason. A growing Republican faction within the United States Congress believed congress, and not the president, should make the decisions about when and how to re-admit the southern states. As a result, Congress refused to seat North Carolina's newly elected representatives and senators, as well as those from other southern states. This congressional or "Radical Reconstruction" would delay North Carolina's re-admittance to the Union for two and a half years.

### *The Freedmen's Bureau*

**Radical Republicans** expressed great concern over the state of the freedmen and women in the South. Some feared that rushing to re-admit the southern states would jeopardize true emancipation and blacks would be reduced to a state of near slavery unless the white South was forced to change. Others saw the practical political advantage in giving blacks the right to vote which, in the Radicals' minds, meant the right to vote Republican.

Earlier in 1865, Congress established the **Freedmen's Bureau** to oversee the newly emancipated slaves' transition from slavery to freedom. Designed to last only one year, Congress extended the program early in 1866. In North Carolina, the Freedmen's Bureau operated until the end of 1868. Officially called the "Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands," the Freedmen's Bureau had the authority to parcel out forty-acre plots from abandoned and confiscated lands. The Bureau then rented these plots to the recently freed slaves and refugee whites who pledged loyalty to the Union. In North Carolina, the bureau later returned these lands to the former owners, but took a leading role in negotiating fair labor contracts between the owners and freedmen.

The Freedmen's Bureau also coordinated efforts to feed, clothe, restore to health, and educate those left destitute by the war, both black and white. Approximately \$1.5 millions worth of food and clothing found its way into the

hands of the freedmen through the bureau in North Carolina and over 40,000 patients sought treatment in newly established hospitals. Two notable women, **Harriet Jacobs** and **Elizabeth Keckley**, both former slaves in North Carolina, did relief work in contraband/refugee camps in other parts of the South both before and after the war's end. Jacobs, in 1864, also established the Jacobs School in Alexandria, Virginia, where her daughter Louisa served as administrator and teacher. The Jacobs School was Alexandria's first free black school under black leadership.

The bureau assisted the American Missionary Association, the National Freedmen's Relief Association, the American Freedmen Union Commission and the Friends' Freedmen's Aid Association in the establishment of 431 schools for over 20,000 students, both adults and children. During Reconstruction, six of what would eventually be eleven colleges for African Americans were established in North Carolina. The establishment of **these historically black colleges and universities** (<http://www.edonline.com/cq/hbcu/nc.htm>) is another indication of the importance the freedmen placed on education.

### **Reaction to the Freedmen's Bureau**

In North Carolina, as well as elsewhere in the South, questions existed as to how to assimilate 350,000 freed slaves into the economy, society and political system of the state. These questions arose before the war was over, at such places as **Roanoke Island** and **James City**, but were now being addressed across the state in emancipation communities such as **Freedom Hill** [<http://www.ncmarkers.com/Results.aspx?k=Search&ct=btn>]. While whites accepted the abolishment of slavery, most did not agree that the freedmen and women were equal to them. They found the Freedmen's Bureau to be meddlesome and believed everyone would find his or her natural place in society if left alone.

In the minds of most white people, the natural place for former slaves was still at the bottom of the social order. Early in 1866, the North Carolina legislature enacted the **Black Code**, a series of laws that regulated control of the African American population. Although North Carolina's code was less rigid than those of other southern states with larger black populations, it nevertheless denied the rights of citizenship to free blacks and the recently emancipated. The code also placed restrictions on free movement within and outside the state, made it difficult for blacks to purchase and carry firearms, and prohibited interracial marriages. This denial of rights created strong opposition by northerners and blacks within and outside the state.

### *Congressional Reconstruction*

It was in this atmosphere that the Radical Republicans began to exert their power and to limit that of President Johnson. When Congress passed the law extending the Freedmen's Bureau, Johnson vetoed it. Congress overrode his veto, thus asserting the Radicals' agenda. In response to the institution of black codes across the South, Congress passed the **Fourteenth Amendment**, which extended citizenship to the freedmen and women and guaranteed their rights as citizens of the United States. It disqualified any state that denied the right to vote to former slaves from re-admittance into the Union. The amendment also stated that anyone who had previously sworn to support the U. S. Constitution, but then supported the Confederacy, would not be allowed to hold public office. Such a provision, in effect, removed the pre-war political leadership of the southern states from further or future political positions.

The ratification or rejection of the Fourteenth Amendment became the central issue of the state election campaign of 1866. Governor Worth, who opposed the ratification of the amendment, lobbied the legislature to reject it. His main argument alleged the amendment was unfair to former southern leaders and was perhaps illegal, as representatives from North Carolina were not

seated in Congress when Congress drafted the amendment. Former governor Holden supported ratification and, in general, the Radical plan for reconstruction. In the 1866 gubernatorial race, Holden and his followers nominated Alfred Dockery for governor against Worth. Worth won easily and those opposed to ratification held the majority in the legislature. Thus, North Carolina rejected the Fourteenth Amendment, which set the state on a long, harsh road to reunion.

### *Military Rule*

The Radicals in Congress took the rejection of the Fourteenth Amendment as a sure sign that North Carolina and other southern states needed firmer treatment in regards to reconstruction. Otherwise, they argued, the southern states would revert to previous actions and attitudes, which jeopardized the standing of freedmen and women and those loyal to the Union. The result of such thinking was the Reconstruction Act of 1867. It divided the South into five military districts, placing all southern states under military rule, and dissolved the civil governments in all southern states except Tennessee. North Carolina was required to hold a constitutional convention to develop a new state constitution, which would guarantee suffrage to all men over twenty-one years old who had not supported the Confederacy. This requirement would ensure that freed slaves could participate in elections and government, while those white men, who had supported the Confederate cause, could not. Once written, the constitution had to be submitted to and approved by Congress. Another condition of the act required that the states ratify the Fourteenth Amendment before being re-admitted to the Union.

North Carolina remained under military rule from March 1867 until July 1868 as part of the Second Military District of the Carolinas under the command of **Gen. Daniel E. Sickles**. Sickles did not rule with a heavy hand, choosing to cooperate with Governor Worth's administration. He did, however, anger many

whites when he set up military courts to try civilians and allowed freedmen to serve on juries. President Johnson removed Sickles from command for refusing an order from a federal judge, and replaced him with **Gen. Edward R. S. Canby**. Canby, somewhat more radical-minded than Sickles, carried out the requirements of the reconstruction acts and ordered an election for November of 1867 to choose delegates to the constitutional convention.

### *The Election of 1868*

A two-party system of politics emerged at the time of the delegate election. The Conservative Party, comprised mainly of former Whigs and old-order Democrats, joined together in an effort to defeat radical reconstruction politics. They desired to return North Carolina to the *status quo antebellum*, or something close to it, by denying black equality and maintaining white political and economic control of the state. The Republican Party, established in North Carolina in March 1867, opposed the Conservatives and supported congressional reconstruction. William W. Holden, recognizing he would never have the support of the Conservatives, saw the new Republican Party as his ticket to power once again. Members of the Republican Party included unionist native whites, called **Scalawags**; freedmen; and northerners, called **Carpetbaggers**, who came South with the purpose of carrying out Congress's Reconstruction plan. The Republican Party dominated the convention election by a vote of three to one mainly due to the registration of more than 70,000 black voters who participated in their first act of citizenship by voting for the Republican convention candidates. Of the 120 delegates elected, 107 were Republicans, eighteen of whom were northerners and fifteen of whom were black.

The convention met from mid-January to mid-March, 1868. While the Conservatives criticized it, the new state constitution of 1868, was an improvement over the old one. All three departments of government were amended. The constitution created new offices under the executive branch,

including a superintendent of public instruction, a superintendent of public works, a state auditor, and the office of lieutenant governor. The term of office for these new positions as well as for the governor was increased to four years and all faced direct election by the people, instead of being chosen by the legislature. In the legislative branch, the lower house, formerly the House of Commons, became the House of Representatives. Property qualifications for holding the governorship or any public office were removed. The lieutenant governor would now serve as the president of the Senate, rather than allowing senators to elect their own president. In the judicial branch, the state Superior Courts and Supreme Court increased the number of judges, who would now be elected for eight year terms. Sheriffs and other court officers would now be elected as well. The new constitution also provided for a tax-supported, statewide, public school system open to everyone.

Following the convention, a bitterly fought statewide election in April 1868, resulted in a Republican-controlled government. Holden, candidate for the Republican Party, easily defeated the Conservative candidate, Thomas S. Ashe. In this election, voters sent sixteen African American men to the N.C. House of Representatives, including James H. Harris, and three to the state Senate, including Abraham Galloway and **John Adams Hyman**. The voters also approved the new state constitution. Holden immediately called a special session of the legislature, which promptly ratified the Fourteenth Amendment on July 2, 1868. Within three weeks, North Carolina's Republican representatives were seated in the U. S. Congress, and North Carolina was officially re-admitted to the Union. This did not bring peace to the state, however, as Conservatives and those who feared Republican rule began a violent campaign to re-assert Conservative control over the social and political systems in the state.

### Reconstruction Politics 1869-1877

Republican control of the legislature and governorship would be short-lived. Despite many accomplishments in the areas educational, judicial and political reform, the party held the legislature only until the 1870 election. Overshadowing these positive gains was a developing reputation of government corruption and extravagance. Mismanagement of state funds and the selling of votes for favorable legislation, particularly in regards to state-aid to the railroad industry, doomed the Republicans' hopes of retaining control of the legislature.

The appeal to **white supremacy** also helped the Conservatives regain control of the legislature in 1870. By asserting that blacks were inferior to whites and, thus, too ignorant to hold office or even vote, the Conservatives were able to attract additional white voters. The rise of the **Ku Klux Klan**, however, had an even greater impact on politics. By intimidating blacks and Republican whites through violence, the Klan influenced elections in favor of Conservative candidates. Fearing what could result from such tactics, the 1869 Republican legislature attempted to fight back with the passage of the **Shoffner Act**, which allowed Governor Holden to declare martial law in any county where he determined that county officers were not maintaining law and order. It also allowed that trials for murder, conspiracy, or wearing a mask could be moved from the county in which the crime occurred. This provision was not designed to ensure a fair trial for the accused, but to assure that the prosecution had a fair chance at conviction, which was unlikely in a Klan member's home county.

Armed with provisions of the Shoffner Act, Governor Holden finally confronted the Klan in Alamance and Caswell Counties, after the deaths of two Republican leaders, Wyatt Outlaw and John W. Stephens. He sent two regiments of state troops under the command of Col. George W. Kirk into the area, resulting in the arrest of eighty-two men in Alamance County and nineteen in Caswell County. These men were held in jail, denied bail, and, in some cases, never told why they were being arrested. When a state judge issued a writ of

habeas corpus to bring these men before a civil court, Kirk refused to comply, stating that they were being held for a military court. A second appeal before a federal judge resulted in writs of habeas corpus for all the prisoners, with which Holden eventually complied.

This episode, known as the **Kirk-Holden War**, was one more nail in the Republicans' coffin. The Conservatives used Holden's actions as evidence that he needed to be replaced. Because there was no election for governor in 1870, the Conservatives knew if they could win a majority in the legislature, they would have enough votes to impeach Holden and remove him from office. The election resulted in an astounding defeat for the Republicans, not only in the legislature, but also in the national offices, with six out of seven seats going to the Conservatives.

### *The Return of Conservative Control*

Shortly after the election, the North Carolina House of Representatives brought charges against Holden, which alleged that he acted illegally in declaring martial law and arresting individuals; in refusing to obey the writs of habeas corpus; and in raising state troops and paying them. After a seven week trial, the Senate convicted Holden and voted to remove him from office. He became the first state governor in the country to be impeached and removed from office. Lt. Gov. Tod R. Caldwell replaced him as governor.

After the 1870 election and the return of the Conservatives to power, Klan activity decreased in the central section of the state but remained an intimidating force in other areas. In the western counties, violent Klan activity resulted in federal intervention and trials for Klan leaders. In 1871, the United States Senate conducted an investigation of Klan activity in western North Carolina and later a joint House and Senate committee investigated the Klan in thirteen southern states. The results were a condemnation of the Klan and passage of the Ku Klux Klan Act, federal legislation that closely resembled North Carolina's Shoffner

Act. With this legislation, the president sent federal troops and U.S. marshals into Cleveland and Rutherford counties to restore order and arrest Klansmen.

Although only a small number of those arrested were convicted, this crackdown on the Klan resulted in a further decrease in Klan activity. By 1872, the Klan became more focused on race rather than politics and ceased to play a major role in North Carolina's political circles until the next century.

With the decline of the Republican Party in North Carolina, the Conservatives looked forward to winning the governorship in 1872. They nominated Augustus S. Merrimon of Asheville, while the Republicans nominated Tod R. Caldwell, the current governor who took over Holden's term. Some Republicans, disgusted with the politics of the previous administration, jumped party lines and supported Merrimon. Despite everything in his favor, Merrimon lost to Caldwell by a margin of about 2,000 votes. The Conservatives, however, won the legislature and sent Merrimon to the United States Senate.

Back in legislative power, the Conservatives set about changing much of what the Republicans had accomplished. They amended the constitution in 1873 and again in 1875, concentrating power in Raleigh and ensuring that only white Conservatives would hold local offices through legislative control of county governments. Other amendments, like those that outlawed interracial marriage and prohibited integrated public schools, served to relegate African Americans to a lower level of society and politics: the *status quo antebellum*.

The Reconstruction era came to a close with the election of 1876. The Conservatives, now known as the Democratic Party, nominated North Carolina's former war governor, Zebulon B. Vance. The Republicans nominated Judge Thomas Settle. The Democrats won the governorship, the legislature, and seven of eight congressional seats. The presidential election hung in the balance as neither candidate, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes nor Democrat Samuel J. Tilden, gained the required majority of electoral votes. Although Tilden had clearly won the popular vote and was only one vote shy of the necessary

electoral votes, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives for a decision since the contests in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina were in dispute. After much wrangling and deal-making, Republican Hayes was awarded the electoral votes from those three states and was named the winner in exchange for a promise to withdraw all federal troops from the South. This was done in April, 1877, ending the era of Reconstruction.

### *The Legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction in North Carolina*

While all of the political turmoil raged during the Reconstruction years, most North Carolinians simply tried to survive. There was no “getting back to normal,” as what they knew before the war simply did not exist anymore. The devalued land and crop prices, along with the lack of a sufficient labor force, resulted in the breakdown of the old plantation system and an increase in the number of small farms. Large landowners sold off property for extremely low prices. In order to cultivate what land they retained, most resorted to a system of sharecropping. North Carolinians began to define a new “normal” for their lives.

Industry seemed to fair better than agriculture during the Reconstruction period. During the years immediately after the war, the tobacco and textile industries in North Carolina flourished. **Washington Duke**, a Confederate veteran, and his sons, began what would eventually be the American Tobacco Company. Textiles, a booming industry prior to the war, continued to grow as part of the war effort. In the years following the war, production increased tremendously. By 1870, production levels surpassed those of 1860.

Reconstruction, which most textbooks define as the period from 1865 to 1877, meant different things to different people. Politically, the time period is specific. However, when viewed in a broader context, the time period is less definitive. Clearly some “reconstruction” activities began as early as 1862 in areas occupied by federal troops. For African Americans, it did not stop in 1877

but continued on for years as they struggled to find their place in the society and political system of the state.

In North Carolina, the years after the Civil War saw a series of political and social changes that revolutionized the lives of its citizens. Efforts towards **reconciliation** and **assimilation** of blacks into society provoked a reaction of violence and racial polarization. African Americans and many whites briefly shared power during Reconstruction, but were soon replaced by the return to power of the white political elite. African Americans were no longer slaves but neither were they totally free from the oppression and control by white society. It would take approximately one hundred years before they regained the full citizenship rights briefly enjoyed during Reconstruction. Although the experience of racial oppression intensified, many African American people persevered towards building strong communities through black churches, businesses, schools and even entire towns.