The Apostle of Dissent: J. Hendrix McLane's Fight Against History in Post-Reconstruction South Carolina

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THE APOSTLE OF DISSENT

J. HENDRIX McLANE’S FIGHT AGAINST HISTORY IN POST-RECONSTRUCTION SOUTH CAROLINA

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J. Hendrix McLane. Undated photograph. 
Source: McLane Papers, Yale University.
“The South has had its full share of illusions, fantasies, and pretensions, and it has continued to cling to some of them with an astonishing tenacity that defies explanation. But the illusion that ‘history is something unpleasant that happens to other people’ is certainly not one of them…”

C. Vann Woodward, 1960

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I. Introduction: Return of the Red-Shirts

On the morning of September 24, 1882 in the small town of Winnsboro, South Carolina, 40 miles north of Columbia, the state capital, the air was tinged with the smell of whiskey and charged the anticipation of violence. Hundreds of men, mounted on horseback and wearing red shirts, swarmed the town. Many brought banners; one man waved a rag-doll effigy in the air.²

The cause of their agitation—and the man depicted in effigy—was a slender 32-year-old man with an uneven beard and a high-pitched voice.³ John Augustus Hendrix McLane, the Greenback-Labor Party’s candidate for governor, listened to the crowd’s jeering from inside Winnsboro’s only hotel. At noon, he took the hand of his ten-year-old daughter, left his room, and headed for the courthouse, where he was due to speak. He did not make it past the staircase’s landing. An apparently drunken man tore the collar of McLane’s shirt and kicked him. The candidate retreated into the hotel’s parlor room and barricaded himself and his daughter inside. They sat there for the better part of seven hours, interrupted only when a group of men broke down the door and lunged at McLane again.⁴ He became a prisoner, fearing for his life, in his adopted hometown.

³ Fairfield News and Herald, Jan. 25, 1882.
J. Hendrix McLane soon retreated into obscurity. He lost the 1882 election in a landslide, garnering barely 20 percent of the vote.\(^5\) Why, then, did this untested, long-shot candidate provoke such a reaction? What did McLane say and stand for?

The import of McLane’s doomed gubernatorial run is visible in the Winnsboro crowd. Alongside the hooting white men stood a “large number” of black men; McLane, who was white, attracted, and depended on, an interracial political coalition.\(^6\) That fact alone marked him as a radical. The effigy of McLane was “half black, half white,” according to a newspaper account; the candidate was a clear transgressor of racial boundaries.\(^7\) His campaign tested the strength of South Carolina’s racial solidarity.

McLane envisioned a wholesale political revolution. He aimed to overthrow the politics of racial and sectional animosities, animated by raw memories of the Civil War, and replace it with a new political alignment organized around a class appeal.\(^8\) In the 1882 election, and for more than a decade after, McLane cultivated a coalition of the economically oppressed. In his idealized vision, working people of all races and regions would unite to dethrone the monopolies, bankers, and lawyers who composed the economic elite. These intrepid efforts are important evidence that, in one historian’s words, “the South is not and never has been a monolith.”\(^9\)

\(^5\) *Boston Journal*, Nov. 12, 1887; Brookes Miles Barnes, “Southern Independents: South Carolina, 1882,” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 96, No. 3 (Jul. 1995), 249.
\(^8\) Lawrence Goodwyn argues that the Civil War exerted a long shadow over the political system, organizing the parties around “[s]ectional, religious, and racial loyalties and prejudices” as opposed to “economic interests.” Long after the War ended, most people “vot[ed] as they shot.” Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 4, 5.

On the matter of sectionalism, K. Stephen Prince offers a reminder that “regional identifiers are contrived and relational, not fixed and absolute”; sectional classifications are a social and cultural construct. However, the people of the 1870s and 1880s perceived sectional differences as real and fixed. K. Stephen Prince, *Stories of the South: Race and the Reconstruction of Southern Identity, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 5.

daring, though failed political career of Hendrix McLane reflected the promise and peril of an interracial, populist challenge to the state’s all-powerful conservative Democratic regime. It was fundamentally about the possibility of dissent in the circumscribed politics of the post-Reconstruction South.

Such dissent almost always failed. Despite more than a decade of organizing, orating, fundraising, letter-writing, canvassing, and lobbying, McLane never won an election. The Democrats were unscathed. Historians have, understandably, followed the example of the crowd in Winnsboro, silencing McLane in the story of South Carolina politics. Scholars of Southern populist reform movements devote much of their focus to the Readjusters of Virginia, by far the most successful of such groups, and to similar campaigns in North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas.\(^{10}\) South Carolina, by contrast, was the very heart of the “deep South,” the nexus of conservative backlash to Reconstruction; there were relatively few white Republicans in the state.\(^{11}\) With the exception of a small handful of scholarly articles, McLane has been relegated, quite literally, to a footnote of history.\(^{12}\)

Reviving McLane’s story elucidates the swirling currents of history and memory that shaped Southern politics in the Gilded Age, as seen on that riotous day in Winnsboro. The red-

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\(^{11}\) Degler, *The Other South*, 266–67.

shirted men self-consciously viewed their disdain for McLane in the context of their overthrow of federal Reconstruction in 1876, which culminated in the election of Wade Hampton, a Democrat and former Confederate general, as governor. The so-called “Redeemers” of 1876—bands of violent Democratic organizers—wore the same red-shirt uniform. It was their visual retort to the Northern “bloody shirt,” a rhetorical emblem of the Union’s triumph in the Civil War that Republicans invoked to advance their political priorities. The men in the mob wore historical grievances on their sleeves. In Winnsboro, the battle over the meaning and legacy of the Civil War almost cost McLane his life.

Only six years prior, though, he was an “active and efficient” Red-Shirt himself. McLane was not a progressive “carpet-bagger” imported from the North; he hated the “carpet-baggers,” the Northerners who entered the state after the War and helped administer Reconstruction. He had been a member of the Ku Klux Klan. While McLane turned on the Democrats and the Klan in 1878, two years into Hampton’s administration, he never denounced Redemption. Instead, it became his model for political change. In the whiskey-filled air of Winnsboro in 1882, the Red-Shirts recreated their 1876 campaign to shout down McLane, a so-called radical Republican; yet McLane employed the same 1876 moment as a source of inspiration for his opposition movement. Underneath the fear and violence of McLane’s experience in Winnsboro, historical contradictions festered.

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14 Fairfield News and Herald, Nov. 8, 1882.
J. Hendrix McLane was a creature of the South—and proud of it. He was born in Catoosa County, Georgia in 1848, and two of his older brothers fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War. If he had been old enough, he surely would have done the same. His family’s roots were in South Carolina, and though McLane was not rich, his ancestors were slaveholders. He married at age 21 and moved to Arkansas, perhaps to flee prosecution for his Klan activities. He became a widower five years later and moved to his widowed aunt’s farm in Feasterville, South Carolina, in the same county in which, seven years later, he was mobbed in 1882. He identified as a farmer, though for most of his adult life he was a full-time organizer and politician.

Politically, McLane was mercurial, identifying, at various times, as a Greenbacker, an Independent, a Republican, a Reform Republican, and a Populist. Despite these diverse labels, McLane consistently championed what he called the “toiling masses.” McLane’s political volatility captures the South’s fractured political landscape and the inherent instability of being a dissenting figure in it. After three electoral losses between 1880 and 1884, he restarted his political life in Boston. He travelled between the North and South constantly, traversed seemingly the entire spectrum of political parties, and courted an interracial coalition, straddling the country’s deepest political, social, and cultural divides. He therefore personified many aspects of the “New South,” a post-War movement that envisioned an industrial, prosperous, and peaceful South reconciled with the North and free from the traumas of both the Civil War and Reconstruction.

15 See J. Hendrix McLane, “Reply to the Above,” Boston Transcript, May 9, 1888, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.
16 New York Semi-Weekly Tribune, Apr. 25, 1890, Box 2, Folder 30, McLane Papers; McLane, “Reply to the Above,” Boston Transcript, May 9, 1888, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.
17 The “New South” was, K. Stephen Prince argues, a story as much as anything else. Statistics measuring industrial growth and the proliferation of railroads were used as markers of the achievement of the New South—even if, ultimately, “the New South boosters failed to deliver the economic and industrial revolution they had prophesied.” The New South story, Prince asserts, was always more fiction than non-fiction. Prince, Stories of the South, 98–99.

In defining the “New South” as a rhetorical device, Prince helps to resolve a core question of “New South” historiography: whether the New South was genuinely “new.” As James S. Humphreys notes, the “enduring trademark[ ]” of white supremacy survived the transition of the “Old” to the “New” South, and even now, “vestiges
America of the 1880s and 1890s through McLane’s eyes reveals a man, a region, and a nation fraught with inner contradictions, struggling against history itself.

History triumphed. McLane’s agenda of economic populism, electoral reform, and clean government failed to overcome racial and sectional tribalism in the South. He failed for many reasons. Most historians who have taken up the question of the defeat of Southern agrarian dissenters have blamed outcomes on the force of racism or the social constraints of “white manhood.” Yet McLane’s failures reveal the ways that historical memory functioned as a powerful, psychological force, encompassing racial and sectional animosities, to curtail the possibilities of Southern dissent. White racist appeals against McLane drew from symbols and stories of the past. The legacy of the Civil War and the memory of Reconstruction tainted white South Carolinians’ perceptions of all reform movements, breeding distrust, resentment, and violence. McLane, of course, was one such white Southerner; ghosts from his own past haunted his attempt to forge this radical coalition and to achieve the full possibilities of his vision.

McLane did establish some degree of a biracial, cross-sectional political movement. But his ultimate failure to maintain this coalition, attract the support of the North, and create a viable statewide threat to Democratic rule illustrates how appeals to the War and Reconstruction impeded economic and civil-rights reforms and entrenched white supremacy. The story of McLane’s circuitous career is a story of racial and regional solidarity trumping the economic interests of poor

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18 Stephen Kantrowitz explains McLane’s losses—and the success of agrarian rabble-rouser Benjamin Tillman (see below, Sections IV and V)—with the notion of white male producerism, the first assumption of which was that “only white male producers were entitled to govern.” This fundamentally limited the potential of a dissenting, interracial coalition. Carl Degler, whose work does not cover McLane, makes the straightforward claim that the story of Southern dissent is the story of racial allegiances trumping class allegiances. Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 109; Kantrowitz, “Agrarian Rebels,” 497–98, 502; Degler, The Other South, 7, 357. See also McMath, American Populism, 171–73.
Southerners through the conduit of historical memory. It demonstrates, more broadly, historical memory’s power as a political weapon, with tales of the past constraining ideologies of the present and visions of the future.

II. Awake, Awake, Awake, Brother Farmers!: Agrarian Revolts, 1876–1879

Five days before his thirteenth birthday, J. Hendrix McLane bade one of his older brothers farewell. E. R. McLane joined the First Confederate Regiment Georgia Volunteers on March 18, 1861, nearly a month before shots at Fort Sumter started the Civil War. Three years later, he was dead.\(^\text{19}\) The War eventually took another of McLane’s brothers and two of his brothers-in-law.\(^\text{20}\) McLane almost never discussed or wrote about his family publicly, but he could not escape the long shadow of the conflict. When he came of age, McLane joined the successful 1876 effort of white Democrats to dethrone Reconstruction—and to truly end, in many ways, the Civil War. As McLane developed political consciousness and then broke off from his former comrades, he continued to frame his ideas with reference to 1876. Paradoxically, McLane cultivated a new movement that self-consciously disregarded the legacies of history, yet grew out of his own roots in the past.

McLane’s earliest political ideas reflected his Confederate upbringing: he condemned Reconstruction as corrupt and depraved. McLane denounced “carpet-bag rule” and harbored hatred for the Northerners who entered the state during those years: “To say that all the Northern people who came to the State were unworthy would be unjust,” he wrote in 1888, “but those who

\(^\text{19}\) Obituary of E. R. McLane, March 18, 1868, Box 1, Folder 16, McLane Papers.
\(^\text{20}\) Boston Journal, Nov. 12, 1887; J. Hendrix McLane, “Reply to the Above,” Boston Transcript, May 9, 1888, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.
were not constituted the exception instead of the rule.”

The carpet-baggers, he said in an 1883 interview, were “political adventurers” who made insincere alliances with blacks in order to “secure[] offices for themselves, and [run] the State Government for their own benefit, to the injury of both the white and colored taxpayers of the State.” McLane’s was a typical Southern view of Reconstruction. In reality, corruption was no more common among carpet-baggers than among homegrown politicians. As historian Carl Degler notes, the carpet-baggers never constituted a large enough part of the population to exert political influence. Nevertheless, the bugaboo of corruption became an extremely important element in McLane’s later organizing efforts. The young firebrand also blamed the Reconstruction regime for racial violence, arguing that the carpet-baggers “engendered and fostered prejudice between the two races until the whites felt it necessity to organize for protection” in the form of the Ku Klux Klan. Whites’ murderous attacks, in his view, were primarily defensive and a product of the North’s interference.

McLane exaggerated the role of the carpet-baggers, but the heightened political power of blacks in the South, particularly in South Carolina, was no myth. During Reconstruction, black officeholders held a majority in the state legislature. They passed new taxes on large landowners and used state money to provide land to settlers, typically freedmen, at low prices. Reflecting the standard view of white Southerners, infected by racial prejudices and wary of the dramatic changes of the period, McLane remembered Reconstruction as a dark period in Southern history.

22 Philadelphia Press, Feb. 13, 1883, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.
23 Degler, The Other South, 194. Between 1872 and 1877, perceptions of Northern politicians in the South transformed dramatically, coalescing around the common view of “carpet-baggers” as “scheming vagabonds and impecunious swindlers” held by large swaths of the population even today. The negative notion of “carpet-baggers” was a construction, not a universally established fact. Prince, Stories of the South, 80–81, 93.
24 Philadelphia Press, Feb. 13, 1883, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.
These ideas drove McLane into the political arena for the first time through his involvement with the Ku Klux Klan and the “straightout” movement. The nature of McLane’s connection with the Klan and the Red-Shirts was highly disputed. The only accounts of those periods come from recollections many years later from McLane himself and his political opponents—all with partisan agendas. When directly challenged in 1888, McLane admitted to having been a member of the Klan, but he framed it as a respectable self-defense group that was later infiltrated by “reckless and unsafe characters.” However, in an 1882 interview with a Greenback Party paper, McLane flatly denied participating in Red-Shirt activities. Meanwhile, opponents made lurid accusations about both affiliations. One newspaper claimed that Democratic leaders struggled to “restrain[] him from attacking the poor colored men”; another quoted McLane in 1876 saying “that the time had come for negro head-breaking at election.” Regardless, in identifying as a straightout, McLane staked his opposition to Reconstruction as a member of an avowedly white supremacist group. The movement, according to its own platform, “demand[ed] [that] the principle of white supremacy shall be considered one of the fundamental principles” of the Democratic Party. McLane’s political life began on racially fraught terrain, toppling the Reconstruction government elected by, and in part run by, freedmen.

Soon, however, McLane split from the administration he helped install. After “the great struggle of 1876,” McLane wrote in 1888, the white farmers who championed Hampton began to realize “that their costly efforts” had not yielded an “‘honest government,’ [or] a ‘people’s

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26 McLane, “Reply to the Above,” *Boston Transcript*, May 9, 1888, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.
government,’ […] but in fact a ring government—a purely class government.”30 The imperative of racial solidarity during Reconstruction repressed, but did not eliminate, class tensions among the whites. Disaffection was, according to historian C. Vann Woodward, “unnaturally bottled up for a generation”; it soon bubbled over as independent movements across the South gained stature.31

The first sign of the Redeemer government’s betrayal of the people, according to McLane, was the “phosphate law,” which granted three companies exclusive rights to the state’s phosphate beds, on which farmers relied for fertilizers. In limiting competition, McLane claimed, the law produced “extortionate prices.” In McLane’s view, the fertilizers “belong to the State” as a collective resource, not as the domain of private companies.32 As he championed farmers’ interests, McLane challenged unrestricted capitalism. The fertilizer trouble was only one element of what one scholar called a “seemingly intractable crisis of the agricultural economy”; the farmers were seriously struggling as the currency contracted and prices plunged.33 Meanwhile, the “direct beneficiaries” of the phosphate law, McLane raged, were the “lawyers about Charleston”—the same lawyers who controlled the legislature.34 McLane’s ire was explicitly antagonistic and class-conscious. This was not the “honest government” promised by Redemption but self-interested “class government.” McLane’s rhetoric pitted the “agriculturalists” against the “lawyers,” perceiving the conflict in purely economic terms.

30 J. Hendrix McLane, “Southern Independence,” Boston Transcript, n.d. [1888], Essay VI, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.
31 Woodward, Origins of the New South, 76.
33 Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 98. Upcountry farmers faced a perfect storm of economic woes stemming from debt, lien, and tenancy; credit was short, railroad rates were high, and fertilizer was expensive. Meanwhile, a glut of cotton drove down prices. Barnes, “Southern Independents,” 235; Cooper, The Conservative Regime, 141–42; Goodwyn, The Populist Moment, 12; Ayers, Promise of the New South, 14.
34 J. Hendrix McLane, “Southern Independence,” Boston Transcript, n.d. [1888], Essay VI, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers. See also Woodward, Origins of the New South, 80.
During the summer of 1878, McLane grew increasingly agitated about the power and abuses of the “lawyers.” Although in April he signed a resolution that “earnestly endorse[d] the administration of Governor Wade Hampton,” by June, he published a resolution of his local Democratic club refusing to endorse “the election of any of the legal profession to the Legislature.”35 While lawyers were to administer the laws, the “farmer, together with the Mechanic and Merchant,” had “the right to make the laws.”36 Class solidarity was the organizing axis of McLane’s politics. By July 1878, he heightened his rhetoric even more. In the same newspaper, he urged “the people of Feasterville, in this farmers movement, to shake off the shackles of oppression riveted on them, by pernicious legislation, and to revolt at the virulent influence of the heinous practice of litigation, which together are crushing us.” Posing as a prophet of liberation, he wished to “raise [his] voice like a trumpet of thunder” and “cry out, and say, AWAKE, AWAKE, AWAKE, brother farmers to know your appalling condition.”37 The farming masses were crippled by high prices, debt, and “litigation” to the point of enslavement. He invoked slavery as purely economic oppression. McLane pledged to make known to the farmers their vulnerable position and to resist the lawyers’ domination.

This agrarian economic appeal became the basis of McLane’s dissenting ideology. One month after his fiery letter, McLane and 12 other farmers in Feasterville set up an “Independent club.” All were white Democrats; they held meetings and in 1879 tapped McLane to start “agitating and organizing” full time.38 His first major address came in Feasterville, where he was still living with his brother and aunt. Now, his enemies were not just the lawyers in Charleston but the bankers

35 Fairfield News and Herald, Apr. 2, 1878; Fairfield News and Herald, Jun. 6, 1878.
36 Fairfield News and Herald, Jun. 6, 1878. McLane served as the secretary of the Feasterville Democratic Party.
37 Fairfield News and Herald, Jul. 9, 1878.
38 J. Hendrix McLane, “Southern Independence,” Boston Transcript, n.d. [1888], Essay VI, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.
and railroad tycoons in New York. He identified with “the common people” and condemned the government for bending to the “interests of railroad companies, money lords, and national bankers, who are fast molding liberty’s palladium into a prostitute machine, which they mean to operate in oppressing the laboring people of this land.”39 The source of political imbalance, in McLane’s mind, was purely economic: the rich oppressed the poor. To uphold the interests of the laboring people, McLane endorsed the burgeoning Greenback movement. Whereas the banking and lending class favored hard money, the Greenbackers supported an inflationary paper currency, such as the green-tinted paper money that proved so important to financing the Union’s War effort, that would ease farmers’ debts and increase laborers’ wages.40 Economic issues dominated McLane’s Greenback program.

Meanwhile, he gave only passing mention to the question of race, indicating his desire to move beyond the tensions that defined the Reconstruction and Redemption eras. The Greenback Party, he noted at the outset, welcomed “all good and honest men everywhere, regardless of race.

39 J. Hendrix McLane, “Labor and Finance: Address to the People of South Carolina,” Nov. 30, 1879, 1–2, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.
40 Ibid., 2, 4. The United States returned to the gold standard in 1879, removing from circulation all paper money. Goodwyn, The Populist Moment, 12, 15. The scholar Gretchen Ritter finds that the conventional historiographical account that Greenbackism had little support in the South is “at best, insufficient.” Her analysis focuses primarily on Greenbackism in North Carolina and argues that there was “strong potential support” for the third party there. For more on the Greenbackers in the South, see Mark Lause, The Civil War’s Last Campaign: James B. Weaver, the Greenback-Labor Party & the Politics of Race & Section (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001); Woodward, Origins of the New South, 47; Ayers, Promise of the New South, 45; Gretchen Ritter, Goldbugs and Greenbacks: The Antimonopoly Tradition and the Politics of Finance in America, 1865–1896 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 122.

McLane was hardly the only southern dissident seeking to organize the lower classes; the Readjusters of Virginia, a third-party movement that opposed the “planter elite,” registered a dramatic victory in 1879, winning majorities in both houses of the state legislature on the strength of an interracial voting bloc. He never explicitly compared his movement to the Readjusters, but they are by far the most prominent model for a class-based opposition campaign in the South. The Virginia legislature elected the Readjusters’ leader, William Mahone, to the United States Senate. In 1881, the legislature elected a second Readjuster senator to join Mahone in Washington, and a year later, six of the ten men representing Virginia in the House of Representatives belonged to the new party. The Readjusters drew votes from blacks in the plantation-heavy tidewater region and poorer whites—yeomen and “hillbillies”—in the western portion of Virginia. Degler, The Other South, 279–81; Ayers, Promise of the New South, 46–47.
McLane used the rhetoric of slavery to stress economic unity, not racial division; the capitalist class, he contended, understood that “to enslave us only meant to keep us ignorant, and to keep us ignorant was to make and keep us poor.” The working people, deprived of economic power, became subject to the will of the “money-changers.” In McLane’s rendering, the bloody realities of race-based human bondage dissolved into metaphor; in its place was a color-blind articulation of the vast inequalities of the Gilded Age economy.\(^{43}\) In one sense, this suppression of race ignored its prominence in South Carolina politics and neglected the debilitating effects of slavery and racism on African Americans. Yet it also rejected explicit white supremacist rhetoric. As the state’s agricultural malaise continued, poor whites grew even more anxious about their status and took comfort in their perceived social superiority to their similarly vulnerable black neighbors.\(^{44}\) For McLane, adopting a color-blind platform meant denying white farmers such racist assurances. The “Labor and Finance” speech vaulted class concerns ahead of racial hierarchies and seemed to embrace people of all races who shared McLane’s resentment against the wealthy.

In muting the race issue, McLane sought to move politics to a different register, leaving behind the divisions and emotions of the past. He sharply criticized the “money monopoly” in Congress for “flaunting the ‘bloody shirt,’” digging up the dead past and quarreling over sectional...
issues.”\textsuperscript{45} The sectional animosities of the Civil War era were, to McLane, part of “the dead past,” irrelevant to politics nearly 15 years after Appomattox. Bickering about the Civil War was a distraction from the farmers’ pressing economic concerns. McLane celebrated the “honest element” of Republicans who were setting aside history and fleeing to the third-party movement. Such men, McLane said, “beg us of the South to not notice any more of the bloody-shirt speeches of the Democrat and Republican leaders, but forget the past, with all its sectionalism, and join them in the holy work of driving bad men out of office.”\textsuperscript{46}

Sectionalism was still a major factor organizing the political landscape, as is evident from McLane’s own language: he drew distinctions between the Republicans of the North and “us of the South.” But the dream of the Greenback Party was to let such sectionalism wither. The Greenbackers would unite the sections and “forget the past.” When leaders invoked the Civil War through “bloody-shirt” rhetoric, alluding to the Union’s sacrifices, they perpetuated the unjust political and economic order of the present. In McLane’s understanding, history prevented natural allies of workers and farmers, North and South, black and white, from coming together to defeat the “money power,” their common opponent. McLane’s endorsement of the Greenbackers expressed a yearning to cast off the acrimonious past for a future free from divisions.

But the model for this economic revolution originated in McLane’s past; he viewed the Greenback movement in 1879 as a second Redemption. His rhetoric explicitly channeled this concept, seeking to “redeem labor from the rigors of the money power.”\textsuperscript{47} He castigated Charleston lawyers for promoting self-serving legislation in the same way that he chastised office-seeking carpet-baggers of Reconstruction. McLane never apologized for “the memorable campaign of

\textsuperscript{45} McLane, “Labor and Finance,” 5.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. Emphasis added.
1876.” “On the contrary,” he wrote in 1890, “I am proud to think that I had some hand in helping drive from power the band of carpet-bag harpies that were plundering the state from end to end.”

Hatred of dishonest government, rooted in his experience of Reconstruction, was core to his politics and his psyche. And by 1878, he aimed to mobilize those feelings to motivate a political and economic realignment. He sought to cast aside the racial divisions of Reconstruction—the subject of the 1876 revolt—to overthrow the economic elite. Historical memory was therefore both his obstacle and his inspiration. As the election of 1880 approached, J. Hendrix McLane intended to redeem South Carolina and the masses of farmers from their own history.

III. A Regular Old ’76 Time: McLane on the Ballot, 1880–84

In December 1882, a fire began on the second floor of J. S. Wiley’s store in Columbia. The flames engulfed the headquarters of the Reform Signal, the independent newspaper that J. Hendrix McLane had managed and helped fund for the previous year. By the time the fire subsided, it caused $50,000 worth of damages. It punctuated a dispiriting year for McLane with a final, incendiary indignity. He was one month removed from a grueling gubernatorial campaign that ended in a landslide defeat. He was only two years removed from an even more decisive loss as a Greenback candidate for a congressional seat in which he registered almost no support. Two years after the fire, he withdrew from a congressional bid before any ballots were cast. Between 1880 and 1884, McLane was constantly a candidate, travelling from local meeting to local meeting,

48 Boston Herald, n.d. [1892], Box 2, Folder 30, McLane Papers.
50 McLane lost by over 50,000 votes, garnering about 20 percent of the vote. Fairfield News and Herald, Nov. 15, 1882.
51 The Yorkville Enquirer reported that McLane received just six votes in York County in the 1880 race for the Fourth Congressional District. Reliable election returns are difficult to locate in archives, so it was impossible to verify this striking result or to tally the district-wide totals. Yorkville Enquirer, Nov. 4, 1880; see also Charleston News and Courier, Nov. 4, 1880.
organizing new political clubs, writing articles, and giving interviews. The inescapable reality of his electoral career—and that of most Southern dissenters—was loss. The white voters he courted grappled with loss, too: the Confederacy’s defeat continued to define South Carolina’s political climate. The Democratic press’s responses to McLane indicated that the memory of the War and Reconstruction shaped South Carolinians’ view of the dissident. McLane’s electoral efforts illustrate a series of failed attempts to cross the sharp lines that Reconstruction etched into politics. Even McLane, though, could not help but root his Independent program in the same history that he attempted to transcend.

In 1882, McLane recognized that any chance of victory depended on broadening his coalition to Republicans, so he softened, to some degree, his fiery populist message. McLane blamed his congressional debacle in 1880 on the presence of a Republican candidate in the race, who performed much better. In January 1882, McLane made efforts to coordinate with black Republican leaders; this paid off in September, when the state Republican Party endorsed McLane for governor. This “fusion” of the parties occurred even as the Republicans refused to endorse the Greenback Party’s economic platform. The party’s official resolution “repudiat[ed] the financial principles advocated by the Greenback Party and reaffirm[ed] the principles of the Union Republican Party,” hedging its endorsement but reaffirming its support for “a free ballot and a fair

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52 J. Hendrix McLane, “Southern Independence,” *Boston Transcript*, n.d. [1888], Essay VII, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers. See also *Yorkville Enquirer*, Nov. 4, 1880.
53 McLane and about a dozen other white Greenbackers and Independents met with Thomas E. Miller, who was black and was one of the foremost leaders of the South Carolina Republican Party, to establish their plan for “fusion.” Miller and his colleagues followed the lead of national Republican leaders, who began to pursue relationships with white Southern independents. *Anderson Intelligencer*, Jan. 26, 1882; *Weekly Union Times*, Sept. 22, 1882. On “fusion,” see Barnes, “Southern Independents,” 242; Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman*, 99; Cooper, *The Conservative Regime*, 70.
count.” McLane’s first barrier to overcome was the basic ideological and economic gulf dividing those who hated the Democrats.

In the two months between the Republicans’ endorsement of McLane and election day, the candidate accentuated the theme of electoral process and muted his class-conscious rhetoric. In interviews, McLane defined the election in terms of broad, small-r republican principles: “We are now in the midst of a political revolution,” he said, “and the issue is, freedom of speech and purity of the ballot.” He raged against the “eight-box law” of 1882, which complicated election procedures by requiring ballots for different offices to be placed into the correctly labeled box. The law implemented a de facto literacy test, disfranchising most black voters as well as poor whites—precisely McLane’s base of support. In the 1880s, turnout plummeted to about 40 percent. Four of the Greenbacks’ 18 planks on their platform dealt with electoral fairness, including a condemnation of Democratic attempts to “disfranchise many thousands of voters of both races.” The economic differences between the parties, however, kept the dissenters from uniting around issues as powerful and motivating as those that drove the Readjusters of Virginia, namely support for refinancing the state debt and expanding public education. Hatred of the Democrats and electoral pragmatism drove the alliance more than deep-rooted ideology.

54 New York Times, Sept. 14, 1882. The Greenbackers and Republicans were both victims of the Democrats’ electoral fraud and violence, enabling the dissident factions to unite against the Democrats with a common cause. Woodward, Origins of the New South, 81.
56 For each classification of office, voters had to place their ballot in a different box. This policy required voters to be able to read the labels on the boxes; misplaced votes were voided. New York Times, Oct. 29, 1882; Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 99; Kantrowitz, “Agrarian Rebels,” 504; Cooper, The Conservative Regime, 100; Woodward, Origins of the New South, 55–56.
57 Ayers, Promise of the New South, 34.
59 This alliance, indeed, was short-lived; after McLane’s loss in 1882, the Greenbackers and Republicans began to compete with each other once again, and the trust between them dissolved. Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 107; Kantrowitz, “Agrarian Rebels,” 507. William Cooper claims that the problems with the alliance were twofold: South Carolina farmers had little interest in “national financial questions” (as the Greenback Party did), and, more
McLane incorporated arguments about republican government and fair elections into his overarching effort to transcend historical racial barriers. He envisioned a fundamental realignment of politics in 1882: “In State politics the contest this year will not be as formerly, between white people and the colored people, but it will be between […] the Progressive and the non-Progressive elements of the country.” The “Progressives” were enlightened liberals, basing their votes on “truth and argument” rather than power and self-interest, and would “contend for the right of free speech and honesty at the ballot-box.” The question of honest elections, McLane argued, would bury the racial divisions of the past. “Between the Democratic and Republican parties there is no living issue,” he added. The “old parties,” he added, were both instruments of tyranny.60

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60 Cooper, *The Conservative Regime*, 71.  
McLane yearned to wipe the political slate clean of its racially fraught history. In the *Charleston Independent*—a campaign organ McLane helped start in 1884 to promote the Republican presidential candidate—an editorial extended this criticism of backwards-looking politics. The unsigned article traced South Carolina’s stagnation to its basis of government on the “race spirit.” “For the eight years from 1868 to 1876 our government was based upon the colored vote,” the editorial argued, and “since 1876 it has been based upon the white count,” an “unhealthy condition of things” that produced “incalculable disadvantages.” Racially segregated politics was a problem of the past. The article endorsed some degree of integration in order to achieve progress; the Independents—the party label McLane used in 1884—sought a new, color-blind alignment. The Independents did not believe that racialized politics were inevitable or intrinsic, but rooted in habit and history.

McLane’s campaigns sought to shift politics away from this racial alignment through a new spirit of “liberality,” as embodied by “[f]ree speech, honest voting and good schools.” History was imprisoning the state. The *Charleston Independent* editorial referenced the influence of the Civil War and sought to reconcile the two sides in two glib sentences: “We cheerfully acknowledge the supremacy of the national government and at the same time we expect to uphold the rights of States. We are persuaded, however, that the sooner we break loose from the moorings of the past and enter upon a course of broad and national views, […] the better it will be for every department of our interest.” This “cheerful” view brushed aside lingering hostilities of the War and embraced sectional reunion. If the wounds of the War and Reconstruction remained raw, there would be no way for the Independents to attract a biracial coalition and divide the white electorate.

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61 *Charleston Independent*, Aug. 21, 1884, Box 3 [Oversize], McLane Papers. While McLane may not have authored the editorial—that is an irretrievable fact—it reflects the worldview and rhetoric of his Independent milieu.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.
When McLane called for a new “progressive” movement, he used that term literally, framing his politics as forward-looking, free from the influences and impositions of history.

Particularly in 1882, McLane cultivated some degree of an interracial movement in opposition to the Democrats, and the racialized backlash he faced testifies to the legitimate threat he posed to the Democrats’ control of the state. At a Lexington County meeting in September, McLane spoke before ten white Greenbackers and 40 black Republicans in addition to about 200 Democrats; at a speech in Kershaw, “two or three hundred colored men” formed the vast bulk of McLane’s crowd; 300 black people and 50 whites gathered in the Yorkville court house to hear the candidate speak in October. Attracting serious numbers of black voters was his only reasonable path to winning office in a majority-black state. White Independents sometimes made explicit appeals to black voters. One “Washington Correspondent” took out a column in the Charleston Independent in 1884 to praise the “black man whose muscle has been as meat and clothing to [South Carolina’s] people” and urge “these honest and industrious, though much abused foster brothers to now come to the front to reclaim the state.” The Independents’ interracial coalition was never egalitarian; racial paternalism suffused the movement. South Carolina’s blacks were only “foster brothers” to the whites. The writer’s praise of black “muscle” was little more than a euphemistic expression of gratitude for the previously forced labor of slavery. Nevertheless, the article illustrates the political leverage freedmen held: without their votes, the efforts of the Independents were worthless. McLane’s sincere attempt to divide the white vote caused considerable alarm among conservative Democrats, or the “Bourbons.”

65 See, for instance, his 1888 prediction that under an “honest vote,” 100,000 blacks and 20,000 white Independents would combine to trounce 50,000 “Bourbon” voters in a statewide election. Boston Journal, Nov. 12, 1887. On South Carolina demographics during Reconstruction, see Degler, The Other South, 193.
66 Charleston Independent, Sept. 19, 1884, Box 3 [Oversize], McLane Papers.
67 The name “Bourbon”—intended as an epithet—derived from Napoleon’s derisive name for the French royal family, suggested that they were stuck in the past. The Bourbons were the Redeemers: the white Democrats who
Democratic newspapers printed accounts of McLane’s allegedly virulent racism while a member of the Ku Klux Klan and the “red-shirt Democracy,” seeking to discredit him in the eyes of black voters.\(^6^8\) McLane’s allies and opponents alike understood that the fate of the Independents hinged on their ability to recruit black Republicans and simultaneously dodge the Democrats’ race-baiting missives.

But even as McLane staked his campaigns on a view that rejected the racial divisions of the past, he continued to frame the Independent movement in the language and memory of Redemption. At the Greenback State Convention in 1882, the committee based its platform on the Democrats’ platform of 1876—the creed that overthrew federal Reconstruction. The Greenback Convention took the Hampton campaign’s promises of color-blind administration of the law at face value. The first plank of the Greenback platform was a lament about the “violation of the most solemn pledges made to the people in 1876 by the leaders under Hampton.”\(^6^9\)

As historian Stephen Kantrowitz notes, most of the Greenbackers shared a “common history as white Democrats”; their claims as “legitimate inheritor[s] of the Redemption legacy” were a natural outgrowth of their personal involvement in the events of 1876.\(^7^0\) The key to developing an interracial voting bloc appeared to be to maintain the promises and rhetoric of Redemption—to restore a revolution, rather than to forge a new one.

When McLane was nominated for governor, he further tried to claim the mantle of Redemption. After “vociferous applause” and “[l]oud calls,” McLane defiantly addressed the

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group of between 120 and 150 delegates, a quarter of whom were black: “If you stand by me and follow me through I will be Governor of South Carolina, or by the Eternal, we will have a military government.” 71 This ominous and confusing line provoked outrage and mockery in the Democratic press. 72 But McLane claimed that the stark warning came directly from the words of the Democrats’ vaunted leader of Redemption: he explained a month later “that I simply quoted the remark of Wade Hampton, made in 1875,” hoping to convey his complete devotion to the campaign. 73 The newly anointed Greenback nominee pinned his candidacy to the words of Wade Hampton; he did not run from the past. Redemption was a fitting model for McLane’s movement: in 1882, he ran against corruption and disorder and appealed for an end to racialized, divisive politics—just as the Redeemers had. The legacy of 1876 resonated emotionally with white conservatives and moderates yet allowed McLane to revive its civil-rights promises, however hollow and paternalistic they were. This self-avowed “progressive” sought to couch his candidacy in the memory and words of Redemption.

McLane made one of his most direct appeals to 1876 in a statement published in the Charleston Independent in September 1884, when he was still running for Charleston’s congressional seat. (He withdrew in October. 74) “In the memorable year of 1876,” he wrote, the state’s “gray haired fathers” mobilized to elect Hampton “with the promise that all people, white and colored, rich and poor, should be equal before the law.” It was an understatement for McLane to say this promise “had been grossly violated.” 75 The radical shift that he attempted to bring about

72 See, for instance, Yorkville Enquirer, Sept. 14, 1882.
74 McLane withdrew after a Republican, W. N. Taft, entered the race, creating the possibility of dividing the anti-Democratic vote. Taft’s entry served as a clear repudiation of the “fusion” between the two parties in 1882. Regardless, a Democrat won the election with a sizeable majority. J. Hendrix McLane, “To the Independent and Republican Voters of the First District,” Oct. 28, 1884, Box 1, Folder 13, McLane Papers.
75 Quoted in Herbert J. Seligmann, “A South Carolina Independent of the 1880’s: J. Hendrix McLane,” n.p., 1965, 21, Box 2, Folder 28, McLane Papers.
in South Carolina politics—to move beyond the racial categories that defined the parties—was, he claimed, actually the promise of Redemption itself. In the article, McLane endorsed the Republican presidential candidate in 1884, James Blaine. Perhaps there is no better example of his precarious position in history: he referenced the campaign of 1876 to rally former Democrats to an Independent movement—and he urged them, without irony, to vote with the Republicans and transcend that very history.

This gamble backfired. Opponents mobilized against McLane using the memory of Redemption. McLane’s 1882 candidacy, the Camden Journal charged, attempted “to resuscitate and bring to life the putrified [sic] issues of a dead past.” In tying McLane to the past, opponents racialized him and condemned him as an opponent of white supremacy. The Democratic press painted the largely white Greenback movement as part of the “broad black shadow cast by South Carolina Radicalism”—in other words, the black-dominated Republican Party. “In fighting the Greenback candidates,” the Charleston News and Courier echoed, “we are fighting the party which we defeated in 1876. It is the white man, with his colored allies, against black ignorance and white corruption as it was six years ago.” The News and Courier thus saw 1882 as a reprise of 1876, too. In its view, McLane’s group was “corrupt,” and the true meaning of Redemption was not a color-blind notion of equal rights but a campaign against “black ignorance” and an effort to maintain white supremacy. Similarly, Sumter’s Watchman and Souther published a short notice from “Uncle Dick” in colloquial dialect:

It is going to be a pretty stiffish fight too—the black-faces and green-backs will be solid, but bless yer boys, “We’ve done it before, and we’ll do it again […].” Go in boys—we aint got the words bolter or independent in our County dickshinary—stick together, talk over

76 Ibid.
as many niggers as you can, and vote early and often on election day, and let’s hear no more chat of independent tickets.\(^7^9\)

Beyond baldly urging election fraud, “Uncle Dick” reminded the “boys” that they had “done it before”: they had overthrown “black-faces” in 1876. Absolute racial and party solidarity still appeared to reign in Sumter, enforced through reminders about Reconstruction and Redemption. A somewhat more eloquent writer made the same claim in a Union, South Carolina newspaper. “We must have a rousing time up here—a regular old ’76 time—to rouse us up,” the newspaper editorialized. “We must equal, if not exceed the memorable ’76 campaign.”\(^8^0\) The press drummed up energy around the Democratic standard through nostalgic appeals to 1876. That McLane himself was a proud Redeemer—even in 1882—readers would never have known.\(^8^1\)

The Democratic candidate for governor, Hugh S. Thompson, likewise portrayed McLane as a threat to Redemption. In Winnsboro, where McLane was mobbed a week later, Thompson spoke bluntly: “To vote for the Greenback ticket is to vote for the restoration of the Radical party to power.”\(^8^2\) Thompson effaced the difference between Republicans and Greenbackers, carpet-baggers and homegrown dissenters, past and present; opposing the Democratic Party meant being a “Radical” outsider. He reiterated that “[i]t was settled in 1876 that none but Carolinians shall rule Carolina. We intend to maintain home-rule and honest government.”\(^8^3\) Even though McLane himself was, by ancestry, a “Carolinian,” he was treated as an outsider and carpet-bagger. His candidacy became a referendum on Redemption. “[A]ll that was gained in the struggle of Seventy-six is at stake in the present issue,” the Fairfield News and Herald declared.\(^8^4\)

\(^7^9\) [Sumter] Watchman and Southron, Sept. 12, 1882.
\(^8^0\) Weekly Union Times, Sept. 22, 1882.
\(^8^1\) However, many newspapers did remind readers that McLane was, allegedly, a member of the KKK and the Red-Shirts. See above. Stephen Kantrowitz treats such accusations with skepticism, noting that the Democratic press was “[s]eeking to discredit their opponents.” Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 102.
\(^8^2\) Fairfield News and Herald, Sept. 27, 1882.
\(^8^3\) Ibid.
\(^8^4\) Fairfield News and Herald, Oct. 25, 1882.
Even white supporters of the Independents subscribed to the racialized view of Reconstruction propounded by such accounts. One letter-writer to the *Charleston Independent* in 1884 cheered the “bold and fearless Independents” but added that “we don’t want Negro Rule. Great God, Mr. Editor, I would just as soon have Negro Radical Rule as the so-called Democratic Double-Radical Rule that now exists in South Carolina.” The specter of “Negro Radical Rule”—a synonym for Reconstruction—haunted the Independents from all directions. Though Redemption seemed to chase away that ghost, it returned to thwart McLane’s efforts to make inroads with white farmers in the mid-1880s.

Beyond rhetoric, the mobilization along the lines of 1876 also produced the same race-driven violence of the earlier period. McLane was not the only Independent who was mobbed; L. W. R. Blair, the Greenback candidate for governor in 1880, was assassinated in July 1882 “for the purpose of intimidating our people,” McLane later recalled. In an 1882 interview with the *New York Times*, McLane similarly said that Democrats “do not hesitate to shoot down negroes on the slightest provocation, and it is their policy to work up a race feeling.” One such racial clash occurred in Lancaster in late September, where, according to McLane, Democrats shot into a crowd of black men and killed “[s]everal of them.” He blamed his loss in 1882 on this “fraud” and “force of bullets.” In 1882, McLane lost by a margin of nearly 60 percent; intimidation alone did not cost him the election. He won a lone county, a lowcountry, heavily black, Republican stronghold, though he registered moderate success in some majority-white counties. What is clear, though, is that South Carolina in 1882 or 1884 had not moved beyond the racial battles that

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85 *Charleston Independent*, Sept. 19, 1884, Box 3 [Oversize], McLane Papers.
86 J. Hendrix McLane, “Southern Independence,” *Boston Transcript*, n.d. [1888], Essay VIII, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers. See also Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman*, 104.
88 McLane, “Southern Independence,” *Boston Transcript*, n.d. [1888], Essay VIII, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.
characterized the backlash to Reconstruction from the moment it began. That history, in which McLane, of course, was implicated, proved too much for him to overcome, no matter how progressive his vision.

**IV. This Mutual Cooperation: Crossing the Sectional Boundary, 1886–88**

After his demoralizing electoral failures in 1882 and 1884, Hendrix McLane had little to show for his exhausting and physically dangerous mission of loosening the Democrats’ grip on South Carolina’s politics. The latter election sidelined the 36-year-old to his bed; he “became ill from overwork” at the end of the 1884 campaign and was “under constant medical care” through the winter, according to an essay he wrote in 1888. The illness may have been mental as much as physical; an 1888 newspaper reported that he suffered “a serious nervous prostration.” Yet if 1885 marked the nadir of McLane’s disappointing public life, 1886 began perhaps its most promising period. Though McLane left his state for Boston to attend divinity school, he heightened his efforts to realign South Carolina politics in a more populist and progressive direction. In the North, this former Confederate partisan seemed to attract more support than he ever did in his home state. As McLane established new political and personal connections, he began to live the reality of his program of a politics freed from the sectional barriers of the Civil War. In short, McLane became an unlikely symbol and advocate of sectional reconciliation. The uneducated farmer-turned-member-of-the-Boston-elite ultimately left town with new allies, a new wife, and a refined message—but he could never, even then, escape the burdens imposed by the past.

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90 J. Hendrix McLane, “Reply to the Above,” *Boston Transcript*, May 9, 1888, Box 2, Folder 23, McLane Papers.
91 “A South Carolina Symposium,” *Boston Transcript*, [n.d.] 1888, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers. See also *Abbeville Messenger*, Jul. 20, 1886.
Before leaving for Boston, McLane made a final speech in Feasterville that signaled his continued political ambitions and his desire to transcend the political constraints of the Civil War. McLane organized his address, delivered at the local Grange, around contrasts between suffering and renewal, the Old and New South. The speech began with visceral imagery of the War. “A stream of human blood was poured out and mingled with the soil,” McLane recalled, “as if vying with the crystal limpid fountains that gushed forth from the base of those historic hills.” The “whole earth seemed to tremble,” “culminating” in the “terrible conflagration” in Atlanta. McLane’s language pulsed with the anguish and terror of the War as if it had ended moments, and not two decades, before. But he pivoted to “more pleasant thoughts,” namely, Atlanta’s speedy revival. He celebrated the proliferation of railroads, bridges, and telegraph lines and attributed the city’s newfound prosperity to “Northern money and Northern enterprise.” He cheered the intermarriage between Northerners and Southerners. McLane’s language about the North’s hand in the rebuilding of Atlanta was remarkably rosy—especially for someone who had just reminded his listeners that “union bayonets” had unjustly forced “[o]ld men and old women” into prisons. In the flourishing New South, the tensions of the War dissolved. Atlanta, McLane rejoiced, “sprang from its ashes like a mushroom in the night.” His shift in tone was jarring, emphasizing the possibility of the South remaking itself and the allure of rapid, radical change.

Yet South Carolina, McLane said, had never regenerated; he blamed his state’s poverty on its rulers’ failure to accept defeat and embrace a new political and economic order. The Bourbons, he said, were irredeemable; “[t]hey cannot be reconstructed,” for they were “still fighting the war

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92 J. Hendrix McLane, *Speech Delivered Before Feasterville Grange By One of Its Members upon the Condition of the State*, February 13, 1886 (Charlotte N. C.: Hirst Printing Co., 1886), 1–2, Box 1, Folder 13, McLane Papers.
of secession—still struggling against the inevitable.”

The South had lost the War. South Carolina’s leaders, unlike Georgia’s, failed to grasp this essential fact. Whereas Atlanta had remade itself, welcoming Northern investment, South Carolina languished. McLane made the case for a new approach, one that recognized and sympathized with the South’s terror and suffering in the War but sought to overcome it.

At the conclusion of this call for “reconstruction” and “progress,” however, McLane endorsed—although tepidly—a staunchly white supremacist populist and a rising star in South Carolina politics: Benjamin R. Tillman. In 1886, Tillman, a fellow former Red-Shirt, seized on the growing resentment against the Democratic Party and organized the Farmer’s Movement, which sought to take over the party from the inside. He recognized that agrarian populism and white supremacy were a politically potent mix. In Feasterville, McLane offered his support to Tillman. “The members of this Grange since 1878 have been where Mr. B. R. Tillman of Edgefield now stands,” he said. “Therefore you can consistently indorse [sic] Mr. Tillman’s course; he is aiming for the same port for which years ago you set sail.”

This was not exactly a rousing rallying cry behind Tillman’s cause, and the second-person pronouns distanced himself from the endorsement. Yet Tillman shared McLane’s anger at the ruling class and championed the ordinary farmer, though he himself was a wealthy planter. McLane’s cousin J. M. McCrorey disseminated the

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94 McLane, *Feasterville Grange*, 4–5.
95 In April 1886—about two months after McLane’s Feasterville speech—Tillman organized a farmers’ convention that led to the permanent organization of a Farmer’s Association. At this point, Tillman himself was not running for office. Tillman’s platform included appeals for an agricultural college, changes to the Board of Agriculture, and the establishment of farmers’ institutes. Cooper, *The Conservative Regime*, 145, 174–82; Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman*, Chapters 3 and 4.
96 McLane, *Feasterville Grange*, 7–8.
97 Through the universal language of “the farmers,” Tillman was able to elide the class distinctions between the wealthy planters like himself and the “impoverished tenant[s]” whom he purported to represent. Kantrowitz argues that “farmers” was little more than a “slogan” that “smooth[ed] over” class conflicts. Kantrowitz, “Agrarian Rebels,” 501, 511. Perhaps part of McLane’s unease—to the extent he was uneasy at all—came from this elision. McLane, for one, was not rich, though he also used the identification of “farmer” for political purposes long after he stopped farming and began political organizing full-time. See also Cooper, *The Conservative Regime*, 17.
Feasterville speech and wrote McLane’s brother comparing the two insurgents: “Tillman spoke here the first Monday,” he wrote from Abbeville. “[H]is speech was very much the same as Hendrix’s.” Tillman, McCrorey reported, “spoke at least half an hour about the lawers”

Perhaps, as Stephen Kantrowitz suggests, Tillman represented Republicans and Independents’ “only hope” to fracture the Democratic Party as it currently existed, even if Tillman never wavered in loyalty to the party.

As McCrorey spread word of the Feasterville speech in the summer of 1886, McLane prepared to leave politics and South Carolina. In early August, his good friend and Independent ally V. P. Clayton forwarded McLane a signed petition of members of Feasterville’s Universalist Church, expressing their willingness “to license brother J. Hendrix McLane to preach the gospel.” “Am glad you have determined to prosecute the work of lecturing people how to live that they may be prepared to die,” Clayton wrote his friend. Kantrowitz claims this was “self-imposed exile.”

In November 1886, McLane received word that his application for a two-year, $360 scholarship at Tufts College Divinity School was approved. The coursework included theology and homiletics—the study of preaching—in which one reading came from a speech of the

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98 J. M. McCrorey to Jones McLane, Aug. 10, 1886, Box 1, Folder 9, McLane Papers; see also J. M. McCrorey to J. Hendrix McLane, Jul. 14, 1886, Box 1, Folder 2, McLane Papers.
99 Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 140. Kantrowitz further contends that McLane was “duped” by Tillman’s “sleight-of-hand,” but it is also possible that McLane still believed that Tillman was the best—or only—option for those who wanted to split the Democrats. As argued above, McLane’s endorsement was not full-throated. Ultimately, his complicated stance on Tillman illustrates the limited possibilities for dissenters in South Carolina.
100 V. P. Clayton to J. Hendrix McLane, Aug. 2, 1886, Box 1, Folder 2, McLane Papers.
101 Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 154. After this glib reference, Kantrowitz all but ignores McLane’s Boston years; I, however, find them to be a crucial turning point in the independent’s political career. In Boston, McLane achieved as much success as he ever would in forging a genuinely cross-sectional coalition.
102 C. H. Sims to J. Hendrix McLane, Oct. 8, 1886, Box 1, Folder 2, McLane Papers; Scholarship Application, Nov. 1886, Box 1, Folder 15, McLane Papers. McLane entered Tufts as a “special student,” one of 29 total divinity students in the 1886–87 school year. Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Tufts College 1886–87 (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1886), 39, Tisch Library Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University.
abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher. McLane, geographically and ideologically, was now far
removed from his Southern upbringing.

But whatever McLane gleaned from his religious education, it paled in comparison to the
political opportunities that Tufts presented. McLane befriended E. H. Capen, the president of
Tufts, who later recounted that “[l]ittle by little we learned the thrilling and almost tragic story of
his work in South Carolina.” Capen eventually introduced his pupil to numerous political
dignitaries in Boston, including a senator and two former governors. Capen was an “ardent
Republican,” served as a party delegate to national conventions, and was a member of numerous
Republican-leaning clubs and organizations in Boston. He shared, moreover, many of McLane’s
political ideas. In a baccalaureate sermon he delivered in 1891, Capen celebrated the South’s
improvements in education for “both whites and blacks” and declared that “[f]reedom, equality,
franchisement are the watchwords of the hour.” Capen and McLane’s partnership embodies
the New South vision of sectional comity. They shared a color-blind faith in progress, achieved
through education and fair elections.

McLane did not end up taking a degree from Tufts. According to Herbert Seligmann,
McLane’s son-in-law, the “family tradition,” as reported by McLane’s daughter, “was that
[Hendrix] McLane had preached but one sermon, and decided the career of minister was not for

103 Student Notebook, 1886–87, Box 1, Folder 23, McLane Papers.
104 E. H. Capen to Editor, Boston Transcript, May 9, 1888, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.
105 Boston Herald, Mar. 22, 1905; Springfield Republican, n.d. [1905]; Boston Herald, Mar. 26, 1905, Box 1, Folder
3, Elmer Hewitt Capen Papers, Tisch Library Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University.
Capen Papers.
107 Entreaties to the North were a crucial element of the “New South” paradigm; its goal was to forge a new, more
stable, more economically beneficial sectional relationship, free from the bitterness of Reconstruction. The idea of
“progress” became a sort of myth, a catch-all for the New South dream. Prince, Stories of the South, 98, 104.
108 McLane’s name was not found in the list of graduates from Tufts University in 1887 or 1888; this may be due to
his status as a “special student.”
him.” Politics kept him busy, as did someone else. McLane’s archive contains no trace of evidence as to how, when, or why McLane met Fanny Clifford Friend. But on June 28, 1887, just eight months after arriving on “College Hill,” the 40-year-old widower married this New England woman at Boston Highlands in Roxbury. Friend, seven years McLane’s senior, was the daughter of an early female doctor and came from a family apparently connected to Henry C. Wright, the prominent Boston abolitionist, feminist, and pacifist. The former KKK firebrand’s marriage into a New England family with connections to radicals marked a personal triumph in achieving the cross-sectional, forward-looking alliance that he yearned to develop among South Carolinian farmers and Northern reform-minded Republicans.

McLane worked feverishly to pursue this alliance. He fundraised to revive the Reform Signal, his old newspaper, and spoke at various clubs of Boston elites. The independent also made contact with George Washington Cable, a sharp critic of the South’s racism and the Jim Crow regime who was born in Louisiana and relocated to Massachusetts; Cable was too busy “to offer my cooperation.” The substance of McLane’s pitch to the Bostonians reflected his new audience. In the fundraising circular that Capen and six other elites distributed on McLane’s behalf, the only issue they identified was suffrage for all citizens, “both white and black.”

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109 Seligmann, “A South Carolina Independent,” 25, Box 2, Folder 28, McLane Papers.
110 Wedding Announcement, Box 1, Folder 16, McLane Papers; Boston Journal, Nov. 12, 1887.
111 See Folder 7, Julia M. Wass Carpenter Papers, New York Public Library. For Friend’s age, see 1910 Federal Census, Ward 21, Boston, Massachusetts, Ancestry Library, accessed online, https://tinyurl.com/unfd49x. For Wright’s correspondence in the McLane collection, see Wendell Phillips to Henry C. Wright, Aug. 27, 1886, Box 1, Folder 12, McLane Papers; Lucy Stone to Henry C. Wright, Apr. 23, n.d., Box 1, Folder 12, McLane Papers; Pamphlets, Box 2, Folder 27, McLane Papers.
112 Boston Journal, Nov. 12, 1887; Seldon Connor to E. H. Capen, Nov. 18, 1887, Box 1, Folder 10, McLane Papers; William W. Crapo to J. Hendrix McLane, Oct. 17, 1887, Box 1, Folder 3, McLane Papers; Fred H. Williams to J. Hendrix McLane, Mar. 21, 1888, Box 1, Folder 4, McLane Papers; E. H. Capen to Frost, Mar. 1, 1888, Box 1, Folder 7, McLane Papers. By November 1888, he had raised $2,500 of the $5,000 he hoped to secure for the newspaper. Congregationalist and Boston Recorder, Nov. 22, 1888, Box 2, Folder 30, McLane Papers. See also Diary, Jul. 14, 1888, Box 1, Folder 18, McLane Papers.
113 Diary, Dec. 3–4, 1887, Box 1, Folder 17, McLane Papers; G. W. Cable to J. Hendrix McLane, Jan. 2, 1888, Box 1, Folder 4, McLane Papers. On Cable, see Degler, The Other South, 306; Ayers, Promise of the New South, 30–31.
114 Circular, Mar. 15, 1888, Box 1, Folder 13, McLane Papers.
longer speaking to the resentful upcountry farmers of South Carolina, McLane emphasized economic issues less and political rights more.

McLane further sought to promote sectional unity by distancing his movement and his region from its Civil War history. To begin a series of ten newspaper essays published in the *Boston Transcript* in March 1888, McLane turned to 1861. “It is a mistake to suppose that the people of South Carolina seceded,” he wrote. Instead, a “little handful of lawyers,” who controlled the press, imposed secession on the masses. In this version of secession, ordinary South Carolinians “were forced out of the Union under gag law and against their honest protest.”\(^{115}\) The Independents, he endeavored to demonstrate, did not resent the Yankees. The South Carolinian flattered the North and appeared to bow to its superiority. Painting the Bourbons as lawless thugs, he quoted one letter from a fellow South Carolinian who made a trip to the North and returned impressed. “I am forced to the humiliating conclusion,” this visitor wrote McLane, “that they are a better people in many ways than we of the South.”\(^{116}\) McLane recognized that Northern support was essential to quashing the Bourbons and published a letter urging an alliance: “If the Independents of South Carolina can once get in affiliation with the good people of the North, […] our salvation would be sure.”\(^{117}\) The South needed the North for its “salvation.” As McLane made entreaties to forge a cross-sectional relationship between North and South to overthrow the Democrats, he sought to erase residual resentments from the War.

McLane invoked the Civil War to spur the North to aid the South, illustrating the power of the War’s memory on politics through the late 1880s. In his final *Transcript* essay, McLane urged


\(^{116}\) J. Hendrix McLane, “Independence at the South,” *Boston Transcript*, n.d. [1888], Essay III, Essay IX, Box 2, Folder 33, McLane Papers.

\(^{117}\) Ibid., Essay IX.
Yankee readers to care about his state’s problems. He noted how many Northerners neglected the “Southern question,” taking solace that “[t]he war has been over twenty-three years.” McLane rebuked this “bad logic”: he disagreed that the War was over and all was resolved; instead, he urged the people of Massachusetts “to take as decided a stand against Bourbon brutality and fraud, in the election of today, as they did against slavery before the war.” McLane presented himself as a loyal Unionist struggling to defeat the old secessionist class. The conditions in the state impelled the North to intervene as it did in 1861. McLane concluded his Transcript series with a direct plea. “[I]f the people here will form an alliance with the Independents there and give us strong moral support,” he wrote, “[t]his mutual cooperation will be to the interest of the North and will assure the liberty and prosperity of South Carolina and of the whole South. Then, but not till then, will we have a united country.” McLane conceived his movement as an instrument of sectional unification. Unlike those who said that the War had been over for 23 years, he knew that the essence of the conflict endured. It would end when the “good people of the North” and the loyal masses of the South cooperated to unseat the manipulating, disloyal, power-hungry class responsible for the conflict in the first place. McLane’s war against the Bourbons would achieve what the Civil War did not: sectional unity.

Yet even as he formulated a unifying, biracial movement, McLane never fully buried his own sectional and racial prejudices, indicating the limits of his new form of Southern politics. McLane worried that if he organized “an army of brave white and colored men” to defend their rights against Bourbon indiscretions, the Democrats would control the narrative in the press as it reached the North. “And would not the Northern people believe these lying despatches,” McLane asked, “and bring the whole force of your civilization down upon us?”

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118 Ibid., Essay X.  
119 Ibid.
understood, still had the power to “defeat and destroy us.”\textsuperscript{120} He feared Yankee manipulation in Southern affairs, even as he wrote in a Boston newspaper soliciting funds. McLane continued to conceptualize politics with a sectional frame, employing the first-person “us” when referring to the South in contrast with the second-person “your” for the North. Anxieties about Northern domination, forged in the Reconstruction years, survived. In his home state, meanwhile, one newspaper sarcastically noted that “Mr. McLane is up in Boston getting on a little ‘culchur,’” mocking the North’s claim to sophistication and cultural superiority.\textsuperscript{121} Sectional barriers did not dissipate easily.

Meanwhile, McLane’s political education continued. On May 28, 1888, Frederick Douglass, the former slave and abolitionist who was now a Republican activist, spoke in Tremont Temple in Boston on the subject of women’s rights. McLane and his wife were in the audience.\textsuperscript{122} One wonders what McLane might have been thinking as he heard one of the most famous speakers in America. The two had backgrounds and prospects as divergent as one could imagine: Douglass was a former slave who became a party insider and one of the most prominent men of the century; McLane was a former member of the KKK who was struggling to form a viable political coalition and destined for obscurity. But both men, at that point, were Republicans, and both grappled deeply with the legacy of the Civil War, 23 years after its apparent end. They grasped that politics still revolved around the meaning of that bloody conflict.

McLane’s time in Boston tested the limits of the War’s legacy. In the heart of New England, the South Carolinian worked to unify the sections and races under the Independent banner. The

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Fairfield News and Herald, Feb. 29, 1888.
final months of 1888 signaled a turning point in McLane’s circuitous life. With the victory of Benjamin Harrison, a Republican, in the presidential election, McLane had new opportunities to press for reform and a revived, reformed Republican Party in South Carolina; he went to Indianapolis to see the president-elect on November 22, 1888. Meanwhile, Fanny gave birth to a son, Allen Friend McLane, on December 14. Having remade his personal life and garnered new allies in the unlikeliest of places, the new father turned his attention back to his home state, seeking again to regenerate a political revolution.

V. The South More Surely Solid: Returning Home, 1889–94

May of 1892 was a busy month for McLane. He spent time in Greenville, Wagener, and Columbia, South Carolina. He travelled to Philadelphia and New York and made two trips to Boston. On the final day of the month, he began a journey to Minneapolis. He kept a simple diary, logging his location each day. But when he reached Chicago on June 1, he reflected for a moment: “This,” he wrote, “is my first sight of Canada.” Surely McLane must have marveled at the trajectory of his life. His unlikely political career had taken him across the country. The yeoman son of a slaveholding family was now en route to the Republican National Convention, prepared to plead his case for recognition from the party that he once reviled. The trip culminated more than four itinerant years of intense organization. His appearance in Minneapolis marked the apex of his hopes for the new, independent-minded branch of the Republican Party he sought to build in South Carolina. He returned home with those hopes shattered. In the final years of his life, an embittered

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123 Diary, Nov. 22, 1888, Box 1, Folder 18, McLane Papers.
124 Diary, Dec. 13–14, 1888, Box 1, Folder 18, McLane Papers; Allen Friend McLane Registration Card, 1941, Ancestry Library, accessed online, https://tinyurl.com/s9ppste.
125 Diary, May 4 to Jun. 1, 1892, Box 1, Folder 21, McLane Papers.
McLane reckoned with the impenetrability of the racial, sectional, and historical boundaries that he had travelled so many miles and spent so many years trying to transcend.

McLane’s next movement, the “reform Republican” Party, was his latest attempt to overcome the racial divide, but its proposed solution failed to win the trust of either race. McLane and a South Carolina ally organized a convention in February 1889 in Pickens to organize the new party.126 There, the independents spoke explicitly on behalf of “native white citizens” and framed the party as an attempt to transcend the state’s racially divided history: “we wish to forever put to rest the joint falsehood of the Bourbons and carpet baggers that all native white people in South Carolina are Democrats” and that “all the colored people are Republicans.”127

McLane’s new party sought to reject the segregated alignment forged in Reconstruction. A “true interracial alliance,” Stephen Kantrowitz argues, would be even more radical; it would require “southern white men to surrender their own monopoly on power.”128 This the Pickens convention was unwilling to do; it installed whites as the sole leaders of the party. In doing so, it paralleled other Southern interracial reform movements, including the Readjusters.129 That McLane courted an interracial coalition at all is remarkable given his background. But his limited

126 Anderson Intelligencer, Feb. 7, 1889; [No Title], n.d. [Feb. 1889], Box 2, Folder 30, McLane Papers; New York Semi-Weekly Tribune, Apr. 25, 1890, Box 2, Folder 30, McLane Papers.
127 [No Title], n.d. [Feb. 1889], Box 2, Folder 30, McLane Papers. The source comes from an untitled scrap of a newspaper preserved in McLane’s archive.
128 Kantrowitz, “Agrarian Rebels,” 500. Kantrowitz, for one, appears to believe that McLane indeed did forge such an alliance. Elsewhere, he argues that McLane made “an effort to establish the state party on an interracial basis.” Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 140. It is true that in McLane’s context, the extent to which his political coalition was interracial was nothing short of radical. But the vision of the reform Republicans was hardly egalitarian, and suggesting that it was—or that black South Carolinians uniformly supported the new party—flattens black Republicnas’ history and denies their historical agency. In fact, as shown above, the evidence suggests that most African Americans distrusted McLane and the reform group.
129 Degler, The Other South, 311. Pickens Sentinel, May 12, 1892. A similar paternalism existed in the North Carolina Republican Party, which was more successfully interracial than its South Carolina counterpart. Deborah Beckel finds that white Republicans often viewed themselves as the leaders of the party, even as black people were the basis of their voting bloc. “[R]esidual assumptions about racial inequality,” she contends, “created the most serious threat to Republican Party solidarity and the perpetuation of an interracial party devoted to equal political and civil rights.” Beckel, Radical Reform, 207.
message did not always thrill black people. When L. Edwin Dudley, a contact of McLane in Boston, visited South Carolina at the behest of Massachusetts Representative Henry Cabot Lodge and Senator George Hoar, he reiterated the need for a white-led party in order to divide the white vote. Black Republicans recoiled: “This picture of a back seat in the peanut gallery as lookers on at the performance, while the chief parts on the stage were taken by white men who but lately had been fiercely opposing them,” one article commented, “did not strike favorably the majority of the colored auditors of Mr. Dudley last night.” Even those who were open to Dudley’s proposed “experiment” expressed their distaste for McLane, whom one black attendee called a “crank.”

At numerous local meetings, groups of black Republicans denounced McLane and his new organization. Understandably, they questioned the prudence of trading away their access to Republican patronage for an explicitly reduced role in a new, unproven party—especially when its leaders were all former Democrats and Redeemers. The interracial possibilities of Southern dissent remained precarious.

Benjamin Tillman did not help with easing racial tensions; the agrarian firebrand whom McLane endorsed in 1886 won the Democrats’ gubernatorial nomination in 1890, further fracturing the Bourbons’ opponents. Tillman’s campaign for an agricultural college channeled the zeitgeist in the country: the farmers were suffering and angry. But Tillman’s flagrant racial appeal turned the Republican organization away from him, indicating the tension between economic populism and racially inclusive politics that McLane attempted to straddle. Tillman drew on the legacy of 1876 to define his political identity, not as a reformer but as a murderer of

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130 Manning Times, May 29, 1889.
131 Anderson Intelligencer, Feb. 7, 1889; Anderson Intelligencer, Apr. 4, 1889. See also Goodwyn, The Populist Moment, 121–22.
132 Degler, The Other South, 319–20; Cooper, The Conservative Regime, 156–57. For an example of agrarian economic populism, see Patrick Henry Adams’s 1890 speech lamenting the “great inequality in the distribution of the wealth of the country.” Patrick Henry Adams, Undated Manuscript, n.d. [Fall 1890], Patrick Henry Adams Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.
blacks. Unable to run a nominee of their own, Regular Republican leaders declared their intention to “exercise their right to vote for any good men irrespective of party lines and defeat Tillman, whom they regard as a bitter enemy of the negro race.” The Regulars decided to “unite with the straightouts,” the more genteel Democratic faction that nominated a challenger to Tillman. McLane’s group of Republicans, meanwhile, nominated a candidate and defined itself as “essentially conservative”—implicitly in contrast to the “revolutionary” Tillman—but that candidate never appeared on the ballot in 1890; Tillman coasted to victory. A fiery champion of the farmers had successfully taken hold of the conservative Democratic state and mounted a proto-populist revolution. But unlike McLane, this successful dissenter never betrayed the Democratic Party, the white race, or the history that tied them together.

Even before this electoral disappointment, McLane had his sights set on a larger goal; with energy bordering on fanaticism, he continued to organize his white-led Republican faction, forming a new party he hoped would achieve national recognition. In April 1890, he attended the Republican Club Convention in Nashville and was elected a member of the National League Committee from South Carolina. He allied his movement with the National Republican League, an offshoot Republican organization that began in 1881 that emphasized civil-service reform and honest governance. A decade later, McLane organized a convention to establish a League branch in South Carolina. “The true object of this league now is to rid the people of the dregs of this old line party of carpet baggers,” McLane told a reporter, “and to create a confidence between North and South by not making a question of race or color, but by selecting the best men for the

133 Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 162.
134 Yorkville Enquirer, Sept. 24, 1890.
136 New York Semi-Weekly Tribune, Apr. 25, 1890.
offices.” By cleansing the party of its Reconstruction past and suppressing the race question, the Reformers would ingratiate themselves with the Northern power brokers and gain the benefit of national resources and support.

McLane put this theory to the test when he addressed the Republican National Convention in 1892. He urged the convention to seat his Reform Republican delegation rather than the Regular faction. McLane’s speech was a tribute to his brand of interracial, cross-sectional dissent, a grandly optimistic synthesis of the vision that directed him for the last 14 years. He presented the Independents as the true friends of black Republicans: the Regular faction “falsely claim[ed] to bear” affection “for the poor down trodden Negro.” McLane reported that his party sympathized with the plight of African Americans and earned their support. “Both races of our people,” he declared, “are ready for the formation of a clean and respectable Republican party. A large number of progressive [and] aggressive whites are coming into our movement where they meet [and] readily assimilate with the better class of thoughtful colored people.” The Reform Republicans, McLane suggested, had shattered the color line—even though his party, as shown, was hardly egalitarian.

138 McLane’s allusion to the “best men” recalls the earlier “Liberal Republican” movement, an offshoot Republican faction that organized itself in 1872 to oppose the nomination of Ulysses S. Grant to a second term; it opposed Radical Reconstruction and condemned the Grant Administration’s corruption. The Liberal Republicans rallied around a slogan of collecting the “best men” of both parties to resist the spoils system. They held the common white Southerner view—shared by McLane himself—that Northern intervention was problematic and corrupt, using “carpet-bagger” as an epithet. The scholar John Sproat defined the term “best men” in his study of liberal reformers with broad categories: “the intellectuals, the men of substance and breeding, the voters of independent political disposition.” While McLane’s men were undoubtedly independent thinkers, they were hardly “men of substance and breeding”; they were agrarian dissidents, not intellectuals and aristocrats. Regardless, the moniker certainly conveyed status and authority. Sproat’s assessment of the “best men” rings true for McLane: they “seemed almost to be exiles in their own land, watching in impotent dismay as their countrymen gorged themselves at the ‘great barbecue.’” Richardson, To Make Men Free, 96–8; John G. Sproat, “The Best Men,”: Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), ix; Prince, Stories of the South, 87.

139 The speech is undated; however, the substance of the speech, when cross-referenced with McLane’s contemporaneous diaries, make it clear that he is speaking at the 1892 convention.

140 J. Hendrix McLane, Essay at Minneapolis Convention, n.d. [1892], Box 2, Folder 24, McLane Papers.
McLane proclaimed that his band of dissenters had triumphed over historical and sectional barriers. He proudly noted that the delegation in Minneapolis included “some of the best white and colored men in the State—white men belonging to the best native families, [and] some northern men, who were in the Union army.” In repeating the qualifier “best,” McLane vaguely asserted that his party was purer than the Regular Republicans, perhaps distancing his coalition from the corruption associated with Reconstruction. Among his group were seven ex-Confederates, three ex-Union soldiers, and at least two black men, a professor and a reverend. The coalition dissolved divisions of the past. “The movement,” McLane said, “is therefore, free from race prejudices [and] sectional feelings.” Absent from his rhetoric was any allusion to the violence he and his men continued to face, the racialized opposition from the press, or his own experience as a Redeemer in 1876. McLane concluded with a final, dramatic flourish. Accepting the Reform Republicans’ “appeal,” he said, “will be the opening of a wide door to the ingress of Republicanism in the whole South. It will be a new emancipation of the colored men, the establishment of equality of interest, influence [and] action between the two races [and] the vindication of honor [and] honesty of the national Republican party.” Perhaps no other sentence better captures McLane’s vision at its most optimistic and radical: the Reformers would not just foster an interracial party, but they would establish genuine equality between the races. After years of resisting the lure of the past, McLane invoked “emancipation,” the most dramatic result of the Civil War. Far from rejecting the basic premise of Reconstruction, he promised to fulfill its unfinished work—to furnish “a new emancipation.”

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141 Ibid.
142 J. Hendrix McLane, “Condition of South Carolina,” n.d., Box 2, Folder 24, McLane Papers. The leader of the delegation was the son of the secretary of the Confederate Treasury.
143 McLane, Essay at Minneapolis Convention.
144 Ibid.
Yet four months later, McLane was not even a Republican. In perhaps the most resounding blow to his political career, the Minnesota convention voted to seat those whom McLane called “old ‘hacks’”: delegates of the Regular Republican Party. In October 1892, he attended a rally of the People’s Party in Boston. “I was delighted,” McLane wrote in an uncharacteristically long and reflective diary entry, “[and] felt more at home in this meeting than any I have attended for years.” “I have been a strong believer since 1879 in the same things advocated at this meeting,” he continued. “And I advocated them at the risk of my life in S.C. as far back as 1879–80 + 82.”

Populism emerged in the West as an agrarian movement, rooted in the same economic appeals of McLane’s 1879 “Labor and Finance” speech. McLane had lost faith in the Republican Party, which had increasingly become the party of big business, directly opposed to the interests of labor. He was resigned that it “cannot do much for the toiling masses in regard to wages or to relieve their debt distressed condition. Nor can the party secure a free [and] honest ballot in the South.”

In South Carolina, though, the Populists struggled to make inroads. Tillman coopted white agrarian anger, and the state’s majority-black demographic composition continued to deter whites from joining third-party movements, as they feared inadvertently helping the

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145 McLane, “Condition of South Carolina.” Records of the convention are slim. In the published official proceedings, one sentence may allude to McLane’s delegation: “As to the contest in South Carolina on delegates at large, the committee finds in favor of the sitting members.” On the fourth day of the convention, June 10, a “Mr. Emery” of South Carolina addressed the chairman: “I wish to state in behalf of a contesting delegation from South Carolina, that they have come two thousand miles for a hearing in this Convention, and that the Committee appointed by this Convention to pass upon their claim to contested seats, has refused to hear them, and we desire this Convention to say whether or not they endorse that action.” Though no one named “Emery” was on the list of delegates nominated at the Pickens convention to represent the Reform Republicans, he appears to be referring to McLane’s group. Another South Carolina delegate pointed out that Emery was “not a member of any delegation,” and his objection was sustained. *Proceedings of the Tenth Republican National Convention* (Minneapolis: Harrison & Smith, 1892), 49, 92. For the Reform Republican delegates to the Minneapolis convention, see *Pickens Sentinel*, Apr. 21, 1892.

146 Diary, Oct. 13, 1892, Box 1, Folder 21, McLane Papers.

147 Richardson, *To Make Men Free*, 130; for a comprehensive study of the Populists, see Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*.


149 Diary, Oct. 13, 1892, Box 1, Folder 21, McLane Papers.
Republicans. Nevertheless, McLane, fed up with the Republicans, “rejoiced” at the election of Grover Cleveland, the Democrat whom he had repeatedly criticized in his newspaper in 1884. The South Carolinian insurgent was as mercurial as ever.

By late 1892, these ironies wore down his optimistic spirit and exposed a sharper, more resigned figure of dissent. At some point after his Minneapolis disappointment, McLane wrote a lengthy essay, undated, that survives only in handwritten form and serves as a bookend to his convention speech. In the second essay, he demonstrated the enduring power of race, section, and history to threaten and ultimately defeat the vision he outlined in Minneapolis. He chastised the “Northern radical with the help of the unscrupulous carpetbagger” for forcing “the negro question to the front,” enabling the Southern Bourbons to survive. McLane’s arguments on race reiterated his earlier belief that an interracial coalition would have to be limited in its racial unity, tempered by a firm commitment to white leadership. He specifically criticized the Harrison Administration’s patronage decisions, by which the new president removed “native white men” appointed by Cleveland and replaced them with “negroes.” During the Cleveland years, he reported, “the race feeling greatly subsided, [and] before two years ago had passed away, the white people were more national than they had been since 1861.” With white men holding power, he said, racial tensions diminished. Counterintuitively, though, he argued, this was better for the black man: “the scope of his freedom was more extensive than he had ever known before.” Being “at peace” with whites,

150 Degler, The Other South, 337.
151 Diary, Nov. 9, 1892, Box 1, Folder 21, McLane Papers. See Charleston Independent, Box 3 [Oversize], McLane Papers.
152 McLane, “Condition of South Carolina.”
153 Ibid. Harrison’s administration replaced Cleveland appointees with “staunch Republicans,” according to Heather Cox Richardson. Within a week of Harrison’s inauguration, thousands and thousands of job-seekers swarmed the Capitol. Hendrix McLane, in fact, was among them, lobbying the president to appoint Reform Republicans to posts as opposed to members of the Regular party. Richardson suggests, with a derisive tone, that Harrison prioritized party loyalty above all else in making his patronage decisions, which may provide insight into why McLane ultimately felt so disappointed by the elevation of the Regulars. Richardson, To Make Men Free, 125–26.
McLane contended, “was the first thing necessary towards the political emancipation of both races.” The “new emancipation” that McLane envisioned in Minneapolis was a system of white paternalism. McLane’s affirmation that “reviv[ing] the negro question” backfired for the Republicans indicates the extent to which the “negro question” had never been buried.

As McLane’s essay makes clear, it was not simply racism that triumphed during the Harrison years, but a racialized view of history. In addition to appointing Regular Republican blacks, the Harrison Administration also pursued the Federal Elections Bill, referred to pejoratively in the South as the “Force Bill.” The legislation would have authorized federal circuit courts to appoint supervisors of elections, and it was written with the intent of ensuring the ability of black men to vote in the South. Its author was Representative Henry Cabot Lodge and its Senate sponsor was George Hoar—the two Massachusetts Republicans who dispatched Edwin Dudley in 1889 to South Carolina to inquire into the strength of McLane’s Reform Republican movement. The bill championed the South Carolinian’s most consistent political priority from 1882 on: election fairness. Now, however, McLane rejected their proposal. Harrison’s “appointments, coupled with the Force bill legislation,” McLane argued, could not “have any other tendency than to resurrect the fear of negro domination [and] help to make the South more surely solid, [and] thus prolong Bourbon domination in the Southern states.”

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154 McLane, “Condition of South Carolina.” A similar retrenchment of white supremacy occurred among North Carolina reformers as they began to be defeated, as in South Carolina, by “violence and fraud,” according to Deborah Beckel. The Republican Party there began to retreat from support for black men’s political rights and a genuinely interracial coalition. Beckel, Radical Reform, 208. White Populists across the South became supporters of black disenfranchisement. See McMath, American Populism, 174.
155 See Manning Times, May 29, 1889. Besides a genuine motive to protect the political rights of black men, the Republicans behind the Force Bill also proposed the legislation out of political desperation. As the Republicans grew increasingly tied to business interests, they sought to stem the backlash by mustering support from the still-loyal constituency of black Southerners. Richardson, To Make Men Free, 126–27.
156 McLane, “Condition of South Carolina.” McLane’s response to the Lodge Bill was emblematic of the white Southern response. Ed Ayers argues that the legislation “ignit[ed] the hottest sectional conflict in Congress since the end of Reconstruction.” One Arkansas newspaper echoed McLane in invoking Reconstruction, claiming that “every line” of the bill “contains the gleam of a half-concealed bayonet.” Ayers, Promise of the New South, 50.
black male voters would revive the specter of “negro domination,” racist code for Reconstruction. Legislation to prevent the Democratic regime from intimidating voters and engaging in election fraud—the very tools that McLane believed allowed the Bourbons to win elections in the first place—would now stir memories of the past and further entrench the Bourbons. McLane appeared to concede his entire philosophy on elections to fears of increasing the threat of Reconstruction-era “negro domination.” His personal “transformation” toward this fatalistic attitude, Stephen Kantrowitz writes, marked Tillman’s ultimate triumph over the populists and “yet another defining moment in the reconstruction of white supremacy.” What kept the South “solid” was the fear and memory of the original Reconstruction.

In the Southern psyche, even deeper than the memory of Reconstruction was the memory of the Civil War—and McLane’s final appeal resurrected the animosity and political relevance of the War. McLane suggested that the Minneapolis convention’s refusal to recognize his delegation was evidence that “they have entirely forgotten what it cost the North [and] Nation to deal with this Southern problem from 61 to 65.” In snuffing out McLane’s upstart reformers, the Northern Republicans aggravated the same “Southern problem” that created so much destruction during the War. With a militant tone, he reminded the North of the South’s fighting power of three decades earlier and denounced the North’s attempt to impose itself on the South via the Regular Republicans, who constituted a handful of white allies and the “helpless race of colored people.” The memory of the War revealed the full force of McLane’s racial paternalism and interwove racial and sectional tensions. While his bitterness may have been motivated in part by his personal rejection at Minneapolis, McLane also reflected the worldview of most white Southerners, including those who had long opposed him. The years “61 to 65” unified them all.

157 Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 155.
158 McLane, “Condition of South Carolina.”
Nearing his conclusion, McLane outlined a plan for renewing the South that was greatly constrained by the memory of the War. “The Southern problem,” he avowed, “must be settled on Southern soil, [and] largely through the enduring patriotic activity of the progressive element of Southern whites.”\(^{159}\) To redeem the South, blacks and Northerners had to play subordinate roles. He urged the North to “encourage reliable reformers in the South,” but to deal with the South “on their own ground and from a Southern standpoint. They [Southerners] cannot be coerced into taking on Northern life [and] habits by the threat of force bills, through a revengeful use of the Federal patronage, or by the [...] Northern demagogue [and] press.”\(^{160}\) Reconciliation between the sections depended on the North yielding to the Southern viewpoint with absolute deference.\(^{161}\) States’ rights would prevail. If the North met “the progressive spirit in the South with a like spirit on a patriotic basis,” McLane promised, “the chasm will soon be bridged.”\(^{162}\)

Though still proposing a “progressive” vision, McLane implicitly acknowledged that the “chasm” of the Civil War endured. Any attempt to break up the solid South that revived the sectional and racial hatreds of the War was destined to fail. The “new emancipation” that McLane promised gave way to unreconciled hostility over the conflict that created the original emancipation.

VI. Conclusion: A Piercing Light of Prophecy

As McLane waged a political battle over the Civil War, he waged a private battle with his own body. He struggled on and off with “throat trouble” from at least September 1891

\(^{159}\) Ibid.
\(^{160}\) Ibid.
\(^{161}\) McLane’s vision of this lopsided sectional relationship was not unique; it was core to the ideology of the “New South.” See Prince, *Stories of the South*, 120–21.
\(^{162}\) McLane, “Condition of South Carolina.”
and died of tuberculosis on August 14, 1894 at 46, attracting little public notice.\textsuperscript{163} The prospects of his movement withered, too; by 1895, Jim Crow reigned in South Carolina, and blacks were formally disfranchised.\textsuperscript{164} Eighteen black people were lynched during Benjamin Tillman’s four-year tenure as governor. The legislature rewarded him by electing him to the United States Senate.\textsuperscript{165}

Tillman is now memorialized in front of the South Carolina State House. By contrast, McLane would have vanished from historical consciousness if not for his daughter, who likely had no living memories of him. Lillias Hazewell MacLane—she spelled her name with an additional “a”—was born 13 months before her father died.\textsuperscript{166} She collected papers that her parents left behind: diaries, newspaper clippings, letters, and scrapbooks. The material intrigued her husband, Herbert Seligmann, a white Jewish man who worked for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for 13 years. Seligmann later became a journalist, and when Lillias died, he wrote a lengthy article about his father-in-law in 1965. He donated a copy of his essay, his research notes, and his wife’s collection to Yale University, all of which was valued at $150.\textsuperscript{167}

In death, then, McLane transcended the racial, sectional, and historical boundaries that he tried to span, personally as well as politically, in life. In Seligmann’s romanticized portrait, McLane was a courageous, solitary hero who sought to reform the South from the inside. “He saw

\textsuperscript{163} Diary, Sept. 9–16, 1891; Jan. 23–27, 1892, Dec. 29–31, 1892, Box 1, Folder 21, McLane Papers. Coverage of his death was limited in the South Carolina press. For short obituaries, see [Sumter] \textit{Watchman and Southron}, Aug. 15, 1894; \textit{Darlington Herald}, Aug. 17, 1894; \textit{Yorkville Enquirer}, Aug. 22, 1894.
\textsuperscript{164} Degler, \textit{The Other South}, 267.
\textsuperscript{165} On Tillman’s support for lynching, see Kantrowitz, \textit{Ben Tillman}, 6, 156–57, 169; see also Frances Butler Simkins, \textit{Pitchfork Ben Tillman, South Carolinian} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944), 225.
that much of the South refused to accept the fact of defeat in the Civil War,” Seligmann wrote, the
full meaning of which was “not only that slavery must end, but that the slavery attitudes based on
exploitation of colored by white people were incompatible with the basic concepts of a democratic
society.” Seligmann presented his father-in-law as the South’s redeemer from its history and as
a champion of racial equality, a man who stood up to all that was backwards in the American
tradition. Seligmann’s McLane was a liberal prophet of the Civil War.

Seligmann hailed McLane’s independent politics as a precursor to the civil rights
movement, with which he sympathized. “This man’s thoughts, utterances, and, more important,
his actions throw a piercing light of prophecy on the struggle now, 1965, still in process. We are
still,” he wrote, “as a nation, not free of the South’s heritage of resentment at defeat.”
“Bourbonism,” he concluded, “in protean forms, is still with us, and the fight [McLane] fought is
still, and will remain for long years, to be carried forward.” Civil rights leaders, Seligmann
hoped, would fulfill McLane’s reform vision.

168 Seligmann, “A South Carolina Independent,” 7, Box 2, Folder 28, McLane Papers.
169 Ibid., 7–8, 38.
Seligmann’s analysis captured the War’s integral presence in McLane’s politics, but it was incomplete and misleading. Over the course of his political life, McLane certainly tried to overcome “the South’s heritage of resentment at defeat,” but he also harbored that resentment himself. He modeled his political movements, in organization and rhetoric, off of Redemption, which sought to defeat Reconstruction. He was hardly a champion of racial equality, and though he courted black supporters, he did not grant them equal status. He recognized the constraints that the Civil War memory created, racially and regionally, but he could not escape them. Swirling inside him was what Carl Degler called a “triple history”: he and his colleagues were shaped by the national narrative of the United States; the regional identity of Southerners; and the unique set of values of Southern dissidents.\(^{170}\) His political volatility embodied the difficulty—if not impossibility—of streamlining these clashing historical orientations into a coherent, politically viable narrative.

That Seligmann felt that McLane’s story was so relevant to the 1960s further illustrates the grip that the War exerted over Southern politics. Historical memory sympathetic to the Confederacy and white supremacy has survived the attempts of McLane, Seligmann, and many more reformers to inaugurate a political and social revolution in the South rooted in an alternative reading of the War’s history and meaning. Four years before Seligmann wrote his essay, South Carolina raised the Confederate Battle Flag in 1961 above its State House to commemorate the Civil War centennial. The state symbolically affirmed what McLane and his contemporaries implicitly understood: the Civil War did not end in 1865. It was not—is not—over.

\(^{170}\) Degler, *The Other South*, 5.
Historians will never be able to recreate the thoughts that coursed through McLane’s head while he waited inside Winnsboro’s hotel as Red-Shirts jostled at the door. He remains a largely inscrutable figure, having maintained skeletal diaries and left behind relatively few written records. His legacy lies not in what he did, but what he did not do. Counterfactuals and hypotheticals are not the primary domain of historians, but the blurred shadows of McLane’s failures help illuminate the ways South Carolinians entrenched white supremacy. He further serves as a reminder that such shadows existed. Even when the South was most “solid,” figures like McLane risked their lives to imagine something different.

In retrospect, the scene at Winnsboro—swarming Red-Shirts, angry shouts, drunken kicks—appears as a crystallization of a battle between competing populisms. McLane, if he were allowed to speak, would have advanced a vision of economic redistribution. If yeomen farmers and ordinary laborers were empowered and protected, racial and sectional distinctions would melt away. The Red-Shirts, however, promoted a populism animated by racialized notions of white male power, channeling their resentments against poor blacks and their perceived allies, such as McLane. In South Carolina, and across the region, that vision triumphed; the historiographical consensus is that racism subsumed and eventually destroyed populism at the turn of the twentieth century. In many ways, American politics continues to revolve around this battle of populisms. The question of whether populism can ever be free of white supremacy—whether race is doomed to hijack and coopt class-based appeals—remains a matter of contemporary debate.

The story of J. Hendrix McLane offers no answers. But it illustrates that such debates are never purely ideological. Politics belongs to the realm of emotions, memories, and stories as much as it reflects facts, policies, and rational arguments. Fights of the present are often fights about the

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171 On “white male producerism,” see Kantrowitz, “Agrarian Rebels.”
172 McMath, American Populism, 173.
past—and shaped by them. It was not simply racism that defeated McLane. As he sat in the hotel with his daughter, silenced and trapped by the mob, he was a prisoner of history.

Words: 12,437.
Bibliographic Essay

I found Hendrix McLane on an early September afternoon, scrolling through listings of Yale’s archival collections relating to the Civil War and Reconstruction. I have gravitated to this period throughout the whole of my college tenure. In the turmoil of the War and in the country’s reckoning with the institution of slavery and the meaning of freedom, I heard echoes of our current roiling times. Reconstruction captures the country at its best and at its worst, illustrating its greatest possibilities and its ugliest limitations. My coursework ingrained in me that no history, and certainly not Reconstruction, could be encapsulated by a single narrative; the battle over the stories we tell about the War and Reconstruction continues to define our politics and our national self-identity. I knew nothing about this unorthodox figure with an imperious name—John Augustus Hendrix McLane—but I was drawn to his apparent engagement with the legacy of the Civil War in the deep South. I believed that his was an untold story of Reconstruction. At the outset, I did not know the question I would be answering. But in learning his story, I hoped, I could join and perhaps add to the ongoing dialogue about Reconstruction and its defeat. I embarked on an attempt to find Hendrix McLane, which taught me as much about the tortuous nature of historical research as it did about McLane himself.

I began with a simple online search, and I found what continues to be one of the only published scholarly works on my elusive subject: Stephen Kantrowitz’s August 2000 article, “Ben Tillman and Hendrix McLane, Agrarian Rebels: White Manhood, ‘The Farmers,’ and the Limits of Southern Populism.” Kantrowitz introduced me to the central motifs that defined my project: the possibilities of cultivating an interracial political coalition deep in the post-Reconstruction South; the dueling impulses of economic and racial self-interest; the emergence of agrarian populism; the hulking presence of Benjamin Tillman in South Carolina politics; and the
complicated legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction entangling all of the above. Kantrowitz pursued similar ideas in his biography of Tillman of the same year, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*.

Having located little other secondary material on McLane, I proceeded to the archive to discover McLane myself. To the extent I ever found him, he emerged slowly and incompletely out of the slim two boxes of his papers at Sterling Memorial Library’s Manuscripts and Archives. The papers encompassed a mix of speeches, pamphlets, letters, political records, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, and exasperatingly curt diaries. Working through the material, I came to unearth the feverish activities of a man constantly at odds with the prevailing political dogma, constantly organizing a new movement or party, constantly on the move. Confronted with the multiplicity of political identities he assumed, I struggled to identify coherent threads with which to weave my story. I agreed with the diagnosis of my advisor, Professor David Blight: McLane was “mercurial.”

Secondary sources helped considerably to contextualize McLane’s career. Carl Degler’s *The Other South* chronicled the development of dissenters and independents in the South from the Civil War through the Populist moment. Degler established, in the most basic sense, that there was, indeed, an “Other South,” an alternative strain of thought that resisted the dominant political currents since before the outbreak of the Civil War. McLane did not appear, but he firmly belonged to this tradition. Degler chronicled the more famous Southern dissenters, such as William Mahone and the Readjusters of Virginia, and their examples began to clarify what sorts of arguments and forms of opposition were popular—and what were possible. Degler’s conclusion on the triumph of “race allegiance” over “class appeals” in the South, which marred, if not destroyed, the reform impulses of Southerners, became an influential framework for my analysis. Ed Ayers’s *The Promise of the New South* presented a social and cultural portrait of the “New South” and offered
details on the political and economic issues, such as the “stock law” and “eight-box law,” that animated McLane. A study of interracial dissent in North Carolina, Deborah Beckel’s *Radical Reform*, helped provide me a sense of a more successful populist revolt in the South.

Most of the secondary works I consulted on Southern post-Reconstruction politics included almost no information on South Carolina. Independent and reform movements achieved varying levels of success across the South, but they barely registered a blip in the election returns in the Palmetto State; accordingly, McLane and his colleagues received almost no mention in the survey works. Perhaps for that very reason, I found McLane’s story all the more compelling. His failures would illuminate the possibilities and limits of class-based opposition and interracial organization in the most unfriendly political terrain. I therefore began to focus on South Carolina more narrowly. A call to the South Carolina Historical Society ultimately yielded the second—and, to my knowledge, only the second—journal article about McLane. Brookes Miles Barnes’s “Southern Independents, South Carolina, 1882” offered helpful portraits not only on McLane, but on his ragtag group of independents on the ballot in 1882. Barnes’s work helped identify new avenues for primary-source research, highlighting newspaper troves on the 1882 campaign. For similar reasons, I turned to William J. Cooper Jr.’s 1968 study of South Carolina politics, *The Conservative Regime: South Carolina, 1877–1890*, in which McLane briefly appears. Cooper provided pertinent details on the landscape of South Carolina politics.

With a more refined sense of the issues and personalities involved, I returned to McLane’s papers and other primary sources. As I scoured McLane’s archive, new questions emerged. Part of the collection is the research notes and article compiled by McLane’s son-in-law Herbert J. Seligmann, a former NAACP employee and journalist, who ultimately donated the papers to Yale. Seligmann’s progressive gloss on McLane’s life was intriguing, though less and less credible the
more I learned. I sought more information on the McLane family. I visited the New York Public Library to view Seligmann’s papers, and the archivist there also pointed me to the papers of Julia M. Wass Carpenter, McLane’s mother-in-law. While the New York papers did not unveil substantial new information, they enhanced my portrait of McLane’s family and his activism in Boston. I found half a dozen of McLane’s calling cards in her archive, which may just have represented his courtship of Carpenter’s daughter, Fanny, who became his wife. In turn, my interest in McLane’s years at Tufts Divinity School and his relationships with Boston elites led me to the archives at the Tisch Library of Tufts University. I looked through the archive of Elmer H. Capen, the president of Tufts who became a friend and patron of McLane. Though McLane, alas, did not appear in Capen’s papers, I gained a more complete sense of the elite Republican circles in which Capen, and through him, McLane, travelled. Born and bred a Southerner, McLane seemed to be much better received by Yankees.

Newspaper sources complemented my archival work and closed many gaps in the record. The digital newspaper database of the South Caroliniana Library offered a highly useful search function of local papers, allowing me to identify numerous articles about McLane’s otherwise undetectable newspaper, the Reform Signal, and to gain a much clearer sense of where McLane was at any given time, what he said, and how he was received. The newspapers also illuminated the battles over patronage during the Harrison Administration between McLane’s independent or “Reform” Republican group and what was left of the “Regular” Republicans. The database America’s Historical Newspapers proved equally fruitful, turning up a full run of the most prominent South Carolina newspaper, the Charleston News and Courier, as well as many of the Boston newspapers in which McLane appeared when he moved North. The digital archive of the
*New York Times* added additional newspaper sources to my collection, highlighting the moments and issues in McLane’s life that attracted national attention.

My dialectical process between primary and secondary sources continued, as I turned back to secondary authors to help refine my argument. For studies of Populism and the South’s complicated role in the movement, I consulted Lawrence Goodwyn’s *The Populist Moment* and Robert McMath Jr.’s *American Populism*. For an overview of the Republican Party during the Gilded Age, Heather Cox Richardson’s *To Make Men Free* was helpful, especially in elucidating the party’s changing approach to the South under Benjamin Harrison. In *Stories of the South*, K. Stephen Prince offered a compelling interpretation of the “New South” as a rhetorical and symbolic notion as much as an economic reality. C. Vann Woodward’s landmark work on the topic, *The Origins of the New South*, is rightly seen as one of the founding works of “Southern History,” and the book, first published in 1951, remained fresh. I referred to Gretchen Ritter’s *Goldbugs and Greenbacks* for material on the Greenback Party and to John Sproat’s “The Best Men” for a better understanding of the Liberal Republicans, a model for McLane’s Reform Republicans. For additional context on the South in the Gilded Age, I used Richard White’s comprehensive *The Republic For Which It Stands*. Eric Foner’s *Short History of Reconstruction*, which I first encountered in a lecture course on the Civil War in my first year at Yale, remained valuable for background on Reconstruction. As a reference for South Carolina newspapers, John Hammond Moore’s *South Carolina’s Newspapers* was a thorough catalogue.

Finally, thanks to the generosity of Grace Hopper College’s Mellon Grant and the Yale History Department, I was able to pay a visit to McLane’s adopted home state of South Carolina. Over two-and-a-half days of research in February, I spent time in the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, and the

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Fairfield County Museum. While many of my findings did not make it directly into my thesis, they helped me better understand McLane’s allies and opponents. At the South Caroliniana Library, I thumbed through archives of Simeon Corley, a former Reconstruction-era Republican congressman in South Carolina and a friend and supporter of McLane; Hugh Thompson, McLane’s gubernatorial opponent in 1882; Ben Tillman; Farmers’ Alliance groups; and agrarian activists. At the Fairfield County Museum, I gained more information on McLane’s family and got to see the small town that became his home.

Back at Yale, perhaps my most startling discovery of all was that one of my current professors, William I. Garfinkel, now a federal judge, wrote a term paper for a Yale history seminar in 1975 on none other than McLane. Judge Garfinkel located his paper, which arose out of the very same archive that I consulted; it served as a useful analysis with which to compare my own. This coincidence affirmed to me the ways history, even the most obscure history, is far from a study of things old and dead. It is a poignantly human discipline. In the connections I formed in this process, from New Haven to New York, Medford to Columbia, J. Hendrix McLane animated and enriched my life for the better part of seven months. In telling his story, he became a part of mine.
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