

**‘The Shadow of that Memory which I Honor’: Politics and
Identity in Henry Grady’s New South Vision**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS WITH HONORS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

March 30, 2016

Advised by Professor Stephen Berrey

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincerest thanks to my advisor, Professor Stephen Berrey, for his guidance through this process. Always pushing me to uncover new ideas and challenging me to work new angles, he has provided me with immense support and inspiration. I wish also to thank Professor John Carson for his encouragement over the last year. His leniency in allowing me to deviate from listed due dates to best accommodate my own schedule and pace proved invaluable to my success.

I wish to thank the staff at Emory University's Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Books Library for their friendliness in my many visits to their library.

Finally I thank my family: Larry, Andrea, Josh, and Sari. From shouldering me at my most weary to raising my spirits with the right tune, they have supported me through every step of the process. I could not have completed this thesis without them.

INTRODUCTION

In 1886, Henry W. Grady sat at Delmonico's restaurant in New York City for the annual meeting of the New England Society, featuring a collection of some of the most influential and wealthiest politicians, businessmen, and other leaders of the previous 20 years, including millionaire banker J.P. Morgan and Standard Oil founder H.M. Flagler. Grady, the first southerner to address the group in its history, was to follow speeches from General William T. Sherman, perhaps the most detested man among whites in Grady's native Georgia, and T. DeWitt Talmage, a well-known northern pastor famous for his reformist platform, particularly against slavery. Here was Grady, Georgia's favorite son and a Democrat, limited in his influence and recognition beyond the southern states, following the famous Union war hero who burned much of Grady's hometown of Atlanta to the ground and a celebrated pastor who fought for the end of an institution so enmeshed in southern society that it had, to many in the North, defined the South itself. The two men gave their speeches; Talmage spoke first, discussing how what he termed the 'typical American' of the future would be born of many nationalities, and Sherman followed with a toast to the absent President Cleveland.¹

Grady had prepared nothing, but during the proceedings had scribbled notes on the back of a menu. At last, Grady stood and addressed the crowd, opening with words, he claimed, that had been uttered by Georgia Congressman Benjamin H. Hill in 1866: "There was a South of slavery and secession—that South is dead. There is a South of union and freedom—that South, thank God, is living, breathing, growing every hour." With a slight

¹ Louis Albert Banks, *T. DeWitt Talmage: his life and works: biographical edition* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1902), 188.; Harold E. Davis, *Henry Grady's New South: Atlanta, a Brave and Beautiful City* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 175-8.; "The New South" Speech as reprinted in Barton C. Shaw, "Henry Grady Heralds the New South," *Atlanta Historical Journal* 30, no. 2 (1986): 58-65.

rebuke to Talmage, he said that the typical American had already come; he was Abraham Lincoln, a man who was neither northern nor southern but was “greater than the Puritan, greater than the Cavalier in that he was American, and that in his honest form were first gathered the vast and thrilling forces of his ideal government.” And like the typical American, a New South had also arrived, a South of industriousness, freedom, good fortune, and benevolence towards its brothers in the North, all raised from the ruins of the Civil War. He posed a question to his audience, “Now, what answer has New England to this message? Will she permit the prejudice of war to remain in the hearts of the conquerors, when it has died in the hearts of the conquered?” The South, he concluded, awaited the North’s friendship. With his closing words, Henry Grady would soon become the most prominent, most celebrated voice of the New South movement. As newspapers from across the nation publicized his mantra, he represented a symbol for reconciliation and progress known not only in the South but across the entire country.²

This is the image that scholars most often associate with Henry Grady, the “Spokesman of the New South”: a bold reconciliationist whose New South vision fostered renewed economic ties between North and South in calling for northern investment and southern industrialization and growth. Occasionally scholars will also mention Grady’s white supremacist feelings, and that his image of a South where whites and blacks lived peaceably and thrived contradicted the actuality of a southern society hostile towards blacks. But while elements of these assertions bear truth, the reality of Grady’s New South vision proves more complicated. Scholars prefer to look at his New South program as reconciliatory towards North and South, but evidence derived from Grady’s writings and speeches throughout the 1870s and 1880s suggests that Grady’s rhetoric is geared not

² Ibid.

towards necessarily a sectional reunion but towards political compromise between Republicans and particularly southern Democrats. Other scholars have argued that Grady's New South vision was a principally economic or racial vision for the future of the South. I assert that, rather, his vision was a political alliance between Republicans and Democrats that manifested itself through economic and racial mechanisms; it offered economic incentives to Republicans in the North and, in exchange, the freedom to establish a social system that created racial separation rooted in white supremacy to southern Democrats.

The political atmosphere in America during and after Reconstruction created heavy tension between whites and blacks, particularly in the black belt region, where slavery had been most prevalent and where the slaveholding planter elite held the most political sway. In these counties, blacks and their white allies took control over many public offices; with few exceptions, this coalition ran Republican. In competition with them was the southern Democratic Party, which drew much of its appeal from racism, and found its greatest successes in counties that were majority or near-majority black. Voter intimidation and violence would turn the black, and therefore Republican, voters away from the polls come election time, significantly altering voter turnout in favor of the Democrats. Voter intimidation manifested itself in several ways. Sometimes it meant socially ostracizing Republicans, principally white but sometimes black, from the community. But in the case of black Republicans, white southerners resorted to violence and scare tactics, at first through the First Ku Klux Klan and later through rifle clubs, after the Klan's disbandment in 1871. It was through these tactics that southern Democrats sought to maintain their

system of white supremacy that the federal government had interrupted with the abolition of slavery.³

Henry Grady's New South vision offered an alternative to violence as a weapon of racial dominance. It presented a society that operated peaceably where whites and blacks coexisted but were otherwise racially separated; this, he maintained, was the only possible way of preserving a mixed race society. His vision appealed to both Republicans and Democrats on several grounds. To Republicans, it meant that Republican voters would cease to be interfered with at the polls, which further indicated diminishing hostility towards the party. Compounding this desire for an end of Republican political oppression was the need for new venture capital investment opportunities, for which the South was ripe given its changing economy; if the South was truly peaceable, it meant that northern labor could operate in the South, and, as a result, northern Republican capitalists would possess fewer qualms in investing their cash in the South. To southern Democrats, the vision would convince northern Republicans that the South was compliant and therefore no longer needed mandated control from the federal government. Without Republicans maintaining their watchful gaze over the political mechanisms in the South, white Democrats possessed free reign to establish their racially separated society and thereby assert their supremacy.

But though the result of Grady's New South vision was a political truce, it did not speak directly of politics. Instead it operated through messages of economic prosperity. The majority of wealth in the southern slave economy was not invested in land (as a factor of production), as it was in the North, but in labor itself. Therefore, when slavery was

³ J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the establishment of the One-Party System, 1880-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 16-17.

abolished, so too was much of southerners' wealth. Boosters in the South, Grady among them, focused on creating an entrepreneurial spirit to recover the South's lost wealth through industrialization. Central to this industrialization was the need for a network of railroads that could haul raw materials, coal principle among them, to the newly established factories across the South. And around the railroads came boomtowns, around which more mills were built.⁴

One such railroad town was the city of Atlanta. Though built in the late-1830s, Atlanta embodied the entrepreneurial spirit characteristic of Grady's New South. Despite Atlanta and its several railroad lines having been utterly destroyed at the hands of the Union Army following the Battle of Atlanta in 1864, the city's citizens managed to quickly rebuild Atlanta's infrastructure and railroads just months after the end of the war. The city repopulated rather quickly, so much so that by 1880, the census put the number of residents at more than 37,000 individuals, more than quadruple the number of residents from before the war. When Grady moved to Atlanta permanently in 1879, he took advantage of the city's identity as the "Phoenix City," rebuilt from the ashes of the Civil War and moving towards a prosperous future. In selling his vision to Republicans, he cited this as evidence of a changed South that harbored no hatreds and sought only to reap the rewards of its labor, in just the same way as northerners worked.⁵

But if some values associated with the South had changed to mirror those of northerners, such as those changes undertaken in Atlanta, others remained strong. Pride in an imagining of the South's past as an aristocratic, noble society dedicated to values such

⁴ Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: revolutions in the southern economy since the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 19-21, 39, 43.

⁵ Russell S. Bonds, *War Like the Thunderbolt: The Battle and Burning of Atlanta* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2009), 386, 388.

as courteousness, leisure, and camaraderie and loyalty between whites and their slaves were cornerstones of southern culture. Grady's vision echoed these sentiments throughout his life; even in his New South speech in New York, he insisted that the South and its past had "nothing for which to apologize." These were, Grady maintained, part of southern white identity and therefore immutable. Reconciliation would not mean forgetting the past, but instead it would mean honoring it and uplifting it through the rhetoric of what would become the Lost Cause, a public memory glorifying the antebellum South and the Confederacy whose rhetoric revered the fallen soldier and confederates as survivors of a noble conflict. Though Grady never directly referenced the Lost Cause by name, he embraced many of its tenets, reinforcing white southern identity to northern Republicans. Even in their compromise, Democrats would remember their past.⁶

Though scholars often associate the terms industrialization, boosterism, southern identity, and Lost Cause with Grady and his vision, they have understated the political implications that drove Grady's thinking and connected these notions. Harold Davis, perhaps the preeminent scholar on Grady, overlooks this connection in favor of narrowly attaching Grady's vision to building Atlanta and Atlanta alone. Perhaps Grady did hope that his vision would propel Atlanta ahead of its rival southern cities, and in many ways Atlanta ultimately did. But to boil down the entirety of Grady's New South program to the "singular local application of the New South elements—farm policy, race, industrialization, and reconciliation—each emphasized or distorted in a way to help his city," disregards the far reaching implications of the vision, namely in how it served as a transition into the Jim Crow era. Viewing the vision through the lens of the political

⁶ Shaw, "Henry Grady Heralds the New South," 64.; David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 38.

atmosphere of the 1880s demonstrates that reconciliation was neither clean nor solid. It took years for Democrats and Republicans to comfortably embrace one another, and even after Grady's vision achieved the political alliance between the two parties, it held delicately for only two years before it broke down. Exploring the political relationships of the post-Reconstruction era and how Grady's vision attempted to manage them reveals more deeply the deep-seated tensions of an era characterized by northern capitulation.⁷

Historian K. Stephen Prince asserts, "The South was not just a place. It was an idea," and this is an appropriate starting point to understand Grady and his New South. For the South that Grady described to his audiences, both in his speeches and in his newspaper articles, was a picture or idea of what he imagined it could ultimately be, but not as it actually was. But there were signs it might come about. The South of the early and mid-1880s offered chances for a society to develop in which whites and blacks actually interacted with one another in an open, fair political environment; Grady's New South never called for the disenfranchisement of southern blacks but instead wanted to harness the power of the black vote, and in fact the numbers of black voters during the decade tallies quite largely given the Democrats' control of the ballot boxes. Further still, while his vision included a social separation of whites and blacks that bears resemblance to Joel Williamson's theory of a duo-chromatic order, it did not call for the exclusion of blacks from society or prosperity altogether in the way that the era formally considered Jim Crow did.⁸ Of course, to submit that Grady's New South was better than Jim Crow and

⁷ Davis, *Henry Grady's New South*, 196.

⁸ Joel Williamson, "The Separation of the Races," found in John David Smith, ed., *When Did Southern Segregation Begin?* (New York: Macmillan, 2002). The theory of a duo-chromatic order suggests that blacks and whites in South Carolina each undertook a conscious social separation of the races. Blacks though retained the same privileges as whites to use public spaces until 1889 when the state's antidiscrimination laws were repealed.

slavery comparatively says little, but it suggests that, as C. Vann Woodward claims in *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, the result of southern race relations that came about beginning in the 1890s was not set in stone.⁹ The same forces that helped Jim Crow establish its foothold in the American South were the same forces that ultimately pushed southern Democrats and Republicans to break the political alliance that was at the core of Grady's New South.¹⁰

Central to Grady's vision and to its undoing were memories of the past and the identity associated with them. Historian David Blight identifies three forms of remembrance of the Civil War informing thinking on race relations in the late nineteenth century. The supremacists sought to continue emphasizing sectionalist ties and would terrorize the black population. The emancipationists held that the South could never truly be reconstructed and reunified until the question of the place of black Americans in a liberated South could be addressed. Finally, the reconciliationists delivered a message of mutual grief and suffering from the Civil War, but also looked to the future to rebuild.¹¹ Blight situates the boosters, including Henry Grady, with the reconciliationists, and Grady certainly was a forward-looking reconciliationist; Blight further notes that reconciliationists and supremacists banded together in many of their pursuits, which also holds in terms of Grady. This is the way we remember Grady and his New South vision, but is that enough to understand an incredibly complicated political truce that was built upon decades of history, ideas, and expectations of the South, and then helped set it on the course that would define it for the next sixty years and beyond? In this thesis, I seek to

⁹ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, found in John David Smith, ed., *When Did Southern Segregation Begin?* (New York: Macmillan, 2002).

¹⁰ K. Stephen Prince, *Stories of the South: The cultural retreat from Reconstruction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 2.; Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, 27-29.

¹¹ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 2.

reexamine the common narrative of Grady and his New South vision and tackle the political nuances imbued in it. It asks three questions: what political, social, and racial influences drove Grady's New South vision? How did his vision help create the political truce between Democrats and Republicans? And what is the relationship between his vision and the early development of Jim Crow?

I have drawn my primary sources principally from newspaper articles and editorials and speeches. Grady wrote or delivered most of these works, but other utilized sources include articles written by staff reporters at Grady's newspaper, the *Atlanta Constitution* (where reporters operated under the direction and approval of Grady as managing editor), editorials from critics of other newspapers and magazines from across the nation, and speeches and interviews from several prominent politicians and businessmen, including Senator Joseph Brown and businessman Edward Atkinson. These sources span throughout Grady's professional career, from 1870 until his death in 1889, charting his views from when he worked for small-town papers in Georgia to his time with major regional and national newspapers, including the *Constitution* and the *New York Herald*. Grady spread his message through the press and on the public speaking circuit, and critics responded to that message through their own presses and media outlets. And in addition to influencing public opinion, presses concurrently reflected and strengthened that opinion, particularly in the South. Therefore, these articles and speeches offer an appropriate gauge of the relationship between Grady and the public as he delivered his New South vision.¹²

This thesis is organized into three chapters. The first chapter considers the factors early in Grady's life that influenced his later vision of a New South. I assert that the

¹² Richard H. Abbot, *For Free Press and Equal Rights: Republican Newspapers in the Reconstruction South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 1.

concepts that ultimately formed his New South vision arose from a deeply held retention of the idea of southern identity. Grady was raised in a college town indicative of a classic Old South environment, in a family that owned slaves. Further his father served and died for the Confederate cause. Though he may not have known the phrase throughout his life, Grady's childhood invoked in him sentimentality for the South that resembled the very same romanticizing of the Lost Cause. This fondness for the past and for white supremacy, coupled with the postwar industrial spirit embodied by his eventual home, Atlanta, and his skill as a Democratic journalist and editor, provided him with the tools to fulfill his vision.

The second chapter explores the process by which Grady built his reputation as a Democrat and also as a moderate reformer, friendly to Republicans. Grady's New South was meant to suggest that the South had changed from its antebellum days into a society more reflective of the North. Using Atlanta to showcase the possible improvements, the International Cotton Exposition of 1881 was intended to transform northerners' preconceived notions about the South. After northerners showed their interest in investing in the South, Grady quelled any lingering doubts about the South at the New England Society, playing upon the mutual respect for fallen soldiers and heroes of old to in turn express the brotherhood between regions that was yet untapped. Although he tried to depict a southern region wholly united behind his vision, Grady's New South was not universally accepted, and it left on the margins several populations, principally the farmers of the South, fueling an emerging Populist movement, and southern blacks.

The third chapter considers the political and racial undertones of Grady's vision, how it highlighted the white supremacy inherent in southern white identity and the

southern Democratic Party. From his earliest reporting days, Grady expressed a close relationship with the southern Democratic Party in his anti-Republican and anti-Reconstruction rhetoric, as well as his subtle white supremacist attitudes. Once northerners had been convinced of the South's changed ways, Grady wrote more openly of the need for a racially separated society. With this racially charged rhetoric, he helped to reinforce white supremacy as a distinctly southern identity, which sometimes led to violent results, including a rise in lynching and massacre of southern blacks as the 1880s progressed. Northerners did not rebuke this attitude and identity as long as it meant Republican voters would not be tampered with and as long as the South remained a profitable business venture. But as the 1880s began to close, southern Democrats began to more openly harass and intimidate black voters as formal segregation began to take root; Republicans responded with frustration over the antagonism directed towards Republican voters, marking their eroding political power in the region. After Grady died just days after he gave his final speech in December 1889, in which he made the same claims of racial separation but offered no solutions to violence, his imagined New South was all but dead. And the forces that unraveled and killed the alliance set the South on a road of ruin: white southern Democrats had begun to embrace violence towards blacks, lawfully separating and disenfranchising them, which signaled the arrival of a Jim Crow racial system.

The story of Henry Grady's New South is ultimately the story of a compromise between two political parties—each with racial and sectional preferences. And it is in understanding its formation and ultimately its failure that we see a more complicated

picture of Grady and his New South, offering new insights into this transitional period in southern American history between Reconstruction and Jim Crow.

CHAPTER ONE: Origins of a Vision for a New South

Henry Grady could not hold his tongue. Reporting from Washington D.C. on February 21, 1877, he wrote, “The fight against fraud has about broken down and Hayes will regularly and peacefully be inaugurated—the first usurper of the republic.”¹ The election of 1876 was highly disputed, with the popular vote favoring Democratic candidate Samuel Tilden, and electoral votes putting Tilden one vote shy of a majority in the Electoral College. But it was Hayes who was named the apparent winner of the election. The Democrats claimed federal troops in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida had tampered with the polls to give Hayes a victory; Republicans responded that Democrats had kept black Republican voters from the polls. As tension mounted and both parties threatened violence, Congress formed a bipartisan commission of five senators, five representatives, and five Supreme Court justices to determine the election; the commission ruled 8-7 in favor of Hayes. After months of arguing and negotiating on the commission, a compromise had been reached: in exchange for Hayes’s seat in the White House, federal troops would be pulled from the South. This Compromise of 1877 marked the end of Reconstruction.²

Though the Compromise involved both parties and though it ended what many former Confederate sympathizers viewed as an era of oppression from Radical Republicans, many Democrats, particularly southern Democrats, including Grady, viewed the Compromise as corrupt. They believed that they had been cheated. For Grady and many southern Democrats, Hayes’s ascension to the White House recalled years of tyranny from a fraudulent Republican government, this time aided by the northern Democrats and

¹ Henry W. Grady, “Haggling with Hayes,” *Constitution*, February 21, 1877.

² “Disputed Election of 1876,” Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center, accessed January 29, 2016. <http://www.rbhayes.org/hayes/president/display.asp?id=511>.

their “mock heroic[s].” “During the whole of this campaign,” Grady said, “[the South] contentedly held a back seat...” only to be betrayed by the North.³

Such was the predominant sentiment in the South, a sentiment that could be traced back to the country’s post-Revolutionary days. In the formation of the unifying narrative of the United States, many white southern leaders believed that their interests had been ignored or threatened. Ideas about America as a whole revolved around principally northern perceptions and pursuits: industry, business, and, most importantly, the movement towards, and in some cases achievement of, the end of slavery. In response to being “othered out” of the national narrative, many white southerners created over time an identity distinctly “southern” in nature that they could embrace. That narrative foregrounded the North and South as culturally distinctive.⁴

The perpetuation of that cultural rift forced many leaders, northern and southern alike, to reexamine the role of the South in America, especially in light of the Compromise of 1877. The predominant ideas of the antebellum South had apparently died with the abolition of slavery, and so it was necessary to ask what was the South and, more importantly, what would it become? The end of Reconstruction marked the end of Republicans’ efforts to shape the region and its values into the image of the North.⁵ But with the departure of Republicans, white southern leaders intensified their efforts to rebuild and redefine the South. For many white leaders, their vision of the South was instilled in their past: their values of nobility, honor, and leisure in their Christian, white antebellum

³ Grady, “Haggling with Hayes.”

⁴ James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5.

⁵ But though active efforts had ceased, this idea of what would later be coined the No South, referring to a lack of apparent cultural, political, and economic distinction between North and South, endured in Republican thought.

society. But some leaders recognized that to simply recreate the Old South would be ill advised, lest the mistakes of the past be repeated; for them, there would need to be a New South onto which white southerners could latch that offered both progress and the values of old. For Grady, that meant transforming the South from an agrarian society to a more industrial, modernized region that still embraced the spirit and culture of the Old South.⁶

Henry Grady, born in 1850 and raised in a decorous southern environment, and having lived in a fairly large home with several slaves, could easily recognize this Old South identity and culture in his family and in himself. Part of this identity was a fondness for the past and an honoring of the heroes of the Civil War. These two precepts were incorporated into what would become the “Lost Cause” ideology that formed in the decades following the Confederate defeat in the Civil War. Grady, as a son of the Old South, would have regularly heard as a child rhetoric and philosophy that bore a striking resemblance to the eventual Lost Cause narrative. This rhetoric would speak of an aristocratic South that valued its leisure and hospitality, of white benevolence towards slaves, and of slaves’ undying loyalty to their masters. These notions of a distinctly southern identity would come to define Grady’s New South vision.⁷

And that vision would be personified in Grady’s eventual hometown of Atlanta. Though Atlanta was not an agrarian town but a railroad terminal, the townspeople embraced values that matched those of the typical southern agrarian society: hard work, independence, diligence, and, following the burning of Atlanta in 1864, scars from the Civil War. This city, with its battle-tested history and subsequent economic revival, embodied what Grady would stress with his New South vision, at its most basic, in

⁶ Ibid. 4-7.

⁷ Ibid. 7.

convincing northerners of the reformed southern experience: with his audiences, he would remember the past and then boast of the drive to build for the future.

This chapter demonstrates that Grady's ideas about the future of the South were rooted in his perceptions of both his own past and of the past of the South as a whole. Grady's own upbringing in wealthy, isolated Athens, Georgia resembled that of a classic Old South childhood: his household owned slaves and many of his town upheld values of leisure and culture. Meanwhile, the city of Atlanta, where Grady resided as an adult, exemplified the spirit of a resilient South that honored its past but looked to the future. These formative influences combined with the long-held perceptions of the South both before and after the Civil War created a sense of white southern identity with which Grady clearly grew up and later presented through his New South vision. By the time Grady permanently resided in Atlanta in 1879 and had part-ownership of an influential, stable newspaper, the journalist had a platform rooted in the economic enterprises for an industrialized South represented by Atlanta, in the fondness for the past that was his own childhood, and in the lens through which one could reinterpret and envision a glorious southern past and spur the fight for a Democratic, white South with the Lost Cause.

The Atlanta Spirit

Sixty miles south of Grady's hometown of Athens, Georgia stood the city of Atlanta, founded in the late 1830's as the terminal stop of the Western and Atlantic railroad. Located squarely in the hilly Piedmont region of Georgia, Atlanta offered little space for farming. And, unlike Chattanooga to the North, which was near major coal deposits, Atlanta's location was far from any obvious geological or natural resource

advantages. Further still, the Chattahoochee River that ran near the city could not support a mass port, like Savannah to the east. In all, Atlanta seemed to present too little of anything to maintain much beyond “one tavern, a blacksmith shop, a grocery store, and nothing else.”⁸

But the city did have a railroad that would serve as the iron lifeblood by which the city would prosper. While in 1845 only twelve to fourteen families inhabited it, the city grew throughout the next decade with the addition of three more railroad lines: the Georgia Railroad, the Macon & Western Railroad, and the Atlanta & West Point Railroad. At the start of the Civil War, railroad lines from Montgomery, Alabama to the west, Chattanooga, Tennessee to the north, and Augusta, Georgia to the south all converged at Atlanta.⁹

From the railroads came opportunities for commercial investment. The four railroads served as large employers, and around the terminus sprouted commercial and municipal centers: general stores, hotels, churches, a city hall, a jail, and the first successful newspaper, the *Daily Intelligencer*. Farmers located outside the city further stimulated commerce and growth by bringing in their produce for trade and shipment by railroad.¹⁰ In 1852, the first “machine shop” was founded to repair railroad cars and tracks. By the end of the decade, four machine shops in total would flourish, as would two planing mills, a rolling mill, and several smaller manufactories.¹¹ The mere twelve-to-fourteen families that occupied the city only fifteen years later had increased to more than 6,000 inhabitants.¹²

⁸ Wendy Hamand Venet, *A Changing Wind: Commerce and Conflict in Civil War Atlanta* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Wallace Putnam Reed, *History of Atlanta, Georgia: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & co., 1889), 44.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 45, 52.

¹² *Ibid.* 53.

As the businessmen poured in, a pattern of governance between them began to take shape. The various business leaders took turns running for and winning public office on the city council and the mayor's office. Having seen firsthand the capabilities of a railroad-based economy, the men shared a common vision of economic prosperity based on the continued success of the railroad and the manufacturing shops and mills that supported it. They emphasized the growth of business, the improvement and stabilization of the city's infrastructure, and the promotion of the still fledgling city in the state of Georgia as a whole, the same basic framework that Henry Grady would publicize in his New South vision. This economic and industrial spirit remained steadfast, and the city continued to grow. By 1859, inhabitants began calling Atlanta the Gate City of the South. Even as the Civil War loomed, spirits remained high.¹³

Though Atlanta did not participate in the actual farming of cotton, slaves still occupied the city. Whatever thoughts of secession were before the election of Abraham Lincoln, when Georgia became the fifth state to secede from the Union, citizens rallied behind the Confederate cause. The pronouncement of war stifled the burgeoning business sector, as resources had to be pumped into new outlets that would benefit not Atlanta itself but the war fronts.¹⁴ Atlanta became a military post in 1862, its location vital as railroad hub of the South. It continued to produce metal works to support the railroad and the Confederate army. But the city is most famous for the months-long Battle of Atlanta that preceded General William T. Sherman's March to the Sea.¹⁵

After the long siege, the Union army stood victorious. Desiring to advance east, Sherman could not spare troops to remain in the city to defend against a recovered

¹³ Venet, *A Changing Wind*, 11.

¹⁴ Reed, *Atlanta*, 106.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 118.

Confederate army. Recognizing the obvious importance and utility of the railroad, Sherman instead resolved to reduce the town into a useless remnant of itself. “I want you to take special charge of the destruction in Atlanta of all depots, car-houses, shops, factories, foundries...” Sherman ordered chief engineer Captain Orland M. Poe on November 7, 1864, mentioning, “Fire will do most of the work.”¹⁶ After having ordered the evacuation of every citizen from the city, Sherman set loose the Union army to dismantle the city and its railroad lines, leaving a trail of smolder and ash and twisted, decrepit metal in its wake. The light from the fires illuminated the night sky, “Such clouds of smoke, and vast sheets of flame, mortal eye has seldom seen, the whole region for miles was lighted up with strange and indescribable glare,” wrote one Union soldier.¹⁷ While estimates of the destruction are unclear, and though the whole incident has taken on a mythic grandiosity and cruelty to it, it is clear that the city suffered incredible damage. One Indiana soldier wrote in his journal, “We have utterly destroyed Atlanta.”¹⁸

Following the demolition, Georgia militia colonel W.P. Howard surveyed the aftermath, noting that only 400 houses remained standing in the city and between 3,200 and 5,000 had been burned. The factories, rolling mills, arsenals, armory, foundries, and all railroad related buildings and machines had been reduced to scraps. “Every species of machinery that was not destroyed by fire was most ingeniously broken and made worthless in its original form—the large steam boilers, the switches, the frogs, etc. Nothing has escaped,” Howard wrote.¹⁹ And the railroad tracks, the primary support of the city, themselves had “simply ceased to be.” But the state and the railroad companies mounted

¹⁶ Russell S. Bonds, *War Like the Thunderbolt: The Battle and Burning of Atlanta* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2009), 341.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 355.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 359.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 362.

an extraordinary effort to repair the city and the railroads. In March 1865, though there was neither platform nor station, the first railroad reopened and a train drove through the city, a remarkable feat when one considers the incredible extent of the damage a mere four months prior.²⁰ Rather quickly, an air of normalcy began to resurface. Fifteen years later, the 1880 census would put the total tally of Atlanta inhabitants at more than 37,000. Atlanta would adopt the name “Phoenix City” to mark its improbable rebirth.²¹

For any Georgian moving into the city in the 1870s, as Grady did, the story of Atlanta’s burning and rebirth would have been a familiar one. Damage from and recovery after the Civil War offered southerners in general, but particularly the citizens of Atlanta, a self-starter and communal identity that they embraced, and in doing so shaped their remembrances and personal identifications with the Civil War as a whole; for though they had lost and had suffered much, they had rebuilt their lives and reshaped their city into a bigger and better version of its antebellum iteration. Southerners could view themselves as victims of the hellfire of the Union army, and noble for picking up the pieces to build something more beautiful. It was this identity centered around a noble cause and an unyielding embrace of perceptions of what it meant to be “southern,” especially in the face of defeat, that ultimately shaped the prevailing sentiment of much of the white South as a whole, that of the Lost Cause.

The Rise of the Lost Cause

As victors of the Civil War, northerners won the opportunity to reshape the South as they saw fit, and what better mold than the image of the North itself? The

²⁰ Ibid. 386.

²¹ Ibid. 388.

Reconstruction process, as historian K. Stephen Prince writes, centered namely on answering this core question of “What is the South?” In searching for an answer, the leaders of Reconstruction had to address the antebellum past—what key social and cultural structures differentiated it from the industrial-based economic and social system of the North. The answer, of course, was rooted in slavery.²² Northerners had long held notions that the South possessed a backward impression of freedom and labor, namely that to be free “consists in having somebody else to work for you,” wrote the *Chicago Tribune* during Reconstruction.²³ The northerners viewed the South as something completely separate, something that needed to be fixed, both physically in its infrastructure and ideologically in its perceptions of work, freedom, and culture in general. In doing so, the newly reunified country could move past the bloodshed of the war and into a brighter future.

The North’s perception of this “otherness” of the South was not birthed out of the Civil War. These cultural perceptions of North and South had persisted in prior decades. From 1800 to 1860, the proportion of the northern labor force involved in agriculture dropped significantly, from 70% to 40%, while the southern agricultural force remained strong, employing 80% of the labor force throughout those six decades. The fact was the South was entrenched in a deeply different economic system than the North, and the cultural, economic, and political implications of that system mandated that cotton be grown to own more slaves to grow more cotton, and the cycle continued.²⁴ The obvious distinction between the two regions would have proved less substantial had the

²² K. Stephen Prince, *Stories of the South: The cultural retreat from Reconstruction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 19.

²³ *Ibid.* 32.

²⁴ Cobb, *Away Down South*, 39.

construction of the American identity not been centered completely on the northern way of life. As historian James C. Cobb wrote, “From the outset [of post-Revolutionary America], a widely dispersed, overwhelmingly rural population and the absence of incentives in a plantation-based society for the investments in public education needed to develop significant literary or journalistic institutions had effectively consigned the southern states on the periphery of popular communication in America.”²⁵ In essence, the South had been “othered out” of the national narrative.²⁶

The natural response to the apparent lack of identity was to embrace the one northerners refused to acknowledge. To be southern was not just a point of pride but an appeal to the original American way of life, the very agrarian lifestyle that Thomas Jefferson envisioned. An unavoidable component of that way of life was slavery and white superiority, and so the South became only more entrenched in the cultural disparities between North and South.²⁷

When the Civil War ended, northerners could reason that their victory proved the social, economic, and moral superiority of their way of life. Leaders in the South, by contrast, could only assume that defeat meant not only the dismantling of their own lifestyle and culture, one that had persisted since America’s colonial days, but also the further erasure of a southern identity from the national narrative—and the defeat after a bloody Civil War would only solidify that fact in the annals of history.²⁸ Rather than capitulate to the erasure from history and wallow in defeat, the South began to concoct a new way of thinking.

²⁵ Ibid. 3.

²⁶ Ibid. 5.

²⁷ Ibid. 4-5.

²⁸ Prince, *Stories of the South*, 31.

In 1866, Virginia journalist and Confederate sympathizer Edward A. Pollard released his book, *The Lost Cause*, putting to phrase the new, growing southern spirit. The Lost Cause offered not only solace in the shadow of defeat but also a sort of moral victory that the South could embrace. The South did not choose slavery, Lost Cause moralizers would argue; it was thrust upon them by the British and the northern merchants and slave traders that would profit from the transactions of slaves and raw materials. Further, the South had gone to war not for slavery itself but for the protection of Constitutional freedoms of state rights guaranteed in the Tenth Amendment. That the Confederacy had seceded from the Union not dissimilarly from the manner in which the thirteen colonies had left Britain provided further justification.²⁹ From this revisionist frame of mind came a new sentimentalism for the southern past, the days of the righteous, noble, Christian Cavalier. Embodied by the likes of Robert E. Lee, the Confederate soldier became a Christian warrior who upheld the values of the past, who fought the Yankee just as the Pope's soldiers gallivanted to Jerusalem in the Crusades. God had preordained that the South had lost in its moral cause because, as the Episcopal bishop of Georgia Stephen Elliot contended, "God's people must always be tried."³⁰

As Union soldiers occupied the southern states to implement Reconstruction, the Lost Cause took on a more belligerent aura. The South had battles to fight yet—not battles of war, though Pollard did not disregard the possibility of another Civil War, but one of ideologies. In the introduction of his 1868 follow-up book, *The Lost Cause Regained*, Pollard asserted, "That the question of the Negro practically couples or associates a revolutionary design upon the Constitution; and that the true question which the war

²⁹ Cobb, *Away Down South*, 62.

³⁰ Found in Cobb, *Away Down South*, 63.

involved... was the supremacy of the white race, and along with it the preservation of the political traditions of the country.”³¹ By occupying the southern states and implementing their Reconstruction agenda, northerners and Radical Republicans continued to oppress the basic rights on which the Union was founded, and necessarily included in those rights was the supremacy of whites over blacks. This was the new front of the war: “From the beginning, Lost Cause diehards attacked Reconstructionist policy nearly as much as they appealed for history true to the Confederate cause.”³² By establishing alliances with northern whites sympathetic to Anglo superiority, the Democratic Party could overthrow the Republicans and claim the symbolic victory for which the Civil War had truly been fought.³³

But for as much as political rallying could do for a wounded southern ego, and though, as Cobb argues, Reconstruction would fall as a result of “Lost Cause propaganda and Pollard’s political plan,” the realities of a collapsed southern economy weighed heavily on the common man.³⁴ Wealth in the North had increased by 50 percent in the 1860s, while southern wealth had spiraled. In an economy heavily invested in labor itself rather than land, emancipation meant the loss of an estimated \$3 to \$4 billion, in addition to damages incurred during the war. With global demand for cotton beginning to stagnate, the need for a new economic system that altered the plantation system to one of free labor, and in the process take advantage of that copious, newly available free labor, became urgent.³⁵ The rapid rebuilding and expansion of the railroads would prove indispensable to

³¹ Edward Alfred Pollard, *The Lost Cause Regained* (New York: GW Carleton & Company, 1868), 14.

³² David W. Blight, *Race and reunion: the Civil War in American memory*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 264.

³³ Cobb, *Away Down South*, 65.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 65.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 67.

any sort of future success. Through railroads, towns could self-build, much in the same way Atlanta did in the antebellum era. Towns spread word through the mail with pamphlets advertising their local cotton and real estate markets. “The ‘booster’ spirit...was a reflection of the basic economic impulses behind town building itself, the tendency of townspeople to treat their communities as a common enterprise.”³⁶

This southern culture persisted, engrained within it an undying sentimentalism for an idealized past, one where to be southern meant to be proud, self-sustaining, and American in the Jeffersonian sense, and one that had known tensions but had not known civil war. When, following the election of 1876, the Republicans struck a deal with the Democrats to secure the presidency for Rutherford B. Hayes in exchange for the removal of federal troops from South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana, effectively ending Republican-controlled governance, Reconstruction came to an end. Permeated by the Lost Cause, the new, shared history of the “Old South” united white southerners in a common experience, and laid the groundwork for a new front to reassert the glory of the past.³⁷ This “New South” would play upon the same constraints as the Lost Cause, but adapt it to a northern audience, effectively making the Lost Cause not a southern experience but a national one. But a strong and sure voice would need to handle such a delicate matter; that voice belonged to a young journalist from Georgia named Henry Grady.

Growing Up in Athens, GA³⁸

³⁶ Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the southern economy since the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 43.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 74.

³⁸ The biographical information found here is taken from Raymond B. Nixon’s *Henry W. Grady: Spokesman of the New South*. Prior to this book, most biographical information regarding Grady’s life came from Joel Chandler Harris, who published a laudatory, memorial account of Grady’s life very shortly after Grady had died in 1889. That Harris’s biography appeared so rapidly following Grady’s death and speaks so

In 1850, the year of Grady's birth, the small town of Athens, roughly sixty miles northeast of Atlanta, had a population of 3,500, approximately divided evenly between whites and slaves. A trading center for the plantations around it, Athens was also the home to the University of Georgia and three small cotton factories. But life in Athens revolved around the genteel and the intellectual, its free inhabitants sought not for their town to industrialize but to remain the leisurely, idyllic town of large, white-columned houses and vast fields of green.³⁹ Grady's father, William, was not a planter but owned and operated a plant to supply Athens with gas from converted pinewood. As the business found success, William moved his family from the small cottage in which Grady was born into a two-story house within eyeshot of the university. The Gradys owned five slaves as house servants, who, as Grady biographer Nixon writes, "under the customs of the pre-war South enjoyed a status somewhat above that of the ordinary field hand." Nixon suggests Grady was welcoming and cordial with these servants, even lovingly playing with a young slave whom he referred to as "Brother Isaac."⁴⁰

Though William Grady did not initially support secession, voting for moderate Democrats in the 1860 election, he nonetheless joined the Confederate cause following the events at Fort Sumter, convinced that states had a constitutional right to secede. William self-funded a company of guards and became a captain in the Twenty-fifth North Carolina Regiment. Accompanying Captain Grady were two family slaves.⁴¹

uncritically of him suggests suspect information may be included. Nixon cites Harris readily throughout his own book. Nonetheless, Harold Davis, perhaps the premiere scholar on Henry Grady, insists that Nixon's work is sound for its biographical points.

³⁹ Raymond B. Nixon, *Henry Grady: Spokesman of the New South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), 33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 34.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*40

Though the war had forced the schooling system to shut down, it did not stop young Henry from finding ways to learn. At the now-closed university, where a Confederate hospital and a small Union prison camp now stood, Grady would often speak with soldiers from both sides, gaining their insights, and sharing his leftover morsels of food or cash he might have on him. Though much of Georgia would suffer the physical devastation of war, from Sherman's March and other skirmishes, Athens remained physically untouched.⁴²

But vigilance was nonetheless necessary without Captain Grady to protect the family. Grady would recall the faithfulness of the slaves that remained with his family in his father's absence. He wrote of one "trusty slave, who for four years while my father fought with the armies that barred his freedom, slept every night at my mother's chamber door, holding her and her children as safe as if her husband stood guard."⁴³

Though the buildings of Athens themselves suffered little during the war, at war's end, its citizens felt the brunt of a demoralizing defeat. Many of Athens' citizen-soldiers had died in campaign, and much of the remaining citizens' wealth was lost to fund the war. Union troops occupied the university and the Georgia state treasury lacked funds to finance it, ensuring it would not reopen for some time.⁴⁴ And Grady had suffered the compound tragedy of the death of his father in October 1864 and of his baby brother earlier that year.⁴⁵

These remembrances of Grady's early life and the idyllic portrait of growing up in a classically "Old South" town suggest a strong link to Grady's frame of mind with which

⁴² Ibid. 40.

⁴³ Ibid. 39.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 41.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 40.

he would ultimately write about and discuss the South. One cannot help but question if the descriptions of Grady's growing up are accurate, as relayed by Grady and his various, posthumous biographies, or if these memories had been influenced by an infatuation with the Old South ideal. The fact remains that we can never know exactly how Grady lived. But one cannot ignore the stark parallels between Grady's remembrances and the Lost Cause/Old South ideology that appeared following the end of the war. The sentimentalism with which he regarded his past is perhaps best demonstrated in Grady's review of a stage production of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," written in January, 1881. Grady's disdain for the "unfair" and "false" portrayals in the play is clear, and he reminded readers, "There was no hint on the stage of the real antebellum life of the South...No touch of that strange tenderness that bound the old slave to his old 'massa' and 'missus,' in a bondage softer and yet stronger than slavery."⁴⁶

Grady grew up in an environment already infatuated with the genteel South, the same idea that would also serve as the cornerstone of the Lost Cause. That Grady had lived comfortably, in a larger house with slaves as servants, and suffered the loss of a father would only compound the fondness with which he would look back on the antebellum years. Whether he had known of the Lost Cause by name when he began his career in journalism in the early 1870s is a moot point—he already lived the life the Lost Cause would later lay out for southerners to affectionately remember. And it was through journalism that such rhetoric could spread throughout society.

Early Journalism Career in the Reconstruction Era

⁴⁶ Henry W. Grady, "The Stage," *Constitution*, January 11, 1881.

Newspapers had long affiliated with political parties, working in tandem to spread the party platform and denounce critics. By 1860, the South was so enmeshed with the Democratic Party that no Republican newspaper existed in the eventual Confederate states. But with the outset of the Civil War, the Republican Party saw an opportunity to spread its message. It established a series of newspapers throughout the South to begin to disseminate information targeting Unionists in the seceded states with the hopes of converting them to the Republican Party.⁴⁷ Following the war, these Unionist papers, such as the *Virginia State Journal* and the *Savannah Daily*, numbered at least twenty-seven and existed in nine of the eleven Confederate states. When the war ended, the Unionist papers converted to purely Republican presses and took to altering public opinion.⁴⁸

Of course, anti-Republican papers still remained. The southern newspaper business had suffered during wartime, as many publishers, printers, editors, etc. had left the business to join the Confederate army. Those papers that remained active found difficulty in acquiring printing materials due to the Union blockade, and the Union army often destroyed printing materials and machinery when it occupied a town or city. But following the war, the southern presses had rebuilt themselves, having actually increased their numbers since before the war by 1870, and fueled themselves with their ire for the Republican platform and Reconstruction.⁴⁹

The newspaper always held a larger sway over southern readers than over northern ones. As a planter and agriculture-based socioeconomic system, the South possessed few incentives for schooling, libraries, and other readily available sources of information and

⁴⁷ Richard H. Abbot, *For Free Press and Equal Rights: Republican Newspapers in the Reconstruction South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 39.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 40.

education that were more abundant in the North. Therefore, a town's local paper might be the only, or at least the principal, accessible source. The exact degree of a newspaper's influence cannot be easily measured, but like town leaders, clergymen, and public officials, a newspaper and its editor certainly held a certain sway, especially in smaller, more rural parts of the South.⁵⁰

Southern, anti-Republican newspapers far outnumbered their Republican counterparts, and created and persisted a culture of "intolerance of divergent opinion and dissent."⁵¹ The anti-Republican, anti-Reconstruction newspapers remained highly united on this front, generally refusing to acknowledge newspapers that countered their opinions, sometimes referring to them as "nigger papers" that printed only "incendiary documents."⁵² The southern Democratic public aided in the maltreatment of the Republican press by refusing to make purchases from businesses that took up ad space in these newspapers or by otherwise socially ostracizing the owners.⁵³ The meshing of the political with the social and economic may have been troubling to the Republican transplants, but it aided the anti-Republican public in remaining steadfast in their zealotry, and demonstrated to Democratic leaders that their Lost Cause platform was working; there was, after all, a narrative to uphold.

Henry Grady was ready to participate in the anti-Republican sentiment of the day. Beginning as a reporter for the *Atlanta Constitution* in 1868, he made his name known through his wit and vivid descriptions in his news stories. In 1869 he became associate editor of the weekly *Rome Courier*. Grady quickly took to making his position with the

⁵⁰ Ibid. 1-2.

⁵¹ Ibid. 2.

⁵² Ibid. 48.

⁵³ Ibid. 51.

Democrats known. In his first issue as editor, Grady immediately attacked Georgia's governor, Rufus B. Bullock. A northern-born businessman that worked with the Confederacy, Bullock ran as a Republican for governor in 1868, defeating the favorite John B. Gordon. Grady decried the Governor, asserting that, "We [of the *Courier*] have never, in the whole course of our life, seen a man who was gifted with so great an amount of beguiling blarney as is this man."⁵⁴ Bullock had been the subject of criticisms since his election, accused of bribery and corruption, particularly regarding the state-owned Western & Atlantic Railroad, for his personal profit at the expense of the state.⁵⁵ "We do not fear the couth ruffian, that is with hideous leer torted, but the soft and supple gentleman scoundrel, that 'can smile and smile, play the villain still,'" wrote Grady.⁵⁶ And when the Atlanta-based *Intelligencer* rushed to the governor's aid, Grady retorted with a condemnation of the paper, claiming it had, "deserted the cause in which it has so long battled, and is no longer worthy the confidence of Democratic leaders."⁵⁷ The truth of the accusations against Bullock and his character is irrelevant. And in fact he managed to bring in considerable northern capital, as Grady would call for a mere decade later, to build railroads, schools, and public buildings. Nonetheless, the largely white, Democratic public believed him a Republican lapdog and a menace to Georgia. Bullock resigned the office in secret after the 1870 election brought a Democratic majority to the state legislature.⁵⁸

Through the 1870s, Grady started and joined various other newspapers, including the Atlanta *Sunday-Telegram* and the *Atlanta Herald* before becoming managing editor

⁵⁴ Henry W. Grady, *Rome Courier*, September 7, 1869.

⁵⁵ W. Calvin Smith, "The Reconstruction 'triumph' of Rufus B. Bullock," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (1968): 423.

⁵⁶ Henry W. Grady, *Rome Courier*, September 7, 1869.

⁵⁷ "The Atlanta Intelligencer," *Rome Courier*, n.d.

⁵⁸ Russell Duncan, "Rufus Bullock (1834-1907)," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, April 27, 2004, accessed January 27, 2016. <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/rufus-bullock-1834-1907>.

and part owner of the *Atlanta Constitution* in 1879. During the decade, Grady continued his role as Democratic watchdog. He campaigned vigorously for the 1876 election of Alfred H. Colquitt to the governorship. His election, Grady asserted, would mark the end of “noisiness and demagoguism” in Georgia, and that Colquitt was a “calm and tranquil patriot—this simple, decorous gentleman, who never knew a politicians trick, who could not descend to a demagogue’s shift.”⁵⁹

No doubt Grady used the word “demagoguism” in reference to Governor Bullock and the Radical Republicans. He vehemently stressed the prejudice of the North towards the South, “I am very much afraid that the same generation of Northern men who fought the late war, or saw it fought, will never allow the ‘rebels’ or any party friendly to the ‘rebels’ to regain power.” The South remained the victim of northern aggression and a Republican Party that had become “rotten” and “debauched.” The oppression of the South by the Republican North harkened back to the Lost Cause narrative, but Grady used it in a more subtle fashion. The original intent of the Lost Cause involved the permanent ascension of whites over blacks, and in overcoming the Republicans, white southerners would achieve the goal of the Civil War. But Grady made no reference to Anglo superiority here or in most of his early politically charged editorials and columns. In these articles, he viewed defeat of the North as a purely political and moral battle with no racial overtones. Here the Lost Cause narrative remained intact but focused on purely sectional prejudices and disagreements. This narrative was more restrained and could be digested by northerners. The failure of Reconstruction and the corruption of the Republican Party, particularly after the Belknap Trader Post Scandal of 1876, became acknowledged even

⁵⁹ Henry W. Grady, “General Colquitt and the Gubernatorial Race,” *Atlanta Courier*, 1876.

within the party itself by the election of 1876.⁶⁰ Grady's calls for reasonableness and leniency and an end to Republican corruption would not appear irrational given the blatancy of the issue.⁶¹

Whether Grady actively engaged the Lost Cause or simply happened to brush with it is uncertain. But it is clear that even if he had never heard or read the term "Lost Cause," given his upbringing and the widespread influence of Lost Cause leaders through the utilization of Democratic newspapers to spread their gospel, Grady would be familiar with its most basic tenets. Firmly rooted in Atlanta by the mid-1870s, Grady had before him a public generally united in their beliefs regarding both the past and the future of their city and an untapped economy. He had an ally in now-Governor Colquitt, and in 1879 he had a vastly influential newspaper, one whose readership extended above the Mason-Dixon line. All of the pieces were in place when Grady started pushing his New South vision, a program that combined Lost Cause sentimentalism and fervor with the more restrained rhetoric that Grady had begun to use in 1876.

Connecting these many threads was the central question of what a post-slavery South might be. For Grady, it was clear by 1877 that, whatever form it would take, it would be in part based on a Lost Cause narrative. Atlanta, as a symbol of southern rebirth, would also play a role in answering that question. With his position as managing editor of a newspaper secure, Grady could channel his voice into calls for reforming the South

⁶⁰ The Trader Post Scandal was only the latest in a string of scandals plaguing the Grant Administration, some of the more famous examples being the Whiskey Ring and Credit Mobilier Scandals. In 1872 William Belknap, Grant's Secretary of War, was accused of accepting bribes from merchants in exchange for preferential access to trading posts in India. Though the then-Republican House quashed these allegations, the new Democratic majority in the House, secured in 1874, reopened the rumors, found that Belknap's wife continued to receive cash payments from merchants, and subsequently impeached Belknap in March 1876, though he had already resigned his post. The Trader Post Scandal was also significant for fueling Democrats' desire to impeach Grant, though this action was never carried out.

⁶¹ Henry W. Grady, "Will the Northern Masses Agree to Trust the Democrats with Power?" *Constitutionalist* (Augusta, GA), April 9, 1876.

through economic revitalization. This would, he hoped, lead to some form of reconciliation.

CHAPTER TWO: The Political Alliance of Henry Grady's New South

“We are not fighting prejudice, but a sincere fear,” wrote Henry Grady in 1876. President Grant’s administration, in its final year, had been accused of yet another scandal. In 1872, Grant’s Secretary of War, William Belknap, was accused of accepting bribes from merchants in exchange for preferential access to trading posts in India. Though the then-Republican House quashed these allegations, the Democratic majority, secured in 1874, reopened the claims, and found that Belknap’s wife continued to receive cash payments from merchants. To Grady, it was the final straw; the Republican Party was “rotten to the very core. Its long lease of power has debauched it. Its heads of department have become corrupt and its minutest machinery corrupt...It has played its part and now lags superfluous. It should step to the rear and give way to a new party.” But Republicans, he insisted, would not loosen their grip on power over the federal government because they continued to despise the Democrats, with whom they still associated the Civil War, “I am very much afraid that the same generation of northern men who fought the late war, or saw it fought, will never allow the ‘rebels’ or any party friendly to the ‘rebels’ to regain power.” But there was the possibility of hope nonetheless. “It is possible,” he said, “that the Democrats may force the country to awaken from its dull prejudice and look at facts as they really exist, to cease sacrificing the living present for the shadowy ghost of fear.”¹

Though tensions between Democrats and Republicans certainly remained high following the end of the Civil War, there was an opportunity for a thaw. Reconstruction had taken a toll on the Republican Party with its only limited success in seeking justice for the emancipated slaves. A revitalized interest in commerce and southern investment began

¹ Henry W. Grady, “Will the Northern Masses Agree to Trust the Democrats with Power?” *Constitutionalist* (Augusta, GA), April 9, 1876.

to sway many northerners to favor reconciliation, creating a rift in the Republican Party.² Meanwhile, the abolishment of slavery had put the southern economy and its white southern elite at a crossroads. Before the Civil War, southern wealth had been invested principally in labor instead of land, as it was in the North and its free labor economy. According to historian Gavin Wright, a downside to a slave economy is the lost incentive to “accumulate wealth by increasing the value of land, the residual claimant on economic returns” because one could just as easily invest in either more labor or more land, where the owner could be assured of a productive labor force. With emancipation, both purchasing labor to increase wealth and the guarantee of a labor force to work the land became moot. With a free labor system now in place, the southern elite needed to change its strategies of wealth accumulation to the practice of augmenting the value of land. As Wright states, “former slaveowners, dispossessed of their labor, rechanneled their energies into the search for capital gains on nonhuman property.” Northern and southern interests were therefore compatible, as each recognized the profits to be made from the entrepreneurial and capital ventures in the new labor system. Within the realm of economics and capital spending lay the mechanism by which Henry Grady would shake the fears of the Republican Party. His New South vision brought Republicans and southern Democrats together through a political alliance: in return for the promise of financial gain for Republicans in the North, the federal government would give to the southern Democrats the self-rule they had long sought.³

² David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 50.

³ Gavin Wright, *Old South New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 19-21.; Gavin Wright, *Slavery and American Economic Development* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 78.

Democratic Congressman from Georgia Benjamin H. Hill laid out some basic economic components for a New South in 1870: the South should remake itself through the investment of southern capital into industry, thereby creating a society that would no longer need to depend on northern capital, manufacturing, and labor. In the late 1870s, Grady too thought the South should remake itself economically, but he envisioned capital flowing in from the North to fund industrial investment. A primary challenge to this plan, however, was that, despite their interest in southern capital speculation, many northerners remained bitter about the end of Reconstruction and viewed the South as a hostile region to northerners and Republicans. If there were to be any hope of luring northern investors southward, reconciliation between the regions would be imperative.⁴ Grady's accomplishment came in altering northern perceptions of the South and its identity from an antagonistic region into one that had moved beyond the days of the Civil War and Reconstruction, that remembered its roots fondly but nonetheless looked forward to peaceful, affluent days for all. The result of this new identity was economic investment that physically transformed the South.

Coupled with its calls for economic revitalization, Grady's New South utilized ideas and rhetoric from the emerging Lost Cause, the collective memory of the noble Old South that honored the fallen Confederate soldier as a virtuous, Christian warrior. Through this language of grieving and romanticizing of the past, disseminated throughout the country by way of the *Constitution* and other newspapers, Grady described noticeable results from early implementations of economic remodeling as evidence of the South's capacity to change. Slowly but surely, Grady reshaped southern identity and perception of that identity in the image of the North—modest, industrious, modern—through his paper.

⁴ Numan V. Bartley, *Creation of Modern Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 85.

It took the form of a New South, defined by hard work, reasonableness, industriousness, and, most importantly, prosperity.

Though Grady spoke of the foreseeable successes of this New South with vigor, he failed to convince all to embrace it. That Grady was so involved in partnerships with government officials as an unelected civilian troubled many. And his New South's farming program, which involved a diversification of crops that the average farmer simply could not afford to pursue, left many farmers impoverished or perpetually tied to money lenders, thereby creating enemies from the agricultural community. Indeed Grady's vision did not address the concerns of many southerners, including poor and working-class whites and African Americans. But his New South was never meant to please everyone, only to create an industrialized South that promised profits for sponsors, thereby securing his political alliance between white southern Democrats and Republicans.

Atlanta, GA as a Forerunner for Change and Success

Grady's vision for a New South did not begin with sweeping calls for extensive change all across the South. It formed itself naturally out of his appeals for local efforts that would change and improve Atlanta as a growing city. Indeed, the city had been founded as a railroad depot town where small businesses over time flourished, where local business owners occupied most government posts with the intention of expanding the city's economic prospects. But those early efforts of economic expansion had the appearance of a growth reserved solely for the capitalists—it was not an Atlantan identity but a capitalist identity. Grady's trick was to bring the local residents into the fold of prosperity through his rhetoric and instill in them a sense of civic duty as citizens.

Industrial development, specifically for Atlanta through manufacturing, promised prosperity for local business owners. And by securing wealth with which to invest in business and municipal infrastructure, the city could physically grow to accommodate its increasing population and improve its civic services, such as sewage control, that would benefit every citizen. The benefits of these changes were obvious, and the city's citizens embraced Grady's calls.

Intimately connected to the need for manufacturing as the basis of future industrial development was the need for cheap coal. States with their own coalmines could pay as little as \$1.50 per ton of coal. Georgia, barren of such a resource, relied on the shipping of coal from Chattanooga, Tennessee to fuel its industrial needs, but at the far greater cost of \$4-5 a ton. Perhaps he was unaware of the discrepancy in price, but Grady made no mention of the need for cheaper coal until February 1879 when he wrote in the *Constitution* of a local manufacturer. Mr. Haimen, he informed his readers, walked into the offices of the newspaper and explained to the entire staff that Georgia needed cheaper coal if it was to succeed in competing with other manufacturing markets, especially in the Atlantic and Northeast regions. It is unclear whether the story unfolded the way Grady told it, or if it happened at all. Regardless, the encounter as told served an important function for Grady. It suggested that the need for cheap coal was not the brainchild of a newspaperman but of established, prescient manufacturers. In the article Grady confirmed the visitor's credentials and professional nature, describing Mr. Haimen as "a gentleman, closely-shaven and business-like in all his movements, quick-eyed, alert and intelligent..." Haimen stated he possessed a letter from "one of the leading manufacturers of Pennsylvania" that expressed his desire to move his business to the South, preferably to

Atlanta, but that he could not justify the more expensive coal prices. “This is the way with them all,” Haimen allegedly said, continuing, “I tell you if Atlanta intends to go ahead with her wanted energy she must have cheap coal.” The solution to this problem, according to Haimen, was to build the Georgia Western railroad to the coalmines of Alabama. Such a line would allow Atlanta to import coal more directly and cheaply. Grady left the article open-ended, “And he was gone—and he left us with a great deal to think about.”⁵

In the following days, the *Constitution* published a series of articles detailing public demand for the railroad, in which the paper declared, “It may be definitely relied on that the *Constitution* will give all the space needed to this most essential scheme. We realize that its [the railroad’s] building is an absolute necessity for the city of Atlanta—that it will give to the city a glorious future.”⁶ The public quickly invested itself in the enterprise; a short column detailed the many postcards sent to the *Constitution* offices inquiring as to the paper’s recent lack of attention paid to the railroad, indicating that the paper was successful in driving at least some public opinion and shaping perceptions about the needs of the city.⁷ One can see how this small series of articles very quickly created a common cause or a public necessity even, given the urgency of Grady’s rhetoric, around which the citizens could rally.

The growth of Atlanta would depend not only on railroads but also upon municipal additions that would improve the infrastructure of the city. The *Constitution* published several articles and editorials, some written by Grady, others not, detailing these improvements and reporting on the economic gains of the city. The paper assuaged fears of real estate property decline by asserting that overall property value had increased the

⁵ “Two Dollars a Ton,” *Constitution*, February 11, 1879.

⁶ Henry W. Grady, “The Coming Road,” *Constitution*, February 20, 1879.

⁷ Henry W. Grady, “The Georgia Western,” *Constitution*, February 26, 1879.

previous year. Though suburban property value had declined slightly, a rise in urban property value due to the construction of new buildings more than compensated.⁸ This rise in property value would lead to a greater income from property taxes, which, Grady asserted, should be put to better use by the city in the funding of schools, police, sewers and street maintenance, and gas. Grady noted that “there has really not been enough [funds] for the past three years to properly maintain the departments,” so this rise in property value further demonstrated the promising future of the city to prosper.⁹ The value of city property would continue to rise with the signing of over \$80,000 in private home building contracts over just a few days in March 1879. The *Constitution* described the necessity of new, affordable homes, especially tenement houses, to meet the city’s ever growing population.¹⁰ The increased population would require improved sanitation measures, an action undertaken by the city in 1879, devoting six sanitation carts (prior to this reform, a mere two sanitation carts served the entire city of under 40,000 people) and appointing two sanitation officers to survey the city and ensure its cleanliness. Grady lauded this much-needed reform that would ensure the health and safety of the city, “It is our opinion that the whole solution of the problem is in this simple remedy—certainly all the solution we can offer at present.” The importance of appearances to attract business and investment did not elude him either, as he wrote, “...we shall expect to see the complaints of foul airs and unhealthy odors melt away under a general clearness and brightness.”¹¹

⁸ Henry W. Grady, “At High Water Mark,” *Constitution*, February 25, 1879.

⁹ Henry W. Grady, “The City’s Income for 1879,” *Constitution*, 1879.

¹⁰ “Over \$80,000,” *Constitution*, March 6, 1879.

¹¹ Henry W. Grady, “The City Scavenger System,” *Constitution*, March 19, 1879.

These platforms put forward by Grady and the *Constitution* demonstrated an attempt at instilling a public drive for reforms, which took on an almost mythic quality. In these articles, the *Constitution* explicitly contrasted the reforms to come with the recent past: a sanitation system unfit to operate in a burgeoning city, a lack of housing only now addressed by the civic leaders, a rise in property value (and increase in property tax revenue) that had been insufficient for the previous three years. The paper noted how these contrasts demonstrated Atlanta's self-reliance, a characteristic that distinguished it from other southern cities, "[Atlanta] is the aggregation of small forces—the resultant of small persistencies. She is built upon no colossal fortunes, nor was she laid out by compass and rule...All of her public enterprises have grown as she did by the putting together of small purses and personal energies."¹² Grady and the *Constitution* had linked Atlanta with a new local identity defined by personal investment, community building, and cooperation.

The city now represented a concrete example of the success of a South devoted to industrialization and self-improvement. Thus, it could serve as a model on which Grady could base his New South platform that involved sacrifice of long-held notions in exchange for a forward-looking perspective that encouraged future prosperity, which is exactly how Grady ultimately characterized the South, "All that the South wants is peace and a fair chance...You go South and you find them busy, earnest, ambitious—boasting of their growing cities and their undeveloped interests. They are disgusted with politics and in love with progress."¹³ Only after his success working in and on the city of Atlanta did Grady possess the credentials to assert a regional program and, thereby, mold a new southern identity that embodied cooperation and personal, almost redemptive

¹² "Atlanta and Her Public Enterprises," *Constitution*, March 12, 1879.

¹³ "Down South," *Enquirer*, n.d.

improvement. With the potential to host the first International Cotton Exposition, Grady found an opportunity to put the reformed southern society of Atlanta on display.

A Vision of a New South on the World Stage: the International Cotton Exposition

As industrialization and manufacturing began to make headway in the South at the end of the 1870s, cotton farming remained the region's most important economic driver. Although cotton was grown widely across the South, the region had always lacked the necessary equipment to process and manufacture it on a scale required to supply the nation with cotton product. And so after being grown and picked in the South, cotton growers shipped their product north to be processed. But by 1880, northern cotton manufacturers had grown dissatisfied with the quality of the cotton crop grown in the South. That year, the Massachusetts economist and businessman Edward Atkinson proposed the staging of a grand exposition to demonstrate methods more apt to successful cotton farming.¹⁴ "There is no great staple of the world so wastefully handled and prepared for market as cotton...and there is no reason why there should not be decided improvement in its culture and handling," Atkinson said in an interview with the *New York Herald*.¹⁵

Atkinson had initially thought New York City or Washington, D.C. to host this event, but after his official announcement of the exposition in August 1880, Atlanta businessmen and Grady began to lobby for the city. Certainly Atlanta was well suited for the affair. Atkinson had wanted the exposition to represent a coming together of North and South, connected by an improved cotton trade between the regions. It would stand as a

¹⁴ K. Stephen Prince, "A Rebel Yell for Yankee Doodle: Selling the New South at the 1881 Atlanta International Cotton Exposition," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 92, no. 3 (2008): 346.

¹⁵ "The Cotton Exposition: A Talk with Edward Atkinson on the Advantages it Promises to the South," *New York Herald*, n.d.

symbol of reunification, of a nation that had moved past the hardships of the Reconstruction era. And its promotion of progress and self-improvement would, Atkinson believed, create sturdier ties than North and South had ever seen.¹⁶ Grady had already succeeded in beginning the process of revitalization in Atlanta; what better city, then, should hold the exposition than one that had already invested in its symbolic messages? When the contender cities were narrowed to Louisville and Atlanta, and with Louisville considered too far north for a southern exposition, the choice became obvious.

And so Grady took to work on selling and preparing for the International Cotton Exposition in his city. The *Constitution* kept readers aware of the exposition's development with frequent updates on its progress. In October 1880, it reprinted a speech from Atkinson, in which he declared, "this city is ceasing to be provincial and is becoming cosmopolitan; it is in a state whose credit is good; in which common schools are actively promoted, and in which even the bluntest of free speech does not abate the welcome that is extended to the citizens of any state. [Laughter and clapping of hands.]" Atkinson filled his speech with jokes making light of sectional tensions, emphasizing the underlying goal of the exposition. The *Constitution* took the occasion to indulge in sharing the city's lack of a grudge against the North, adding a brief anecdote regarding Atkinson, "...he [Atkinson] was told he could not speak here. That if he, a famous old free soiler and abolitionist, attempted to talk to an Atlanta audience, he would be hissed, or insulted, especially if he uttered truths that might be unpalatable to our people." However, the city received him cordially and enthusiastically, "he was astonished and gratified at the heartiness of his reception."¹⁷

¹⁶ Prince, "A Rebel Yell for Yankee Doodle," 343.

¹⁷ "Our Cotton: Speech of Hon. Edward Atkinson," *Constitution*, October 24, 1880.

But though the exposition allowed for self-flattery, there was still business in need of attendance. Grady spent the following year publishing articles detailing what he believed would be an inevitable success, and therefore the city needed to accommodate the scores of attendees. In March 1881, seven months before the commencement of the exposition, Grady wrote, “this crowd will not be a helter-skelter lot of excursionists out for a week’s frolic, but a number of business men and capitalists, busied with material matters and spying out fresh fields for investment.”¹⁸ The last time the city, with a population still fewer than 40,000, held so many individuals was the Battle of Atlanta, and never were the individuals of such importance for the city’s development. Atlanta was ill equipped to handle the expected attendance of more than 100,000 visitors a month for the two-and-a-half month period, so Grady and the *Constitution* began frequent calls for expanded and new hotels. These amenities required capital investment the city did not possess, so exposition director general H.I. Kimball, in close contact with Grady as evidenced by Grady’s detailed account of Kimball’s travels, sought funds from businessmen in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Other businessmen too, such as the landed, former planter Inman family, rallied to locate potential investors.¹⁹

But for as grand a part these rich businessmen could play, the average citizen had to pull his share of the weight. When Grady wrote, “It is safe to say that Atlanta has never received any guests whose opinions will be so important to her as these—never opened her gates to men who can do so much for her advancement, if they are properly treated and pleased with the outlook,” he made clear that not just the city, not just the exposition, but

¹⁸ Henry W. Grady, “A Grand Success,” *Constitution*, March 25, 1881.

¹⁹ Henry W. Grady, “The Atlanta Exposition,” *New York Herald*, July 30, 1881.; Grady, “A Grand Success.”

each inhabitant of Atlanta stood center stage for the country to see.²⁰ Each had a part to play in keeping the city presentable and in handling the masses for the foreseeable future. The citizens rallied to his call, going so far as to offer their own private residences without payment as accommodations to exposition visitors. Such participation from the average citizen would offer northern visitors, “an opportunity of seeing the inside of Southern homes, of enjoying the famous dishes for which the Southern housewife has been noted, and of studying Southern civilization at home...” The additional provided housing could “comfortably lodge 15,000 people a day.”²¹

On the day of its opening, October 5, 1881, the exposition was not yet complete, its scale so massive and grand that the *Constitution* stated, “That it should be even partially ready is almost a miracle.”²² Shortly after its opening though, the exposition would be complete and draw almost 300,000 visitors during its two-and-a-half month run, a number short of its projected attendance, but impressive all the same.²³ The *Constitution* lauded the instructive nature of the exhibits, “Our exposition is doing far more and far better than the gratification of the curiosity of people. It is teaching them lessons in industrial progress and domestic economy.”²⁴ Though such bombast undoubtedly served a self-promotional purpose, there is no denying that northern visitors were affected by this new southern culture. Newspapers across the country gave their praises, “[Atlanta] has grown to be a thriving city...called in name, which appears to the writer it might be called in reality, the Chicago of the south,” wrote one visitor from the *Cincinnati Gazette*.²⁵ In

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Grady, “The Atlanta Exposition.”

²² “The Opening of the Exposition,” *Constitution*, 1881.

²³ Harold E. Davis, *Henry Grady's New South: Atlanta, A Brave and Beautiful City* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 172.

²⁴ “The Exposition as a Teacher,” *Constitution*, 1881.

²⁵ “Press Opinions,” *Constitution*, 1881.

February 1882, Edward Atkinson published “Significant Aspects of the Atlanta Cotton Exposition,” concluding that sectional tensions between North and South had been dissipated:

It surely marks an important era in the history of this country, that even the abolitionists of old time can here meet ex-Confederate officers of high rank, and while conversing, without any sense of animosity, about the events and ideas which controlled the ante-war period, can also take counsel together as to the common interests and common needs of the future—almost as if slavery and war had never been.²⁶

In hosting the International Cotton Exposition, Atlanta stood as an early success of Grady’s New South vision, whose messages of unity and welcome to northern visitors were disseminated by Grady in the *Constitution* throughout the exposition’s run. Attendees and press alike encountered a South very much different from the memory of the discordant, hostile Reconstruction states still lingering in the back of the mind. Atlanta demonstrated that not only was development achievable but that it had already begun, and the more than 300 reporters whom Grady had brought from across the country disseminated that message. Atlanta became a symbol for progress and a monument to the end of sectionalism, and Grady the warrior at the vanguard of the New South. But though he had achieved success, there remained skepticism from the northern elite that the South could prove a completely safe and viable investment, a belief Grady quashed when he addressed the New England Society in 1886.²⁷

The Political Alliance Secured

²⁶ Edward Atkinson, “Significant Aspects of the Atlanta Cotton Exposition,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* (February 1882): 564.

²⁷ Prince, “A Rebel Yell for Yankee Doodle,” 349, 369.

In its entire 81-year history, the New England Society never hosted a speaker from the South, but there sat Henry Grady in Delmonico's restaurant in New York City amongst a crowd of 360 distinguished northern gentlemen. Though Grady may have felt uncomfortable, especially with former Union general William T. Sherman, who had famously burned Atlanta before commencing his March to the Sea, in attendance and slated to speak before Grady, he nonetheless gathered his wits and delivered a rousing speech on southern progress. It is in this speech that Grady so adeptly captured his vision, and never before was that vision disseminated so freely and so extensively. Here, in December 1886, the New South idea emerged fully formed.

His opening lines were bold: "There was a South of slavery and secession—that South is dead. There is a South of union and freedom—that South, thank God, is living, breathing, growing every hour." Grady made this claim, taken, he said, from a speech delivered by prominent southern Democratic Congressman Benjamin H. Hill at Tammany Hall, even before thanking the Society for the invitation to speak; he had made his thesis, and used the remainder of his time to endear himself, and by extension the South as a whole, to these northern Republican gentlemen.²⁸

Central to that endearment was the Lost Cause, a distinctly southern remembrance of the Civil War that recalled fondly the days of slavery and the honest, good Confederate soldier. Though northern Republicans would not sympathize with the Confederacy itself, they did understand loss and fallen soldiers. Grady took advantage of this angle to depict a humble South of broken men and families who sought only to fix their battered lives, "I

²⁸ "The New South" Speech as reprinted in Barton C. Shaw, "Henry Grady Heralds the New South," *Atlanta Historical Journal* 30, no. 2 (1986): 58-65. There is no evidence that Benjamin H. Hill actually spoke these words at Tammany Hall or in any other speech. Whether he did or whether Grady wished to bring authority to his opening lines is uncertain.

tell you of another army that sought its home at the close of the late war—an army that marched home in defeat and not in victory—in pathos and not in splendor, but in glory that equaled yours, and to hearts as loving as ever welcomed heroes home!” This formerly Confederate South was caring and noble, a people that accepted defeat and marched forward, “What does he do—this hero in gray with a heart of gold? Does he sit down in sullenness and despair? Not for a day. Surely God, who had stripped him of his prosperity, inspired him in his adversity.” And with the wisdom gained from hardship, the former soldiers, again citizens of equal status to their Union counterparts, took to the task of rebuilding, of cleaning the wreckage and of transforming their destroyed cities into ones “brave and beautiful.”²⁹

Remembering the past did not inhibit southerners but rather inspired them. Grady spoke of the South’s new manufacturing processes and markets, having embraced the northern practices in industry to create prosperity, “We have sowed towns and cities in the place of theories and put business above politics. We have challenged your spinners in Massachusetts and your iron-makers in Pennsylvania.” Grady depicted these southerners not as vindictive war criminals but as modest men who wanted only progress and peace. In fact, Grady asserted, it was not the South that prevented an acceptable reunion but the Republicans of the North, with their hateful memories of the Confederacy, “Will she permit the prejudice of war to remain in the hearts of the conquerors, when it has died in the hearts of the conquered? Will she transmit this prejudice to the next generation, that in their hearts...it may perpetuate itself?” Grady had flipped the narrative on its head—the South believed in its cause, lost, and had accepted its defeat and moved forward, while

²⁹ Ibid.

northerners had perpetuated a prejudice through waving the bloody shirt, preventing any hope for reunification. The South had changed; the South was *new*—it was the North that was locked in the past.³⁰

But this was no insult. In fact it was exactly what northern businessmen wanted to hear: the Civil War was truly over and no animosity remained, thus ensuring a welcome environment. The South had taken to new work, and, as a result, was rife for investment to be mined for profit. And all that Grady had accomplished in the South prior to this speech—the changing landscape of Atlanta, the International Cotton Exposition—gave weight and authenticity to Grady’s words. Grady recognized that these northern Republican businessmen needed a push in terms of how they viewed the South as both an economic opportunity and as an identity. And this identity, once viewed as disparate and incongruous, now mirrored the northern ideology of work, progress, and prosperity.³¹

Newspapers, such as the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Herald*, and the *New York Herald*, spread Grady’s words throughout the country, commenting on Grady’s ideas or reprinting the speech. Some papers even called for Grady to run as Vice President. His fame spread widely, and he became a national sensation. He began to write less for the *Constitution* and other newspapers and instead traveled nationwide to give speeches. But he did write in 1889 a series of six articles, predictably titled “The New South,” for the *New York Ledger* in which he elaborated on the ideas from his New England Society speech. In them, he did not lose the pageantry with which he adorned his speech, delving into descriptive tangents, such as the conditions met by a Confederate soldier and friend of

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Grady's upon his return from the war, to paint southerners as homely, modest, and determined. But he also provided more specific facts and figures to demonstrate the churning of southern progress. He cited principally the growing number of millionaires and wealthy individuals in southern cities, the increased number of iron furnaces in the region, the cheaper cost of production of iron in the South than in the North, and the prosperity brought by the cotton crop, among other indicators. He presented the New South as a near utopia of compassion and hard work:

We shall see how the warhorses went to the furrow. How the waste places were clothed. How the earth smiled at their rude and questioning touch. How the mountains opened and disclosed treasures not dreamed of before. How, from chaos and desolation, the currents of trade trickled and swelled and took orderly way. How rivers were spanned and wildernesses pierced with the iron rail. How things despised in the old days of prosperity, in adversity won unexpected value. How frugality came with misfortune, fortitude with sorrow, and with necessity invention.³²

This was a New South, Grady suggested, reborn from the past and often misrepresented by the North. Grady had cleared up the messages and meanings behind the South; the region's people were motivated, had advanced beyond past gripes, and were ready and willing to work. They extended their hands in friendship to Republicans—they accepted it. Through Grady's words, his New South had achieved a political truce.

Dissent

Grady had succeeded in allying the white Democratic South with the Republican North, but though his envisioning of the New South was widely accepted, it was by no means universally so. Even from the outset Grady's New South threatened traditionalist

³² Henry W. Grady, "The New South," *New York Ledger*, December 21, 1889.

southerners who feared the influx of northern immigrants to build the labor force that Grady had proposed. And through methods that are hazy at best and downright illegal at worst, Grady had positioned himself with the leaders of Georgia's government in such a way that protected him and his vision from dissenters who saw through the utopic veil of his New South.

Scandal marked the beginning of the alliance between Grady and Georgia's Bourbon government. In 1880, General John B. Gordon announced his resignation from his office in the U.S. Senate. A popular Georgia figure, Gordon had served in the Senate since 1873 and had four years left in his term that he won in 1878. Gordon claimed he wished to pursue a more lucrative job in business rather than continue to serve in the Senate. He would accept a job as general counsel for the Louisville and Nashville railroad. Georgians were shocked to learn that Governor Alfred H. Colquitt had named Joseph E. Brown to replace Gordon. Brown, a former governor of Georgia and then president of the Western and Atlantic railroad, had renounced his Confederate ties quickly after surrender at Appomattox, became a Republican, and served at the forefront of Reconstruction in the South; his appointment had the stench of betrayal and corruption.³³

Though the public lambasted Colquitt and especially Brown, their anger was misguided, as it was Grady who had orchestrated the whole endeavor. Because railroads were such a central component of his New South vision, Grady had been cultivating knowledge and connections from and with railroad businesses. Much of his time had been spent with H. Victor Newcomb, president of the Louisville and Nashville railroad. It seems Grady, having already known the men from his travels as a reporter, had put

³³ Ralph L Eckert, "The Breath of Scandal: John B. Gordon, Henry W. Grady, and the Resignation-Appointment Controversy of May 1880," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (1985): 315-330.

Newcomb in contact with Colquitt and Brown. Telegrams, some of which are encrypted in cypher, from 1880 between the men reveal their maneuverings and aims to take the government. Now Grady had a government with which to work that was indebted to him for his role in its establishment and also possessed a similar mindset as him regarding the future of the state. And it certainly didn't hurt that all parties involved had a strong connection to or lived in Atlanta.³⁴

The event known as the Resignation-Appointment Controversy and the formation of the so-called Atlanta Ring government were known or at least suspected by the general public. Newspapers in cities like Macon and Augusta, with agriculture-based economies, did not withhold their ire directed at the state government, which had essentially circumvented the polls to establish itself. These other cities had been competing with Atlanta for years, often for railroad contracts and for the location of the state capital, and were now subjected to an unelected government with clear ties to Atlanta, suggesting they faced an inevitable future of antagonism due to Atlanta-directed favoritism. Grady's allegiance to the government, marked by the *Constitution's* endorsement of Brown despite his Republican ties, signaled future contention with agriculture-based towns and farmers both in Georgia and in the South as a whole.³⁵

Because Grady's New South depended on state government support, keeping the Atlanta Ring intact was tantamount to success. The majority of the South remained agricultural, and so most of the South's voters were farmers. Therefore, to keep the likes of Colquitt and Brown in office, Grady needed to appeal to the southern farmer. Keeping in tone with its themes of independence and self-actualization, the New South called for

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Harold E. Davis, "Henry W. Grady, Master of the Atlanta Ring—1880-1886," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (1985): 9-13.

farmers to continue to grow cotton, the staple cash crop of the South, but to also grow a secondary cash crop. Furthermore, farmers should grow for subsistence and refrain from utilizing commercial fertilizers. Such practices would allow the farmer to spend his wealth locally, which would minimize the outward flow of wealth from the South and thereby allow the South to be economically independent. Grady advertised this plan in the *Constitution* to every farmer, regardless of the type of crop grown, his financial situation, the amount of land he owned, the local climate and terrain, etc.³⁶

This system may have worked for the richest planters, but for the average farmer such a system proved dangerous. Most farmers had little money with which to support themselves, and the credit system in place, run by merchants with high interest rates rather than banks (which were slow to loan), would only pay out if the farmer grew cotton, the only crop sure to sell for cash. Farmers that embraced the program found themselves unable to pay their loans and forced to work on an unstable credit system.³⁷ Frustration with Grady and his economic proposals led to the rise of the Farmers' Alliance in Georgia, pinning Grady and other proponents of his New South as enemies and eventually declaring of farmers, "You cultivate the crop with hard work, and the North and the East does the reaping."³⁸

But Grady insisted that this method of farming was most conducive to success, and the *Constitution* published articles attesting to its effectiveness. According to one essay by Grady, the 1000 most prosperous farmers in the state of Georgia all claimed to practice

³⁶ Harold E. Davis, "Henry Grady, the Atlanta Constitution, and the Politics of Farming in the 1880s," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (1987): 572.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 576.

³⁸ Found in James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 96.

diversified crop growing and subsistence farming to complement their cash crops.³⁹ And even though cotton proved the only sustainable crop, and only barely sustainable at that, the *Constitution* still called for a decrease in its growth, “[A farmer] must not expect to grow rich raising cotton, for that’s a speculation even with the most experienced planters.”⁴⁰ Even though Grady admitted the farm program’s disappointment in 1887, he failed to supply an alternative and laid the groundwork for the Populist revolt in the following decade.

Other dissenters to Grady’s New South claimed it rested on the laurels of social injustices. Child labor was prevalent throughout new factories and mills, so much so that by 1900 children under sixteen composed 30 percent of the cotton mill labor force. They claimed that banks, merchants, trusts, and railroads created these abhorrent social abuses and fingered the economic proposals as a friend and promoter of these institutions. Virginia minister Alexander J. McKelway said later that anyone, Grady included, who allied himself with the phrase “New South” ought to be called “the Mercenaries.”⁴¹

But those who rejected this New South vision, at least in the 1880s, were unsuccessful in inhibiting its development. The image disseminated by Grady and the press told only of success in the South, and that promise of growth and prosperity could not tarnish Grady or his New South’s image. Wealth could hide any social ill that may have arisen, and so Grady focused much of his program in economics, celebrating the rewards investment would bring. But if the surface of Grady’s vision emphasized reconciliation between Democrats and Republicans and shared fortune, its heart beat for a different matter entirely: the role of blacks in the South. Grady’s New South vision did

³⁹ Henry W. Grady, “A Matter of Millions,” *Constitution*, 1883.

⁴⁰ “Truck Farming in Georgia,” *Constitution*, 1883.

⁴¹ Cobb, *Away Down South*, 96.

address blacks, but in such a way that misrepresented and proved detrimental to the black experience for the sake of establishing a de facto segregated southern society. That Jim Crow policies began soon after the New South vision took root in the United States is no coincidence.

CHAPTER THREE: The Racial Program of Henry Grady's New South

On the night of February 6, 1871, Rome, Georgia witnessed “clashes of disputed severity” between Rome’s black population and a group of whites with Ku Klux Klan affiliation.¹ Henry Grady, then editor of the *Rome Commercial*, inadvertently drew himself into the fray. After Grady published an article suggesting B.F. Sawyer, the editor of the *Rome Courier*, the *Commercial’s* rival, had been caught by the Klan and forced to dance for them, the *Courier* issued a retort, stating, “We recognized the snigger of the little fellow in the spotted shirt, who rode the little mule, and...we are now convinced that our suspicions were correct, and that the tail end of the Ku-Klux was no one else than our facetious young friend, Henry W. Grady.”² It is clear that Grady and Sawyer, engaged in a friendly rivalry during those early years of Grady’s career, but it is difficult to determine whether the two men were more involved with the Klan than their articles let on. What is clear is Grady later published a straightforward editorial in the *Commercial* urging the Klan to remain generally inactive, “Remember, brothers, that the strength and power of any secret organization rests in the attribute of mystery and hidden force...Every time you act you weaken your strength; then be quiet. If an inexorable necessity calls for action, act promptly, with decision, and do nothing more than is absolutely necessary.”³ The congressional joint committee exploring KKK activity cited this article as evidence linking Grady to the Klan, though Grady was never subpoenaed to testify himself.

¹ Raymond B. Nixon, *Henry W. Grady: Spokesman of the New South* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1943), 81-82. Founded in 1865, the First KKK formed as a vigilante force meant to upend the freedmen’s newfound liberty and restore the leaders of the Confederacy to power through intimidation and violence of blacks and their white allies. The First KKK was formally disbanded in 1869 but groups remained active until 1871. See David Mark Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: the history of the Ku Klux Klan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987).

² “Murder Will Out,” *The Rome Courier*, n.d.

³ Cited in *Testimony Taken by Joint Selection Committee*, VII, 886, in Nixon, 83.

Whether or not he was involved with the Klan, Grady at the very least quietly approved of its mission and viewed it as a general good, at least at the time. That slavery had ended and that blacks had received suffrage, he thought, did not overwrite the fact that the black race was inferior to the white. It meant only that there was need for a new system or mechanism to keep blacks in their proper place. For some, the Klan, with its intimidation and terrorism tactics, operated as that mechanism. But the image of a violent gang of white southerners doling out racial ‘justice’ was unsavory, especially if the South hoped to ever achieve reconciliation with the North, which, as a Republican dominated region, depended on the black vote. But Grady offered an alternative social system to KKK rule of widespread terror and violence as a form of control. Grady’s New South vision was a political appeasement that proposed a social system rooted in racial separation that allowed for economic progress and profits, promising prosperity for North and South alike. This system presented to northerners a South in racial harmony and to southerners a society separated by color; it was through the political mollification of northerners and southerners that Grady’s New South vision reinforced white southern identity to violent extremes, laying the groundwork for the era of Jim Crow.

C. Vann Woodward argues that the racial order of the South following the Civil War was not as definitive as many would believe. He writes, “Before [the] triumph [of Jim Crow] was complete...there transpired a period of history whose significance has been hitherto neglected. Exploitation [of blacks] there was in that period, as in other periods and in other regions, but it did not follow then that the exploited had to be ostracized.” Woodward further contends that the extreme racism and humiliation that characterized the classical Jim Crow period was not a natural outgrowth of the end of Reconstruction but

resulted from a weakening of the social forces that kept those extremist views in check. As the stabilizers of those social forces—held up by the courts, the government, and influential southern conservatives and Republicans—were weakened and gave way, hatred and fanaticism from the most radical and racist southern whites intensified and overpowered the more moderate attitudes.⁴ Historian Jane Dailey supports this view with her exploration of the manifestation of political tension in the post-Reconstruction South and its effects on race relations and the development of Jim Crow. She argues, “Late nineteenth century formulations of white supremacist racial ideology did not represent an easy continuation of past oppressions. It was not at all clear after the war what antebellum racial hierarchies could be reproduced in the context of the Reconstruction Amendments to the federal Constitution.”⁵ The implication of this argument suggests that there was a period in which the future of race relations in the South was uncertain, and this uncertainty was central to Grady’s New South vision. His vision did not call for the reestablishment of the old racial order—the racial relationship rooted in slavery. Instead it offered a new system of racial control that upheld southern blacks’ political rights whilst also depriving them of, as Grady wrote, their “social equality” in the public sphere through racial separation. By preserving the uncorrupted black Republican vote but concurrently sustaining a racially separated society, this system would maintain the political alliance between southern Democrats and Republicans.

The challenge of realizing his New South vision, one that ultimately proved its undoing, was to make it appeal to all parties: whites and blacks to be sure, but also

⁴ From C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), found in John David Smith, ed., *When Did Southern Segregation Begin?* (New York: Macmillan, 2002), 53-54.

⁵ Jane Elizabeth Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 3-9.

Democrats, Republicans, northerners, and southerners. It needed to show blacks, Republicans, and northerners that the South had fundamentally changed in that it had moved past sectionalism, that it had renounced slavery, that it would not tamper with elections by harassing Republican voters, that blacks lived in a society that offered them boundless opportunity to advance, and that to invest in southern industry and infrastructure was profitable. To southern whites and Democrats, the New South could not abandon the traditional values of the Old South—the chivalry associated with plantation life, the fondness for fallen Confederate heroes, and the inherent superiority of whites over blacks—nor could it fall to Republican rule or be generally “Yankeefied,” referring to a South that resembled the North in its values, practices, and customs.⁶ All the while, it needed to demonstrate that progress could be achieved and be profitable. Grady understood this balancing act, and this is how he sold his idea of a New South.

Grady’s New South vision unfolded gradually over a decade. In the 1870s and early 1880s, Grady directed his message primarily to the North, where he argued that blacks and whites lived in harmony in the South and worked together to advance their shared society. This would indicate that the North could trust the South, that the region had relinquished its sectional and political hatred and now presented a safe opportunity for northerners to live, invest, work, and even vote in the South. Once northerners expressed stronger interests in southern investment and embraced the South’s change of heart and its political leniency, his message shifted to one enforcing white supremacy. Whites and blacks alike, he argued, desired a system of racial separation, and that this was the best

⁶ K. Stephen Prince, *Stories of the South: The cultural retreat from Reconstruction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 31, 98. Prince defines “Yankeefication” as “the conviction that a successful Reconstruction would be one that resulted in a South effectively indistinguishable from the North,” and would entail the replacement of old southern institutions and values with those presented by the North.

way to maintain a peaceable racial society. Until the end of the 1880s, these messages satisfied the investors, the politicians, the southern and northern whites and blacks, and both the Democratic and Republican Parties, as evidenced by the universal acclaim and laudatory oratory that characterized press descriptions of Grady and his views after his New South address in 1886.

But Grady's New South vision began to fall apart and give way to Jim Crow exactly because it played to so many parties. Grady could never maintain a loyalty to the southern Democrats while also pushing for a tolerance in the South that would continue to please the North. And the truce he helped broker (in the early 1880s) and secured (after the New South address) with the North that exchanged the assurance of profitability for southern control over how to handle the race question began to give way in 1888 when Republicans demonstrated their impatience with the lack of progress in the matter by electing civil rights advocate Benjamin Harrison to the presidency.⁷ Though following his death newspapers across the country remarked how, for both regions, Grady represented a warrior in the fight for reconciliation, who bridged a gap between two fuming regions, they failed to acknowledge that he had instead established a fragile reconciliation between northern whites and southern whites that could break at any moment under the duress of the Democratic-Republican clash of ideologies and struggle for the black vote. Indeed one must wonder what Grady had left to offer the two parties when he died in December 1889, just as the Jim Crow era was fully emerging; though each was reconciled in terms of the Civil War, they were yet again clashing through politics over the civil rights of blacks, for

⁷ Harold E. Davis, *Henry Grady's New South: Atlanta, a Brave and Beautiful City* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 152.

both Democrats and Republicans had moved beyond the vagueness and tepid ease of Grady's New South vision.

This chapter examines exactly how Grady instituted the racial components of his New South vision. Beginning in 1876, with his reports on the Ellenton Riot in South Carolina and in his political writings from 1876 to 1878, Grady broke with many in the southern Democratic Party in his depiction of a future southern society where political intimidation of blacks would give way to peaceful coexistence. He developed this portrait fully when Atlanta was designated to host the International Cotton Exposition in 1881, due in no small part to Grady's efforts; one can see how Grady manipulated expectations of the South to create a tolerant and welcoming region through the exposition itself and through his and other northern reporters' articles on the event. As the federal government began to make clear that the extent of civil rights for blacks would be limited, such as with the Supreme Court's 1883 overturn of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, Grady's racial policy became more overt in both his articles and speeches; he directly called for a society that was "equal but separate" and that, in a society of mixed race, such a policy was necessary for cohabitation between the races.

In charting this path to Jim Crow, it becomes clear that Grady's New South vision represents a transitional period between the Reconstruction/Lost Cause era and the Jim Crow era. For though the vision drew heavily from rhetoric resembling the Lost Cause, itself emerging during this period, in its fondness for the Old South and traditional southern values, it concurrently offered a glimpse into a post-*Plessy v. Ferguson* future. It is therefore evident that it is best to view this time between Reconstruction and the full-blown emergence of a system of segregation not as a standalone event but as a decade-long

bridge between two distinct systems. In viewing the epoch in this manner, we get a fuller picture of what the “New South” meant to Grady and how the tension between economic aspirations and racial disunity fired a political divergence that set the South on a dark, difficult road.

The Rhetoric of a Riot

As a correspondent for the *New York Herald*, Henry Grady travelled to Ellenton, South Carolina in early October of 1876 to cover the aftermath of the Ellenton Riot. It was a “Three Days’ War!” his headline read, between a cadre of black townsmen and several corps of white militiamen and members of rifle clubs. Grady explained in the accompanying article, “On the 15th of September the house of Mr. Alonzo Harley, at Silverton, was entered by two negroes [Peter Williams and Fred Pope] with burglarious intent.” The wife of Mr. Harley was alone at home with her young son. Testimonies claimed the two men “beat her severely” with a club, but Mrs. Harley, despite her beating, managed to find her husband’s gun and “frightened them off.” In response, the following morning, a mob of white men found, shot, and wounded Peter Williams, who confessed to the attempted burglary and named his accomplice, Pope, as the one who had assaulted Harley. A band of white men confronted a group of blacks who were “terribly excited, armed, and defiant” and who claimed Pope was not with them. Though an agreement to disperse was reached by both parties, “a score of armed negroes jumped up...” and fired upon the departing whites, killing a white bystander. The next morning, a company of two hundred armed whites, consisting mainly of local rifle club members and members from neighboring August, Georgia, assembled to subdue the “several bands of negroes...with

murderous intent.” Fighting between the two groups occurred throughout Aiken County for three days until South Carolina Governor Daniel H. Chamberlain, a Republican, dispatched federal troops to end the fighting. Grady put the number of dead at two whites and eighteen blacks.⁸

Grady rooted his stance on the riot—its causes, the characters of the men involved—in racial undertones. He closed his article summarizing the riot with his take on the dispositions of blacks, “I am convinced that the great masses of negroes in South Carolina, as well as elsewhere, are perfectly peaceable and harmless. It is only when their leaders stir their passions and appeal to their prejudices that they are vicious and dangerous.” He even came to their defense, to an extent, maintaining, “I can hardly blame them for rallying at first to protect Frederick Pope. They believed that Williams, their favorite, had been lynched and that Pope was being hunted down. They very naturally thought of protecting him.” Nonetheless, Grady clearly viewed blacks as the perpetrators, easily incited to violence, and whites as “cool, determined...defensive.”⁹

Though he noted “how hard it has been to get to the truth,” Grady maintained that his account, gathered from the “fullest affidavits from both whites and blacks,” was wholly truthful.¹⁰ But disregarding the hard facts surrounding the event (number of the dead, dates, etc.), there remains a discrepancy: Grady, and the many other newspapers that wrote stories on the riot, painted a picture of a race riot, when evidence suggests that the riot was equally as politically driven as it was racially driven, if not more so. With the election of 1876 a mere month and a half away, political tensions between Democrats and Republicans would have been high. Rifle clubs, at least those involved in the riot, played a

⁸ Henry W. Grady, “The Ellenton Riot!” *New York Herald*, October 6, 1876.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

role in Ellenton that was primarily political in nature; firstly, in their lynching activities, the clubs often, though not always, “killed blacks on the assumption that they were also Republicans,” and, secondly, the clubs served as the local mechanism of political intimidation. The Democratic strategy for the 1876 election involved the belief that if enough black, and it was assumed Republican, individuals could be dissuaded from voting through intimidation and violence, then the Democrats could unseat Governor Chamberlain. That “the lives of the Citizens in the line of the road [of Aiken County] will be constantly placed in jeopardy by a renewal of these disturbances until after the Election” gives credence to the underlying political motivations propelling the riot. It is a strategy not unfamiliar to the many southern states, and bears resemblance to the “Mississippi Plan,” which Democrats had created in 1875.¹¹

Rifle Clubs throughout the state had caused much anxiety for South Carolina’s Republican non-members, so much so that in October, following the riot, Governor Chamberlain issued a proclamation calling for the disarming of the clubs altogether on the following grounds: The clubs carried state arms but were not subject to the regulations of a militia, raising issues of their legality, and the number of clubs rose by 200 in August of 1876 and numbered over 14,000 members by late 1876.¹² The Democratic rifle clubs clearly presented a threat of corrupting the impending election, and a number of Republican county officials and citizens wrote to Chamberlain asking for protection from the clubs, “who tell us in plain words that they mean to kill us out before this coming

¹¹ Mark M. Smith, “‘All Is Not Quiet in Our Hellish County’: Facts, Fiction, Politics, and Race: The Ellenton Riot of 1876,” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 95, no. 2 (1994): 149-50, 154. The Mississippi Plan, formed in 1875, called for Democrats in Mississippi to prevent blacks, who would likely vote Republican, from voting in the 1876 election through violent intimidation in order to restore the Democratic Party to power. South Carolina and Louisiana adopted analogous tactics, which proved largely effective.

¹² *Ibid.* 153.

Election.”¹³ This would suggest that the rifle clubs involved themselves in the aftermath of the Harley burglary not solely to deal out racially motivated justice to the perpetrators, but to use the burglary as an impetus to dispense election intimidation.

It is unusual then that Grady created a distinctly racial portrait of a far more complex event, especially when he would have been aware of the political tensions surrounding the Ellenton Riot and the clubs, having been in the county when Governor Chamberlain issued his proclamation. A day after the announcement, Grady even wrote positively of them, “These ‘rifle clubs’ have been well drilled, are filled with the very best men, and can be rallied in a jiffy.” By contrast, he described the “dozen or so” legal, state-sponsored black companies of the militia as drawing a “mob of half-armed darkies,” who together commit “petty outrages...almost constantly.”¹⁴

This is not to suggest some conspiracy to defend the rifle clubs and unseat the Republican governor of South Carolina, but it is certainly curious to ignore the clear political implications of the riot. Grady clearly viewed the spark of the Ellenton Riot as steeped in black-on-white sexuality and the confrontation as predominantly white versus black, rather than as Democratic versus Republican. This perspective created a sense of foreboding, one that Democrats touted and played upon—with each confrontation between blacks and whites, the “color line” would continue to “stiffen,” and though, Grady wrote, blacks “vastly prefer working quietly in the field to engaging in guerilla warfare in defence of a principle that they do not understand or appreciate,” they’re continued role in the “perpetuation of strife” risked all-out war. “What extremities they [violent black leaders]

¹³ Ibid. 150.

¹⁴ Henry W. Grady, “The Prostrate State,” *New York Herald*, October 8, 1876.

can lead the poor blacks to and at what point the whites will confront them, the future—the near future, I very much fear—will disclose.”¹⁵

It seems that Grady interpreted the events in Ellenton through the lens of the Democratic Party and some of the racial rhetoric associated with it, and perhaps this is why he ignored the political ramifications and underlying foundations of the Ellenton Riot—to describe his party’s subterfuge would damage the party and prove politically and socially suicidal. Grady stood with the Democrats through and through in the 1870s; most notably, he ardently attacked Republicans, particularly Rutherford B. Hayes and his victory in the presidential election of 1876 under the so-called “corrupt bargain” :

The country will repudiate the fraud by which the republicans have established their usurpation, just as surely as the time arrives for them to vote. Our only danger is this: that Hayes, by glittering offers... will disintegrate our southern democracy, and put us in danger of losing some of the southern states.¹⁶

Locally, in Georgia, he vigorously campaigned for Alfred H. Colquitt, a secessionist and Confederate Major General, in the gubernatorial election of 1876, saying of him, “I have never found such brace honesty, such sweet dignity, such gentleness and grace and sincerity—such loyalty and such winning tenderness, as I have found in this Christian gentleman.”¹⁷ Colquitt, a wealthy lawyer with strong ties to the planter-elite of the antebellum South, embodied the Lost Cause cavalier, a Christian soldier combatting Radical Reconstruction who possessed a strong war record.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Henry W. Grady, “The Coming Reign,” *Constitution*, February 26, 1877.

¹⁷ Henry W. Grady, “Our Atlanta Letter,” *Constitutionalist* (Augusta, GA), August 16, 1876.

¹⁸ Davis, *Henry Grady's New South*, 63.

Grady's loyalty to Colquitt so early in his postwar political career and his outspoken critique of Hayes undoubtedly proved advantageous and laid the groundwork for Grady's heavy involvement in Georgia's government and the founding of the Atlanta Ring in 1880. But it also indicates just how entrenched Grady placed himself in the needs of specifically southern Democrats. For Grady felt that, in aiding Hayes's ascendancy, the party's northern constituents and leaders had betrayed the South, "After a season of dilly-dallying the northern democrats, amorously holding back when they should have been bold, a compromise...was proposed and accepted...The Tilden Campaign received its fatal stab six weeks ago...from the hands of Mr. Abram S. Hewitt [Chairman of the Democratic National Committee]." ¹⁹ The southern Democrats wanted self-rule, free from interfering Republicans, to handle their issues, namely the race issue, themselves. While Hayes ultimately gave the South the very freedom they desired, they could not know it at the time, and took the concession "that Hayes will turn his back upon the men who have helped him to the presidency, and give justice to a long-suffering section of the common country" with heavy skepticism. ²⁰

But though he had obvious allegiance to the Democrats, to view Grady's journalistic choices regarding Ellenton as solely party driven ignores the fact that he also relieved the majority of blacks of responsibility in the riot, and this represented a distinctly non-party stance. Rather than partake in the stark, unabashed racism that characterized the southern Democrats, Grady wrote with a far milder tone; instead of exemplifying the entirety of blacks as militant, angry Negroes of Reconstruction, Grady seemingly looked forward to a more apparently unified racial society, where the majority of blacks lived

¹⁹ Henry W. Grady, "Haggling with Hayes," *Constitution*, February 21, 1877.

²⁰ Grady, "The Coming Reign."

harmoniously, immersed in their work and kept to their own affairs. Tellingly, Grady wrote his Ellenton articles not in a southern newspaper but for the *New York Herald*. The picture of southern society he described for this northern, Republican audience possessed far more appeal than a civilization engaged in an endless tug-of-war between the races. That picture also bears resemblance to an idea that Grady would flesh out in subsequent years—the idea of a South where the races coexisted in peace and prosperity. The Ellenton articles contain rhetoric of racial peace that Grady subtly coupled with language suggesting an inferior black intellect (“engaging in guerilla warfare in defence of a principle that they do not understand or appreciate”); they therefore indicate the beginnings of a message that would become central to his vision of the New South—a peaceful society governed by white supremacy.²¹ After Grady moved to Atlanta to work first as a reporter and soon after as managing editor and part-owner of the *Atlanta Constitution*, a portrait of racial cohabitation in the South became integral to his future endeavors.

By 1879, Grady began pushing harder for internal improvements to the city of Atlanta and, by 1880, to the South as a whole, ultimately writing of what would become the New South vision. This vision may have boasted of economic advancement and progress, but at its heart rested a need for appearances: the appearance of racial unity and of political and sectional accord. It was imperative in Grady’s opinion to gain the trust of the northern Republican states and businesses, for without them the South would have no capital with which to build their infrastructure.

But the general opinion in the North was profoundly negative; northern acolytes and newspapers had remained skeptical of the South following the end of Reconstruction, with the *New York Times* scathingly writing not long before:

²¹ Grady, “The Prostrate State.”

The assumption that the South is wholly on the side of the Democracy is a mistake that would be impossible, if those who base their argument were not accustomed to consider the original white population as properly ‘the South,’ and to treat as of secondary importance the enfranchised freedmen and the Northerners who have gone South since the restoration of peace...The South is a unit for the Democracy only on the supposition that by terrorism and fraud genuine Republican majorities may be overcome...It has yet to give the first earnest sign of its wish to let bygones be bygones and to turn to the best account the circumstances that exist.²²

It is clear that racial tension, stemming from white Democratic and black Republican conflict, formed the basis of this skepticism of the South. Racial tension was also a fairly visible detail that could be corrected, or at least seemingly corrected to northern eyes to an extent that would be deemed acceptable. If Grady could convince these northern investors, presses, and acolytes that the South had become racially adjusted to the present, it would demonstrate that the South had moved past the Civil War and Reconstruction, that it no longer favored waving the bloody shirt.

The Racial Agenda of the International Cotton Exposition

This was exactly the plan when the city of Atlanta began undertaking preparations for the Atlanta Cotton Exposition of 1881. Edward Atkinson, the northern cotton businessman who had concocted the idea of a cotton exposition, expressly stated that the goal of the exposition was one of reconciliation between North and South, “you need also to welcome and not to compel by social ostracism the true men and women from the north who have or shall come here to aid you...” Equally as important was the demonstrated progress of southern blacks, “We want to see the colored farmers’ cotton in competition

²² “The Southern Question,” *New York Times*, August 5, 1876.

with the white farmers' pays. We want to prove to you that education pays, and that the more faith that we have in the capacity of your own black laborers, the better cotton will become year by year."²³ But Atkinson made clear that his interest in black laborers was one rooted purely in economic indicators, "My own observations tell me that the progress of the colored people of the Atlantic states...is one of the marvels of economic history..."²⁴ Atkinson's comments suggest a concern that is only economic in nature; northern businessmen wanted to know that the South could be trusted, that northerners would not be ostracized or degraded, and that they could get a return on investment. To see black laborers and farmers work and, in some cases, succeed would indicate that very change in mentality, but nothing more. And indeed many of these northerners had little concern for social equality, as Atkinson noted, "the harshest condemnation of the colored men I ever heard has come from northern men."²⁵

Having helped secure Atlanta as the location for the International Cotton Exposition, Grady understood this need, and, as arguably the most avid proponent of the exposition, he recognized that not only was southern cotton practice on display, but that Atlanta would be placed under scrutiny as a stand-in for the entirety of the South. And so special attention was paid to highlight black southerners' involvement, as with an exhibit from the American protectorate, the Republic of Liberia, to which the Exposition's director, H.I. Kimball awarded a certificate of merit "for interesting and constructive collective exhibit."²⁶ The press also covered blacks' attendance of the exposition, noting when they would come "out in force," particularly in December 1881 on "Freedman's

²³ "Our Cotton," *Constitution*, October 24, 1880.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ "Atlanta to Liberia," *Friends' Review; a Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal* 35, no. 31 (1882): 493.

Day” to examine the machinery and hear speeches touting the advancement of the colored people in the South. W.A. Pledger, the black editor of the *Journal of Progress*, extended high praise:

I regret that more of my own race are not present to hear and learn. I can say that we present to the world a spectacle that is seldom seen—a race lifted from servitude and placed side by side in the race of life with the ex-master...and with the jealousies removed; so that we feel at home in these southern lands and amongst friends.²⁷

The exposition’s promoters deemed it a success, as it drew in roughly 290,000 attendees and likely spurred the impetus for the establishment of a number of factories in Atlanta, from companies such as Southern Agricultural Works and Chattahoochee Brick Company. But most importantly, through Grady’s publicity, it secured the eyes of some three hundred writers from the northern presses.²⁸ The New York-based *Century Illustrated Magazine* wrote of the profound changes of southern attitudes, “In general, it may be said that the New South is surely surmounting the intense and dogmatic provincialism of the Old, and is rapidly coming into line with the more progressive States.” Much to the surprise of the writer, the South offered blacks “ample suburbs...[that] mark the capacity of the negro to establish himself in comfort” and that “order and safety for white and black alike are now well assured throughout the South.” But perhaps most importantly, the writer vindicated the South of many of its past transgressions, noting that the “dreaded negroes not only were suddenly enfranchised, but that the greater part of the white citizens of the Southern States were, at the same time, disenfranchised,” and that a new generation of leaders had since emerged. He then asked, “may it not be well for

²⁷ “At the Exposition” *Constitution*, December 29, 1881.

²⁸ Davis, *Henry Grady’s New South*, 172-173.

Northern men to see if they also have not been controlled by some errors in regard to the past history and condition of the South?”²⁹ It was a sentiment echoed by countless other papers, including the *New York Times*, the *Cincinnati Inquirer*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Detroit Free Press*.³⁰

To many in the North, the South had developed to a point to provide its black citizens with a not unreasonable place to settle, to work, and to raise a family. Southern newspapers maintained that blacks needed only little to subsist on, that they were content to move between odd jobs and perform at slow speeds, per their “idle” temperament.³¹ Northern newspapers picked up on this propaganda and publicized the working conditions in the fields of the South. One writer for the *Detroit Free Press* reported that blacks enjoyed a working environment unparalleled in any other part of the country, and worked for employers who were receptive and tolerant of their workers’ needs.³² Blacks too had every opportunity to advance themselves in this changed South. In Georgia, Senator Joseph Brown demonstrated his commitment to educating blacks. Speaking to Grady through the *New York Herald*, he affirmed the integral role blacks played in southern society, “But we want these people educated so that they can vote intelligently and honestly, and prevent them being defrauded... Knowledge will protect them as armies nor laws nor anything else ever can...”³³ And to provide an outside, ‘unbiased’ opinion to its readership, the *Constitution* made a point to publish the statements of Professor Alan Curr, native of Scotland, an extensive traveller and member of several British aristocratic

²⁹ Edward Atkinson, “Significant Aspects of the Atlanta Cotton Exposition,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* 23, no. 4 (1882): 565-7.

³⁰ “A New Era for the South,” *New York Times*, October 13, 1881.; “The Atlanta Exposition,” *Cincinnati Inquirer*, January 2, 1882.; “The Atlanta Cotton Exposition,” *Washington Post*, November 8, 1881.; “Atlanta,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 2, 1881.

³¹ “How the Darkies Live,” *Constitution*, October 26, 1877.

³² “Glimpses of the South,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 9, 1881.

³³ Henry W. Grady, “The South as She Is,” *New York Herald*, January 1, 1881.

societies, who attested to the superior treatment blacks received in the South, that the “negro... gets much better treatment than he deserves.”³⁴

But in reality, the International Cotton Exposition had little place for the inclusion of southern blacks.³⁵ And Georgia politicians thought little of educating blacks, undercutting and underfunding black schools.³⁶ It was enough to demonstrate the potential profits to be made in the South, that capitalism would drive southern development, and that racial tension had apparently subsided, having given way to a lasting peace.³⁷ By 1884, many northerners embraced the South’s reformed image concerning its disposition towards blacks. By this indication in particular, the South had moved past its Confederate rebel days, and had embraced northern values of industriousness, progress, and unity, at least to the desired extent; in other words, the New South had already come, waiting for northerners to embrace it.³⁸ Northerners were chiefly concerned with economics and profits—the apparent handling of racial tension meant namely that northerners were welcome in this previously hostile land. Now many of these northern businessmen, investors, entrepreneurs, and laborers could conduct their business without issue.

The New England Society Revisited

Though Grady had succeeded in changing northern views of the South, his southern compatriots remained apprehensive; they feared that the inevitable influx of northern capital and immigrants would fundamentally alter the South, molding it into the image of

³⁴ “A Distinguished Foreigner’s Views,” *Constitution*, January 15, 1884.

³⁵ K. Stephen Prince, “A Rebel Yell for Yankee Doodle: Selling the New South at the 1881 Atlanta International Cotton Exposition,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 92, no. 3 (2008): 345.

³⁶ Davis, *Henry Grady’s New South*, 139-140.

³⁷ K. Stephen Prince, “A Rebel Yell for Yankee Doodle,” 345.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 356-357

the North to such an extent that southern tradition and identity would be wiped out altogether. Such was the obvious fear during Reconstruction, of complete Yankeeification, that would continue to fuel the beginnings of the Lost Cause narrative, which countered and undermined the prospect of a Yankeeified South by strengthening the image of a romanticized South.³⁹ When, in 1870 and 1871, former Know Nothing and Representative from Georgia Benjamin H. Hill had suddenly called for his state to emulate the economic practices of the North and to “do all in our power to educate, elevate, protect, and advance the negro,” when he blamed slavery for southern inferiority and the Confederate defeat and encouraged the recognition of the Reconstruction Amendments, he was met with disdain from the Georgia traditionalists and was ostracized for several years.⁴⁰ Hill had spoken too strongly and too soon following the end of the war, but Grady, an admirer of his, in following the political discourse of the early 1870s, had learned well from these mistakes. Hill, despite his protestations to the contrary, implied that the South would lose its independence in regulating and organizing its society, namely regarding the place of blacks in that society. Grady, by contrast, ensured southern individuality, that the South, though it had moved beyond the days of the Civil War, remained in control of instituting and perpetuating its own values, its own morals, and its own infrastructure.

Such was his purpose when he addressed the New England Society at Delmonico’s Restaurant in New York City in 1886 about the New South. His opening words, “There was a South of slavery and secession—that South is dead. There is a South of union and freedom—that South, thank God, is living, breathing, growing every hour,” distinguished between old and new, but later he remarked “the South has nothing for which to

³⁹ Prince, *Stories of the South*, 31.

⁴⁰ Numan V. Bartley, *Creation of Modern Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 85.

apologize...The South has nothing to take back.” He spoke of brave soldiers, perhaps misguided but beautiful all the same, of hard work, of a glorious past:

Dear to me, sir, is the home of my childhood and the traditions of my people. I would not, if I could, dim the glory they won in peace and war, or by word or deed take aught from the splendor and grace of their civilization—never equaled and, perhaps, never to be equaled in its chivalric strength and grace.⁴¹

These words—traditions, chivalric, splendor—were key components of the emerging Lost Cause that defined southern identity as having a rich history and of honor, even in the Confederacy’s defeat. Grady fed his New South vision, imbued with sentimentality for a bygone era, to these northern leaders and businessmen, and they embraced it. Grady then offered a few general words on blacks in the South, “no section shows a more prosperous laboring population than the negroes of the South.” Blacks were protected by the law, they could vote, work, and live in “friendship” with whites. And then he subtly expressed his purpose, “To liberty and enfranchisement is as far as law can carry the negro. The rest must be left to conscience and common sense. It should be left to those among whom his lot is cast, *with whom he is indissolubly connected...*”⁴² In other words, the question of race belonged to the (white) South and the (white) South alone to decide, without interference from the North. Grady closed his speech by asking his audience if it would accept comradeship, and the terms it necessitated, or coldness. The crowd delivered a lengthy standing ovation.⁴³

⁴¹ “The New South” Speech as reprinted in Barton C. Shaw, “Henry Grady Heralds the New South,” *Atlanta Historical Journal* 30, no. 2 (1986): 58-65.

⁴² Emphasis added

⁴³ “The New South Speech” in Shaw, “Henry Grady Heralds The New South,” 58-65.

Northern and Republican newspapers across the country printed their laudatory comments of Grady and his speech. The speech was, after all, exactly what northerners wanted to hear, and what Grady had been essentially saying since he began touting the International Cotton Exposition. His speech relieved any lingering doubts about the South, and at last these businessmen could embrace the South in reconciliation. Naturally that meant accepting Grady's few, fleeting words on race, which Republicans did. Historian Barton C. Shaw calls Grady's remarks on southern race relations a "bald deception," but Grady said little less than he had been saying for several years.⁴⁴ That was ultimately the point of his New South, to tell the Republicans *just enough* to let bygones be bygones, so that Grady and the other New South leaders could go about instituting a policy of race that fit the widely held southern notion of white supremacy. In yielding to the South on the issue of race in favor of economic prospects, Republicans in the end doomed southern blacks to wither under an oppressive system.

"Equal but Separate" and the Alliance Lost

That Grady believed in white supremacy is certain from the historical record. He grew up in a home with at least five slaves, and later in life he wrote fondly of his boyhood days and his family's "trusty" slaves.⁴⁵ He believed that slavery had put the Negro in his proper place; he spoke of plantation life fondly, insisting that blacks had enjoyed a life of boundless fulfillment, "a happiness and contentment to which the servants of New England were utter strangers, and which we fear the negro will never know again."⁴⁶ But though it provided a public good in fixing a place for the South's black population, slavery did not

⁴⁴ Shaw, "Henry Grady Heralds The New South," 57.

⁴⁵ Nixon, 21, 34, 39.

⁴⁶ Henry W. Grady, "The Stage," *Constitution*, January 12, 1881.

coalesce with his New South vision. At the height of Reconstruction, Benjamin H. Hill had blamed the institution of slavery for entrenching the South in an unproductive economic system that was far inferior to that of the North, and, for that reason, the South had lost the Civil War. Grady, too, hailed the end of slavery; it was outdated, outmoded, and held back the South from achieving its full potential. He thanked “the higher wisdom of God” for having brought about its end.⁴⁷

But he also believed that, without slavery, there was no place for blacks in modern society, and so whites would need to find a place for them, a place where they could do the least harm and so maintain the social order. He insisted upon their lesser intelligence and their incredulousness; they were, he believed, easily manipulated, misguided, and impulsive, and therefore posed a danger to themselves and society. But that view did not call for hostility between the races, and, when he needed to, Grady associated with blacks cordially. Those blacks who met him found him most friendly, and one T. McCants Stewart, a black newspaperman from Boston who travelled to the South as a correspondent of the New York *Freeman* to document his experiences with the racially tense South, wrote regarding his railroad travels, “Mr. Grady would be compelled to ride with a Negro, or, walk.”⁴⁸ But the best solution, the one Grady called for in the New South, was to very simply mingle as little as possible—to remain separate.

The race question had burned in society for years, but Grady did not fully engage with it until 1883. The Civil Rights Cases of that year had declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional on the grounds that though Congress possessed the power to prohibit states from discriminating, it did not possess the broad powers to prohibit individuals from

⁴⁷ Joel Chandler Harris, ed., *Joel Chandler Harris' Life of Henry W. Grady Including His Writings and Speeches: A Memorial Volume* (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890), 96.

⁴⁸ Davis, *Henry Grady's New South*, 134.; From Smith, ed., *When Did Southern Segregation Begin?*, 51.

discriminating, with the court ruling, “It would be running the slavery argument into the ground to make it apply to every act of discrimination which a person may see fit to make as to the guests he will entertain, or as to the people he will take in his coach or cab or car...”⁴⁹ When Republican Senator George F. Edmunds, a vocal proponent of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, drafted a revised bill to replace the repealed act a month after the Supreme Court’s decision, the *Constitution* attacked him, claiming that Edmunds was engaging in “bloody-shirt business” and that any bill that regulated social interaction was inherently unconstitutional, “Cases can arise only when certain so-called social rights are denied, and as everybody knows, social distinctions cannot be erased by the law.”⁵⁰ Where Frederick Douglass feared that justice for blacks had been deteriorating “the hour that the loyal North...began to shake hands over the bloody chasm,”⁵¹ Grady offered words of approval, affirming that the Civil Rights Act had been “for nine years...practically a dead letter.” This matter of “where to draw the [color] line” had been settled for years by the very nature of blacks and whites, “The truth is, the negro does not want social equality. He prefers his own schools, his own churches, his own hotels, his own societies...He is uncomfortable and ill at ease when he is forced anywhere else. Even on the railroads he prefers his own car...” But this separation did not discredit blacks from justice or the vote, noted Grady, as “The negro is entitled to his freedom, his franchise, his full and equal rights...This he ought to have and he must have. Social equality he can never have. He does not have it in the north, or in the east, or in the west.”⁵² At last Grady had revealed the

⁴⁹ *Civil Rights Cases*, 109 U.S. 3 (1883).

⁵⁰ “Civil and Social Rights,” *Constitution*, December 7, 1883.

⁵¹ Found in David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 309.

⁵² Henry W. Grady, “Where to Draw the Line,” *Constitution*, October 1, 1883. There remains much debate over the extent of segregation that was present in southern society. In his *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, Woodward contends that during the late 1870s and through much of the 1880s, southern whites were heavily

heart of the New South: a racially segregated society, but one, he assured, that both races desired and needed to ensure a peaceful, successful society.

But if Grady could assuage his critics in 1883, he met a challenge in George W. Cable in 1885. Writing as the son of slaveholders and a resident of New Orleans, Cable wrote a prodding though less-than inflammatory article in *Century Illustrated Magazine* calling for the South to forsake its “antagonistic sentiments” towards its black citizens and abandon its system “of vicious evasions eventually ruinous to public and private morals and liberty...” Indeed Cable found the rhetoric of Grady’s New South disingenuous, and that its promises of prosperity and material development mattered little when it relied upon the debasement of blacks to a lower public standing. In a later article in *Century*, he asked of Grady regarding his New South, “could any one more distinctly or unconsciously waive

tolerant of sharing public spaces with blacks, including theaters and railcars. Further, though segregation and discrimination were generally practiced before they became law, he argues, there is still much evidence to suggest that they were practiced far less severely, including in the lower South, than they were under the era of what historians generally consider Jim Crow, beginning in the 1890s (though that is an obvious oversimplification of the work and ignores Woodward’s intention to present segregation as a newly founded and therefore reversible social program to his southern audiences of the 1950s). Rabinowitz counters the so-called Woodward Thesis in *From Exclusion to Segregation*. He asserts that following the end of slavery southern leaders had instituted a policy of exclusion that dominated in the years immediately following the Civil War, and that segregation pervasively replaced exclusion throughout the 1870s until segregation began to be mandated by law in the late 1880s and 1890s. Rabinowitz also notes that de facto segregation enforced by whites was largely ignored as a social issue by most blacks and their leaders, despite their opposition to it, due to a myriad of factors, including economic pressures, the fact that segregation was viewed as an improvement over exclusion, and that blacks had developed a group identity that encouraged separation between the races. Williamson supports this latter point in *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction* by demonstrating that, at least in South Carolina, all public facilities were legally open to blacks until 1889 when the state’s antidiscrimination law was repealed, but that blacks nonetheless withdrew themselves from intermingling with whites in these open spaces. He asserts that a “duo-chromatic order” existed in the minds of every individual, regardless of race, that it had long been in place, and that it manifested itself through physical separation brought about by whites and blacks alike. It is difficult to gauge exactly which theory is most correct. Grady’s articles and speeches suggest that blacks did in fact prefer to keep to themselves and that whites did enforce de facto segregation in theaters and railcars. Grady is obviously a biased source, but one would think that, barring the use of the word “segregation,” Grady would side with Williamson and his duo-chromatic order. As a result, this is the understanding of segregation emulated in this chapter, with the comprehension that the question of the extent and beginning of segregation is still very much uncertain.

the whole question of right and wrong? Yet this is the standpoint on which it is proposed to meet the freedman's case *in equity*.”⁵³

Grady responded forcefully to defend himself and his vision. He first wrote in the *Constitution* that Cable was a poor representative of the South with “no real right to speak for the south. He is entirely out of sympathy with the great body of our people. He confesses this himself.” Grady maintained that Cable sought to misguide the American people as to the South's intentions, “In brief, Mr. Cable holds that the races should be mixed in schools, theaters, cars, and churches. The *Constitution* holds that there should be equal accommodations for the two races, but separate. That is just the difference between us.” And he took his assertions further by arguing that the South's separating the races occurred naturally, even in the North:

Let us suppose that Springfield, Mass. has only one theater, and that half its population are negroes, would the white people of that city go to the theater with the knowledge that night after night half the audience would be negroes, indiscriminately placed? There is not, in our opinion, a city in America where that sort of thing could be continued for a season. One race or the other would gradually draw off.⁵⁴

He vehemently stood by “separate but equal” and assured readers that any accommodation that did not meet the measure of equality for both races was “...wrong, and will be remedied.”⁵⁵ Seven days later, Grady called Cable a sentimentalist that ignored facts—that it was the Republicans that instigated the problem when they forced intermingling of the races during Reconstruction, that it was blacks who “are the readiest to draw the race and

⁵³ George W. Cable, “The Freedman's Case in Equity,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* (1885): 410.; George W. Cable, “The Silent South,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* 30, no. 5 (1885): 679.

⁵⁴ Henry W. Grady, “Mr. Cable and the Negro,” *Constitution*, January 1, 1885.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

color-line, and every movement they make is away from Mr. Cable's propositions," and that it was no man's place but the Negro's to "...build himself up. His success or his failure depends on himself alone."⁵⁶ And five days after that, Grady contended that Cable had misrepresented the facts of situations of white-on-black malice he had cited in his article, noting that Cable's story of a black Alabama preacher who had been whipped for attempting to "force his way into the ladies' coach" had been whipped by a "posse of northern drummers [that] did not represent the purposes and desires of the southern people." And his attacks became personal, "Moreover, Mr. Cable does not sing his little Creole lays for honor, but for money."⁵⁷ The white southern press followed Grady in kind, attacking Cable's ideas; the *Constitution* reprinted a snippet from Cable's native New Orleans *Picayune* that affirmed its support of equal accommodations and that "we cannot advocate the degradation of the white race for the sake of the questionable elevation of the black."⁵⁸

Grady could be more forceful and direct for his primarily southern audience, but he needed a more coaxing tongue when addressing the northern Republican audiences. He penned an article in *Century Illustrated Magazine* four months following Cable's article. Making the same points but with milder language, Grady rejected racial equality, declaring that separate but equal was wise, best, and desired by both races alike, and, most importantly, that the question of race in the South was a distinctly southern issue, not meant to be tampered with by outside sources and critics, "...[the South] accepts the issue without fear or evasion. She says... conscious of the honesty and the wisdom of her convictions: 'Leave this problem to my working out. I will solve it in calmness and

⁵⁶ Henry W. Grady, "Mr. Cable's 'Equities,'" *Constitution*, January 7, 1885.

⁵⁷ Henry W. Grady, "Mr. Cable Once More," *Constitution*, January 12, 1885.

⁵⁸ "The Negro Problem," *Constitution*, January 13, 1885.

deliberation, without passion or prejudice...Judge me rigidly, but judge me by my works.”⁵⁹

At its absolutely most basic, these articles and exchanges essentially made up Grady’s New South speech to the New England Society, but it also becomes readily apparent just how much information Grady had left out of his address regarding the race question and how the South sought to handle it. Grady’s New South as a whole, in fact, rested upon the laurels of racial superiority—a New South meant industrialization and economic gain but never at the expense of white supremacy. Of course Grady could not outright speak his mind; the North was, after all, a predominantly Republican domain that depended on the black vote, and he could not risk outright alienating these northern audiences. But it becomes clear in this period between 1883 and 1885, between articles intended for southern audiences and others intended for northern audiences, that Grady meant for the New South to be a white South.

By 1887 this stance was well known. Grady wrote less and spent more time travelling the country to give speeches to northern and southern audiences alike. The speeches did not deviate from his previous writings and, in some cases, were even more blunt. To a Texas audience in 1887, Grady very directly reiterated his opinions, “Those who would put the negro race in supremacy would work against infallible decree, for the white race can never submit to its domination because the white race is the superior race. But the supremacy of the white race of the South must be maintained forever...This is... no new truth.”⁶⁰ This talk drew enthusiasm from the Texas crowd, but it had begun to lose sway over northern audiences. Violence in the South against blacks became more apparent

⁵⁹ Henry W. Grady, “In Plain Black and White: A Reply to Mr. Cable,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* 29, no. 6 (1885): 909-917.

⁶⁰ Harris, *Henry Grady*, 100.

with the increased prevalence of incidents of lynching through the years and the Carrollton Court House Massacre still fresh in the mind.⁶¹ But Grady and the *Constitution* remained silent on most lynching, occasionally offering a half-hearted denunciation of vigilante justice.⁶² Racially driven violence directly countered Grady's claims that tension in the South had subsided and blacks and whites lived together harmoniously. Meanwhile claims of election tampering in the South in preventing the black vote to maintain Democratic control increased. In 1889, with a Republican government in control of the White House and slight majorities in both houses of the legislature, the Congress debated the Lodge Bill (or the Force Bill as it was known to its detractors), which would allow the federal (i.e. Republican) government to appoint supervisors to ensure elections proceeded fairly. Met with reproach by Grady and other southern leaders, it led to President Harrison's extending an invitation to Grady to address the Boston Merchants Association in December 1889 about the race question. In his speech he once again raised many of his same points: inferior black intelligence, inherent white superiority, noble Confederates, an unwavering history, etc. And when asked by President Harrison when blacks would "cast a free ballot?" Grady responded, "When ignorance anywhere is not dominated by the will of the intelligent; when the laborer anywhere casts a vote unhindered by his boss; when the vote of the poor anywhere is not influenced by the power of the rich...then will the ballot of the negro be free."⁶³ But more than anything he urged patience from Republicans, "We simply report progress and ask your patience. If the problem be solved at all—and I firmly believe it will, though nowhere else has it been—it will be solved by the people most

⁶¹ "The Carrollton Massacre," *New York Times*, May 18, 1886.; "The Carrollton Massacre," *Chicago Tribune*, March 19, 1886. In early 1886, at a hearing in Carrollton, MS where two black men stood trial for a mild altercation, a mob of white men entered the courthouse and shot and killed thirteen black attendees.

⁶² Davis, *Henry Grady's New South*, 149.

⁶³ Harris, *Henry Grady*, 190.

deeply bound in interest...⁶⁴ It becomes clear that, by this point, Grady really offered no solutions to the issue. He asked for time and self-determination, and for years his words were enough to coax those requests out of his audience. His Boston speech was met with mild, respectful approval from the white press and outright indignation from the black press.⁶⁵

But the exact words spoken mattered little, for, having been ailing for several weeks prior to the speech, Grady died on December 23, 1889, less than two weeks after delivering his address. Newspapers and prominent figures mourned his death, calling him “an Apostle of the new faith,” “a model citizen,” “a loyal unionist,” and “the best representative of the New South,” among other laudatory citations.⁶⁶ The papers conclusively claimed, “At the South he represented the new pride in the material revival of a section desolated by the war. At the North he stood for loyal and enthusiastic support by the South of the new claims of the Union,” and that he possessed “a moral courage Northern men can little understand” in opposing “Southern treatment of the negro.”⁶⁷ One newspaper stated that his speech to the Boston Merchants Association now stood as “one of those rare addresses that carry with them an immediate broadening of the views of every auditor.”⁶⁸ In short, they felt they had lost a noble son of the South whose work was not yet finished.

But if his final speeches give any indication, Grady had little left to offer the South or the Union as a whole. He was repeating the same words, asking for the same tokens from a Republican-controlled North that, while open to his words, desired control of the

⁶⁴ Ibid. 194.

⁶⁵ Davis, *Henry Grady's New South*, 162.

⁶⁶ Harris, *Henry Grady*, 448, 467-469.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 452-3.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 450.

country through the black vote more than unrecognized assurances of racial unity. And from the South he asked for toleration in a society that began more and more to see the brutalization of blacks as not only acceptable but necessary.⁶⁹ When Democratic and Republican interests became too disparate, the political alliance between the two collapsed.

And in that collapse, history shows, the New South served as a stepping-stone that launched the South into the era of Jim Crow. And Grady had clearly help to establish it: he had advocated for social segregation for years and his rhetoric preceded that of *Plessy v Ferguson's* “Separate but Equal” ruling by more than a decade. Though he did not advocate violence against blacks, he did not condemn it often or particularly harshly. Grady failed to realize that his New South rested so heavily on the Lost Cause and a glorious past—a past in which whites were always smarter, nobler, braver, and more human than blacks—that white racial pride ultimately turned to violence. And because he instilled in his southern white Democratic audience an identity so strongly based on those violence-fueling tenets, the harmonious, separate but equal society that he dreamt of could never stand—eventually, he was going to push away either the Democrats or the Republicans.

But it did have a chance, however brief it was. For at least part of the decade, Grady had held together fairly well the many influences and factors affecting his New South vision. With the rhetoric resembling the Lost Cause, Grady had united a southern Democratic society demoralized after the Civil War and Reconstruction. His defense of southern history and values, its racial heritage and superiority among them, instilled in his southern audiences a new drive for an almost moral victory in their defeat. And he convinced his Republican audiences of that new identity by demonstrating the general

⁶⁹ Davis, *Henry Grady's New South*, 162.

awareness in the South of its past faults, including those related to race, “She [the South] knows that every mistake made and every error fallen into, no matter how innocently, endangers her peace and her reputation.”⁷⁰ This cognizance of the South’s past and the words promising a dedication to a changed future, coupled with the economic benefits of investment, offered Republicans just enough to let southerners handle the race question without the intervention of the federal government. On these lines a political alliance was formed between Democrat and Republican: a sectional reconciliation that left the Democratic South free to its own devices in settling its issues of race. Through that alliance, Republicans received the wealth they had wanted, beginning the wider scale transformation of the agrarian South. Meanwhile, Democratic whites began instituting their separate but equal society; all had received what they had desired. But as Democrats turned to increased violence in asserting their racial pride, Republicans responded with measures to protect their voters. The political alliance could not withstand the tension between these partisan forces, and with it, so died Grady and his New South.

⁷⁰ Grady, “In Plain Black and White,” 917.

CONCLUSION

In the years following Grady's death, Democrats maintained full control of the South and undid the civil rights gains of the Reconstruction era. The introduction of the Lodge Bill in 1889 marked the beginning of several years of political disorder in the struggle for power between Democrats and Republicans. An effort to restore both black and white Republican voting rights in the South, the Lodge Bill would have extended federal supervision of national elections to combat voter fraud and disenfranchisement tactics in the South. Republicans viewed it as a mild reform, and some thought excessively so, but one that would hopefully lead to stronger measures down the road. But southern Democrats viewed it as a Force Bill, a callback to the days of Reconstruction. It was defeated in the Senate after senators with constituents in the silver mining industry defected to the Democrats in exchange for Democratic aid on measures regarding silver. Democrats mobilized in opposition to the bill the following year to claim a majority in Congress in 1890. In the subsequent years, Democrats repealed the Enforcement Acts of 1870-71, which had protected black civil rights in the South. The depression of the 1890s, concurrent with the string of Democratic victories in Congress, led Republicans to drop voter rights from their national platform by the middle of the decade, instead focusing on the economic issues plaguing the northern constituency. The rise of the Populist Party influenced the Democratic Party to adopt Populist stances against the trusts, the railroads, and other corporate interests, pitting Democrats and Republicans against each other on a new front. Though there was risk that Republicans would again turn to civil rights issues

in the South, the Democrats had outmaneuvered the Republicans and won the freedom to restrict the franchise in the South, and the era of Jim Crow moved into full swing.¹

Unsurprisingly, this was not the exact future that Grady had imagined in his New South, but his vision of a fully industrialized and racially separated South certainly played a role in shaping this future. From the very beginning, Grady built his idea of a New South upon the past of the Old South that appealed to the white supremacist views of southern Democrats. Grady remembered an Old South that was peaceable, civilized, and genteel, where whites lived in harmony with blacks because slavery kept them in their place, and slaves in turn respected and honored their masters. In solidifying this imagining of the Old South, Grady helped unite southern whites within an identity as ‘southerners’ with a proud history tied to racial superiority. For some southern Democrats, creating a society with racially separate spaces may have been enough to maintain the racial hierarchy. But for others, separation was not enough: many whites feared an erosion of their racial position. Violence and intimidation, therefore, were the best mechanisms to dominate southern blacks and thereby uphold the white South.²

To Republicans, separate but equal was not an unreasonable trade for the economic promises of Grady’s New South. The South, it preached, was a land of untapped resources, its full utilization hindered by slavery. The South had changed since Reconstruction—southerners had laid their grudges to rest, had embraced the goal of industrialization, and as a result had created a harmonious society where blacks and whites each worked for their own prosperity. The profits, many believed, would be enormous.

¹J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the establishment of the One-Party System, 1880-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 29-34.

²David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 294.

That assurance was too enticing to ignore, and if Republicans had lingering doubts about the safety of Republican immigrants and voters, Grady had mollified their anxieties with his convincing stories of a changed South. His vision told of a South in which blacks and whites interacted cordially when they needed to, but otherwise left each to his own devices; this was best for a mixed race society, he argued, and was desired by both races. To Republicans, a society equal but separate would be acceptable so long as it did not lead to election tampering and voter interference. But violence and intimidation against black, Republican voters increased as the decade progressed. These practices, compounded with the passage of an increasing number of restrictive voting measures by state governments, the poll tax and education qualification among them, frustrated Republicans despite their economic interests.³

By the end of the 1880s, Republicans openly expressed their dissatisfaction with Grady's New South solution to the race issue, and southern Democrats grew only more hostile in their pursuit of an answer to it. In his final address, Grady asked for patience, assuring his audience that the South would reach an acceptable resolution, but by then his vision, the political alliance it had secured, and soon he himself, were dead.

But though the vision itself broke down, many of its elements were in the end fulfilled. Considerable northern capital steadily flowed into the South for years following Grady's death. In particular, the southern textile industry maintained the potent growth that began in 1881 and contributed to the collapse of the New England textile industry in the 1920s. Democrats retained the reins of power until the 1960s by forming the Solid South voting bloc. Such security allowed southern Democrats to maintain a legal system

³ Harold E. Davis, *Henry Grady's New South: Atlanta, a Brave and Beautiful City* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 149-52.; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 271.

of racial segregation for over 70 years until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. And though the early years of the 1890s saw tension between Democrats and Republicans, the prospect of war with Spain united the nation. In 1898, with the first American casualty of the Spanish-American War, sailor Worth Bagley of North Carolina, the *Atlanta Constitution* declared that his was the blood that formed “the covenant of brotherhood between north and south.”⁴

Indeed North and South and Democrat and Republican ultimately achieved the reconciliation for which Grady had fought. But reconciliation was never guaranteed to arrive. In fact this study of Grady’s New South vision reveals the degree of the political flux that dominated the 1880s. This flux offers further proof that the decade was very much locked in political and racial uncertainty regarding the future. And that so many latched onto Grady’s New South vision within this uncertainty demonstrates the vision’s mythic sway.

Mythic is an appropriate descriptor of Grady’s New South, for it ultimately described a story: a version of the southern past, constructed out of a longing for victory in the face of defeat, that raised white southerners from the mud of conquest and into the sunshine of a bright future. For these white southerners, politics, race, and history all met at the nexus of identity—though a white southerner may be poor, though he may struggle from day to day, he was still white, he was still a Democrat, and he was still a *southerner*, and in that he could take pride. From Grady’s New South, then, we can better see how this interim period between Reconstruction and Jim Crow birthed this renewed sense of

⁴ Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 131.; Found in Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 352-3.

identity, and how it marked the shift toward the racial attitudes that would dominate the first half of the 20th century.

C. Vann Woodward refers to the South as suffering from a series of “illusions of permanency,” that each new southern system, be it the various antebellum, post-Reconstruction, or Jim Crow systems, is thought to be the final system. More than any other region of the United States, the South has proven the most inconstant. Even today, the modern South bears more resemblance to George W. Cable’s *No South* than ever before, and yet it remains distinctly southern. Henry Grady and his vision serve this narrative of change and negotiation between regions and parties, but also between people and their needs for self-actualization. Northerners and southerners alike so embraced Grady’s vision because they needed its tenets: its prosperity and its racial accord. But rather than view the vision and its various results as positive or negative, beneficial or harmful, I suggest we view it through this lens of change. For though Henry Grady’s *New South* rose from the shadows of an ignoble memory, it gave way to something new, which in turn gave way to yet another system. The modern South rests upon the foundations of these many South’s before it, and it too will one day fall to yield something new.⁵

⁵ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 8.

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