

## MOBILIZATION FOR SECESSION IN GREENVILLE DISTRICT

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Between 1830 and 1860 South Carolina politicians were involved in three political crises: the Nullification controversy, the political upheaval that accompanied the Wilmot Proviso which threatened to limit the expansion of slavery from territories acquired following the Mexican War, and the Secession Crisis of 1860.

Greenville District presents the historian with a unique case study during this period of South Carolina history. This dynamic up-country district was inhabited by a "yeomanry" (to use a phrase of that period) united in opposition to Nullification. Despite the fact that John Caldwell Calhoun lived in nearby Pendleton District, most Greenvillians were staunch Unionists during the 1830's. However, in 1860 the inhabitants of Greenville District united with the rest of South Carolina in Secession. What caused this dramatic shift of public opinion? Why did Benjamin Franklin Perry, one of the stalwarts of the South Carolina Unionists, proclaim in 1859 that if John Brown's raid were endorsed by northerners in general it would be dishonorable for South Carolina to remain in the Union? This paper will provide one explanation for the shift in sentiment between 1830 and 1860 among inhabitants of Greenville District.

Few South Carolinians in 1827 agreed with Thomas Cooper, President of the South Carolina College, when he declared that it was "time to calculate the value of the Union."<sup>1</sup> By 1832 most South Carolinians had accepted Cooper's analysis and the state was involved in the Nullification Crisis. For several years in the 1830's a bitter and devious struggle was waged throughout the state between the Nullification leaders who followed John C. Calhoun and the Unionists forces led by James Louis Pettigru,

<sup>1</sup>Clarence Malaise, *The Public Life of Thomas Cooper* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1964), p. 307.

Joel Robert Poinsett, John Belton O'Neill, Benjmain F. Perry, and others.<sup>2</sup>

Evidence that the mass of Greenville's "yeomen" were solidly Unionist is abundant. William Lowndes Yancey, who challenged Virginia's Edmund Ruffin and South Carolina's Robert Barnwell Rhett for the sobriquet "Father of Secession," lived in Greenville during the Nullification Crisis. While reading law under Benjamin F. Perry, Yancey contributed articles to his mentor's newspaper, the *Greenville Mountaineer*. Yancey, radical Unionist at this early stage of his career, penned bitter denunciations of Calhoun across the pages of the *Mountaineer*. He noted with wonder that Calhoun had withdrawn from contention as a presidential aspirant. "It must be a hard thing for one of Mr. Calhoun's inordinate and grasping ambition, to give up all hopes of ever obtaining the object for which he has sacrificed so much, and for which he would even have sacrificed his country." After Calhoun was elected to the United States Senate, Yancey wrote:

Eighteen thousand South Carolina voters would rather that the seal of death had been set upon his lips, than that such foul and heretical doctrines -- such revengeful and heart-burning speeches should ever have been uttered by him in our Senate Chamber. **Revolutions indeed!** Or in other words, **Disunion -- Civil War!** These are openly avowed by this political madman, to be his only alternatives in the present crisis -- his only means of destroying the country, in which there is not the least shadow of a hope, that he can ever again be looked upon even as a patriot, or as an American.<sup>3</sup>

Calhoun had, according to Yancey, "left off his desperate attempts to obtain certain grapes, . . . by fair jumping for them, and has been for some time determined, if possible, to kick down the arbour which sustains them."<sup>4</sup>

Perry was more rational in his published attacks on Calhoun in the 1830's. He reprinted speeches made by Calhoun during the "Nationalist" period of the latter's career which called for

<sup>2</sup>William Wihstetz Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina 1815-1836* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), is the most recent and the most complete account of The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina.

<sup>3</sup>*Greenville Mountaineer*, February 7, 1835.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, February 21, 1835.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, February 14, 1835.

increasing tariffs.\* The *Mountaineer* editor wrote that "when we hear such men [as Calhoun] say there is no danger in Nullification, we don't believe them. We are rather inclined to think they may be mistaken again."† Perry's editorials were damaging to the Nullification forces all over South Carolina and eventually Nullifiers tried to silence the Greenville Unionist.

Both Unionists and Nullificationists created symbolic hats to distinguish the allegiance of the owner. The Nullifiers were first, utilizing a blue revolutionary cockade with a button in the center as the emblem of a true Nullifier. Much more numerous around the village was the Unionist's black cockade decorated with an eagle and tassels, the proud insignia of an American citizen. Other millinery marvels were soon in fashion. Those who wore cockades decorated with a very large bit of yellow paper, or with a "whole biscuit," identified themselves as being neutral in the political contest.‡

Unionists dominated the militia in the Greenville district. These expressed their opposition to Nullification by adopting Unionist resolutions at the annual militia muster.§

Meanwhile, Nullification leaders in Greenville found it difficult to cope with the overwhelming popularity of the Unionists. Waddy Thompson, the real power behind the Nullification forces in Greenville, distributed political tracts written by George McDuffie in an attempt to popularize his cause. McDuffie, Chancellor William Harper, Governor James Hamilton, and Christopher Gustavus Memminger were invited to Greenville for public speeches endorsing Nullification.¶

Nullificationists in Greenville argued that Nullification would not result in disunion. They contended that the South's cotton was essential to Northern industry and that a strong stand by the state would result in a satisfactory compromise. The most effective speaker advocating this line of reasoning was Baylis J.

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\*Ibid., June 25, 1831.

†Ibid.

‡Ibid., February 23, 1833.

§Ibid., October 8, 1831.

¶Ibid., September 24, October 8, 1830; September 22, 1832. Henry D. Capers, *The Life and Times of C. G. Memminger* (Richmond: Everett Wadley Co., 1893), pp. 203-224.

Earle, a respected member of the Greenville bar under whom Perry had read law in the 1820's. Earle reassured his fellow townsmen that he personally denied the extreme doctrine of Nullification and that if a convention were called it would not result necessarily in the adoption of radical proposals. Even Perry was impressed for he reported: "there was evidently a change in the minds of many persons on this subject after Colonel Earle had [spoken] . . ."<sup>11</sup> Thompson and other Nullifiers characterized the Unionists as "submissionists."<sup>12</sup> This pejorative term was used consistently to heap approbrium upon the Unionists.

The strength of the Unionists in Greenville District all but stalemated efforts of the Nullifiers to develop organization or a demonstration of strength. In 1830 Thompson and the Nullifiers sought to dominate a Fourth of July celebration by controlling the committee of arrangements. This ploy created such a storm of protest from Unionists that the Nullifiers were forced to abandon their scheme.<sup>13</sup> A year later Greenville Nullification leaders attempted to hold a private meeting prior to a previously announced Unionist public meeting. Their intention was to pass pro-Nullification resolutions and have these published to give the impression that Nullification received public support in the area. This plan was thwarted and Perry wrote an editorial denouncing what he called "un-democratic" tactics employed by Thompson. "The lawyers, doctors, and village loungers can very easily have a meeting and pass resolutions, which go forth to the world as the sentiments of this whole district. The fact is, [these] Nullifiers are more active . . . . If a public meeting be called, they are certain to attend."<sup>14</sup>

As the election year of 1832 approached, Nullificationists over South Carolina were determined to win control of the General Assembly which would then call for the election of delegates to a state convention to consider nullification. They

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<sup>11</sup>Lillian Adelle Kaler, *Benjamin F. Perry, South Carolina Attorney* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1948), pp. 41-42; *Greenville Mountaineer*, August 13, October 15, 1830.

<sup>12</sup>*Greenville Mountaineer*, September 20, 1831.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, July 19, 1830.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, September 2, 1831.

organized the States Rights and Free Trade Party as their political organization. Waddy Thompson ran into local Unionist obstructions as he sought to organize the party in Greenville. However, he was successful after more than a year of effort and the local unit of the States Rights and Free Trade party was ready to support a Nullification ticket in 1832.<sup>13</sup>

Waddy Thompson's most dramatic tactic in preparation for the 1832 elections was to establish a Nullificationist newspaper to challenge Perry's hegemony. With the help of Governor James Hamilton, a leading Nullificationist, and William Campbell Preston, he secured printing supplies and equipment from Columbia and Charleston and imported Turner Bynum, a Nullificationist, as editor. The *Southern Sentinel* published its first issue on June 23, 1832.<sup>14</sup> Nullificationists over the state supported the venture. Governor Hamilton wrote to Thompson:

I enclosed my subscription (\$25) in advance for ten copies of the paper but pray ask Bynum to send me **But one** which I hope will be sufficiently strong to be a dose -- for all the unconverted. My papers for selection are at his service but if record of them are taken in Greenville by you and the rest of our friends, it will be unnecessary for me to forward them. Let our party in Greenville give to this press a zealous writing and efficient aid before the October's Ballot depend upon it you will see the seed not only in a state of germination but fit for the sickle. If you ever want my feeble help over there send for me and as the midwives [sic] say "I will come at any hour of the night." By establishing this paper in Greenville the scabbard has been thrown away and you have nothing now to do but to carry the war into the enemy's country as vigorously as possible."

<sup>13</sup>Clarence Samuel Beards, *The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), p. 124; *Greenville Messenger*, September 3, 10, 24, 1831; January 10, May 12, 1832; January 5, 1833.

<sup>14</sup>Josh Hadden Lescene, "The Nullification Controversy in an Up-Country District," *Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association*, 1919, p. 18; James Hamilton to Waddy Thompson, August 32, 1832. Lescene cites B. W. Simpson, *A History of Old Piedmont District with a Genealogy of Leading Families of the District* (Anderson, South Carolina: n. p. 1911), p. 35, to hold that friends of Calhoun persuaded Bynum to go to Greenville and establish a paper. Bynum had previously arranged to publish a Nullification paper in Montgomery, Alabama. In her *Perry*, p. 124, Kibler draws the same conclusion citing the same source. Calhoun was working with Hamilton and Thompson during this period. James Hamilton to Waddy Thompson, July 16, 1832 (South Carolina Department of Archives and History).

<sup>15</sup>James Hamilton to Waddy Thompson, June 8, 1832 (South Carolina Department of Archives and History). This writer is grateful to Dr. Robert N. Cliberg. In 1970 he pointed out an uncatalogued container of material on Waddy Thompson. Several pieces of correspondence, including the above were included in the material.

The "zealous writing and efficient aid" soon generated bad feeling between the two editors and Perry killed Bynum in the most famous duel in Greenville history in August, 1832. Perry blamed the whole affair on Thompson. Perry wrote before the duel: "The attempt means to take me off by a tool and hireling brought here for that purpose. Should I be killed by the editor of the *Sentinel*, [the Nullifiers] will rejoice much in their hearts. [Thompson] brought Bynum to this place. He assists him in editing the *Sentinel*. He advises and consults with him -- he pulls the wires."<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, the campaign for the legislative election of 1832 continued. The "Paris Mountain Union Society" was created in January 1832.<sup>19</sup> William L. Yancy and Dr. A. B. Crook organized the "Greenville Huzzars," a cavalry troop composed of Unionists, who paraded at public functions demonstrating their readiness to support their ideology with their swords.<sup>20</sup>

In the campaign for the legislature William Easley Blasingame, onetime Unionist, headed a States Rights and Free Trade Party ticket which included also Robert Maxwell, Tandy Walker, and William Choice.<sup>21</sup> In opposition the Unionists ran Banister Stone, Wilson Cobb, Micajah Berry, and John Hampton Harrison.<sup>22</sup> Despite a hard-fought campaign by the Nullifiers, the voters better than two to one voted for the Unionists and sent a Unionist delegation to the General Assembly of 1832.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the Unionist members from Greenville and other up-country districts, the legislature of 1832 called for the voters to choose delegates to a convention. In Greenville District, Perry headed a slate of Unionist delegates which the voters chose overwhelmingly to represent them at the Nullification Conven-

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<sup>18</sup>Lawson, *loc. cit.*, p. 19. This observation by Perry is in keeping with Thompson's activity in the period. On a sales's day in 1831 Thompson made a speech using such "barsh and disrespectful language" that he later issued a public apology. *Greenville Mountaineer*, September 24, 1831.

<sup>19</sup>*Greenville Mountaineer*, January 12, 1832.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, May 12, 1832. Both Yancy and Cobb later became ardent nullifiers.

<sup>21</sup>Blasingame was later replaced by Dr. William Butler. *Greenville Mountaineer*, October 12, 1832.

<sup>22</sup>Walter B. Edgar, editor, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), 1:327.

<sup>23</sup>*Greenville Mountaineer*, May 12, October 13, 1832.

As is well-known, the South Carolina Convention passed the Ordinance of Nullification and for a few anxious months the state faced the danger of civil war. The crisis was compromised with the passage of the Tariff of 1833 and the revocation of the Ordinance of Nullification by the convention on March 15, 1833.<sup>21</sup>

Bitterness between Unionists and Nullifiers engendered by the struggle continued for several years. In 1834 Governor George McDuffie appointed Waddy Thompson Brigadier General in the militia. Thompson reviewed the militia units throughout the district and took advantage of his position by delivering anti-Unionist speeches to his command.<sup>22</sup> The Unionist Greenville militia units were unimpressed and drew the accusation of "secretly organizing a force, to be armed with guns, bayonets, butcher knives, and battle axes . . . ." The "militia question" gradually eased as tempers cooled and Greenville District enjoyed a period of political calm as the 1830's yielded to the 1840's.

In 1846, however, this calm evaporated before the storm generated by the introduction of the Wilmot Proviso in Congress. This proviso would have prohibited slavery in any territory acquired as the result of the Mexican War. George Franklin Townes<sup>23</sup>, the new editor of the *Greenville Mountaineer*,<sup>24</sup> was quick to condemn any proposal to exclude slavery from new territory acquired by the United States. To Townes such exclusion constituted a more serious threat to free men

<sup>21</sup>Greenville *Mountaineer*, November 10, 17, 1832; Kibler, *Perry*, pp. 140-142. Perry led the Unionist slate with 1055 votes. Baylis J. Earle, the leading Nullification candidate, received 381 ballots. The Greenville delegation also included Silas R. Whitten, Thomas Patterson Brockman, and Henry Middleton. Greenville *Mountaineer*, November 10, 17, 1832.

<sup>22</sup>David Duncan Wallace, *South Carolina, A Short History, 1520-1948* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1966 (originally published, 1951)), pp. 399-403.

<sup>23</sup>Pendleton *Messenger*, August 27, 1834.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, May 28, 1834.

<sup>25</sup>The Townes family contributed significantly to the Greenville community during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. George Townes's brother, Dr. Henry Howard Townes of Abbeville District, had married into the Calhoun family establishing a nexus between the two families.

<sup>26</sup>Greenville *Mountaineer*, May 15, 1846.

than had the Stamp Act prior to the American Revolution.<sup>30</sup> He was even more concerned over the abolitionist threat. When a New York native was arrested on charges of distributing abolitionist material in nearby Spartanburg, Townes favored a speedy trial followed by a public hanging as the only fitting punishment for such an infamous crime.<sup>31</sup> Townes expressed dissatisfaction with local clergymen, not over their attitude toward slavery, but because they too infrequently made references to Biblical support for slavery from the pulpit.<sup>32</sup> As editor, Townes converted the *Mountaineer* into a proslavery paper militantly anti-abolitionist in perspective. While he did not view secession as the only means of protecting slavery, under his direction the *Mountaineer* did give aid to the secessionist cause. However, it did not become merely an extension of the secessionist party in Greenville.

William Hans Campbell, who replaced Townes as editor of the *Mountaineer* in January 1850, pledged to maintain the editorial policy of his predecessor.<sup>33</sup> Under his leadership, however, the paper lost its moderate tone and became one of the more ardent and persistent Secessionist papers of the area. As the secessionist crisis of 1850 developed, the Secessionists in Greenville had the advantage of controlling the only means of mass communication in the district.<sup>34</sup>

"Politics makes strange bedfellows" as a truism is well illustrated by the rapprochement of Benjamin F. Perry and Waddy Thompson when these bitter enemies of the 1830's joined forces to fight against the rising demand for secession in 1850. In November, 1850, were jeered by a large crowd when they attempted to speak against secession. Although the crowd was not representative of public opinion in Greenville, the incident does illustrate the fact that in the 1850 crisis the Secessionist forces enjoyed much more support than the Nullifiers had eighteen years before.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Greenville *Mountaineer*, April 2, 1847.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., July 27, 1847.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., August 24, 1849.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., January 4, 1850.

<sup>34</sup>*Southern Patriot*, October 23, 1851.



Believing that the rise of Secessionist support was largely the result of the effectiveness of the now-Secessionist *Mountaineer*, Benjamin F. Perry established the *Southern Patriot* in February 1851. In it, Perry announced that the *Southern Patriot* would be the anti-Secessionists' answer to the newspaper he once edited.<sup>14</sup>

In 1849 a Committee of Vigilance and Safety organized, composed of fifty members representing the entire district but with a preponderance of members from the town. At this point, heated political controversy had not developed and the Committee contained members of both political factions.<sup>15</sup> In December of 1850 the Greenville chapter of the Southern Rights Association formed to mobilize local support for the state-wide secession movement. The Association then created a special Committee of Vigilance and Safety. Unlike the rather large-public-1849 committee which represented all shades of opinion, the second Committee consisted of a handful of men and was an agency of the Southern Rights Association. Led by Dr. A. B. Crook, its primary function was to safeguard the community against abolitionist activity. The Committee operations were enshrouded in secrecy and it promised to become a powerful force in molding public opinion. By the fall of 1851, the unsympathetic Perry declared in the *Southern Patriot*:

What were they [the Committee] organized for, but to over awe and control public opinion; to pay into the secrets of men and families, like the bloody inquisition of Spain, and the all-powerful and unknown police of the French Revolution.<sup>16</sup>

The Southern Rights Association of Greenville also spawned the States Rights Party which ran Dr. O. B. Irvine, Dr. A. B. Crook, and George F. Townes as Secessionist candidates in the 1851 elections. Again, the Secessionists were defeated

<sup>14</sup>*Pendleton Messenger*, November 14, 1850; *Southern Patriot*, February 28, 1851. The secession movement of 1850-1852 in South Carolina revolved around whether the state should act alone (Separatists) or secede only in cooperation with other slave states (Cooperationists). This paper treats only the issue of Secessionists versus Unionists. Perry and other true Unionists worked with the Cooperationists for obvious political reasons.

<sup>15</sup>Richard Yerdon to Benjamin F. Perry, January 6, 1850 (Perry Papers, Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, Alabama); *Southern Patriot*, February 28, 1851.

<sup>16</sup>*Pendleton Messenger*, November 14, 1850; *Greenville Mountaineer*, December 6, 1850.

<sup>17</sup>*Southern Patriot*, September 5, 1851. Perry had been a member of the public 1849 Committee of Vigilance and Safety.

throughout the district.<sup>40</sup> The Crisis of 1850 had passed and in June 1851 the central committee of the States Rights Association suggested that local units in areas where there was considerable opposition curtail their efforts. The Greenville unit followed this suggestion and little more was heard from it until the 1860 crisis.<sup>41</sup>

Both Unionists and Secessionists continued agitation, however. George F. Townes resumed the editorship of the *Mountaineer* in April 1854.<sup>42</sup> As a result of the Crisis of 1850, Townes had become more adamant in defense of slavery than earlier, and had become convinced that secession was inevitable. Recognizing Benjamin F. Perry and the *Southern Patriot* as the major agency for Unionism in the area, Townes attacked Perry in the *Mountaineer* during the spring and summer of 1854. Perry responded with verve. Debate in the columns of the two newspapers became so acrimonious that Townes had Perry arrested on charges of libel. However, friends of both editors, James Lawrence Orr, W. H. Simpson, and James Washington Harrison, effected a reconciliation. Perry took one parting shot, writing that Townes "was the editor raised up by the hand of Providence to lead, with his goose quill, . . . the . . . secession hosts . . . over our . . . prostrate patriotism."<sup>43</sup>

In May, 1854, Townes made his best statement of his attitude toward disunion. He held that slavery imparted "a dignity, a sobriety, and a self-possession to the character of the dominant race" producing a people ideally suited to create a stable society.<sup>44</sup> Townes argued that the South with its common bond of slavery could benefit from Secession while the North would

<sup>40</sup>*Greenville Mountaineer*, December 6, 1850; *Southern Patriot*, February 10, 1851. Crook and Townes were vice-presidents of the Greenville Southern Rights Association and Townes was its secretary. Tandy Walker was president.

<sup>41</sup>*Southern Patriot*, June 6, 20, July 4, 1851; *Tri-Weekly Southern Patriot*, September 10, 1851; Laura Amanda White, *Robert Barnwell Rhett: Father of Secession* (New York: Century Company, 1931), p. 111.

<sup>42</sup>John C. Ellen, "Political Newspaper in the South Carolina Up-Country, 1850-1859: A Compendium," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 63 (April, 1966): 86-92. William H. Campbell had retired as editor the *Mountaineer* in July, 1853. H. Nelson Wheaton edited the paper for nine months until Townes became editor for the second time. *Southern Patriot* August 4, 1853; July 6, August 4, 1854.

<sup>43</sup>*Greenville Mountaineer*, August 3, 1854; *Southern Patriot*, July 27, October 26, 1854.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, May 4, 1854.

break up into small communities because it was an unstable society. Events of 1859 justified Townes's position in the minds of his readers.

After 1854 the political scene in Greenville District became relatively serene. Then the John Brown Raid on Harpers Ferry arsenal with its call for slave revolt in October 1859, shattered the calm irrevocably. John Brown accomplished in a few days what the Secessionist forces of South Carolina had been unable to do in years of agitation: Secessionists of all variations of thought and the "waverers" united. By December 1859 Secession sentiment from the mountains to the coast was as it had been at the height of the 1850 crisis.<sup>44</sup>

There were important differences between the Crisis of 1859 and that of 1850. The most significant difference was that the John Brown Raid convinced most South Carolinians that the majority of Northerners, at best, would remain idle while extremists encouraged servile insurrection. In 1850 the Secessionists had been divided: the Separatists wanted separate state action while the Co-operationists would coordinate South Carolina's action with that of other Southern states. Having learned from this predicament, Secessionist leaders since 1851 had carefully harmonized their actions with those of other Southern states. As a result, in 1859 South Carolinians were not alone in their protestations against what they perceived as a threat of internal warfare between slaves and masters.<sup>45</sup>

Even Benjamin F. Perry was ready to calculate the value of the Union following John Brown's raid. According to the old Unionist such a "notorious horse thief, assassin, and traitor[as Brown], whom they [Northerners] audaciously eulogized as a hero . . . had committed treason, murder and robbery." If his act received general approval in the North it would be dishonorable for "slave-holding states to continue united in the

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<sup>44</sup>Harold Sessel Schultz, *Nationalism and Secessionism in South Carolina, 1852-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1950), pp. 178-199. After careful examination of various votes in the state legislatures following Brown's Raid, Schultz estimated that fifty percent of the senators and forty percent of the representatives favored disunion. He felt that these figures were actually underestimated due to the types of resolutions considered and political expediency on the part of some Secessionists.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 198.

same government with such a nation of savages, assassins, and traitors."<sup>46</sup>

Behind much of the secessionist' motivations was fear. In 1860 there were twice as many whites as blacks in Greenville; still, fear of servile insurrection was a reality for most whites in the district.<sup>47</sup> In a Greenville address, C. G. Memminger expressed the sentiments of most whites when he held that with emancipation "must come civil rights, and your next neighbor, in every jury box and muster field will be a Negro." He painted a picture of the waste and desolation that would cover the South after emancipation. In the end the "final choice to be made, is between a contest with the North, and a war of extermination with our own slaves."<sup>48</sup>

With the hindsight of over a century, one has difficulty understanding this seemingly irrational fear. Memminger, as most humans, did not base his conclusions on facts. Then as now judgements are based on one's perception of the facts. Memminger was articulating a part of the world view of South Carolinians and as such their system of beliefs was their reality. To Greenvilleans in 1860 there was no Republican Party: it was the "Black Republican" Party and its basic goal was to destroy slavery and the Southern way of life.<sup>49</sup>

During the summer of 1860 the *Greenville Southern Enterprise* published dispatches which fed this fear of servile insurrection, as reports of slave revolts and rumors of uprisings frequently appeared. In September, the editor warned residents of the community "to keep a sharp look out, not only for suspicious characters, but for everything of a suspicious character."<sup>50</sup> In March 1860 a Greenville public meeting unanimously passed a resolution which condemned all Republicans for "stirring up a servile insurrection which was to murder the master."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup>*Southern Enterprise*, December 8, 1859; September 13, 1860.

<sup>47</sup>United States, Bureau of The Census, *Eighth Census of the United States: 1860*, 2: 60-61; Steven Alan Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), p. 97.

<sup>48</sup>*Greenville Mountaineer*, December 6, 1850.

<sup>49</sup>*Southern Enterprise*, December 22, 1859; February 2, 9, September 13, November 15, 1860.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, August 16, September 6, 1860.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, March 8, 1860.

In the fall of 1860 the Greenville Committee of Vigilance and Safety investigated rumors of local Abolitionist activities which led to the arrest of Harrold Wyllys, a native of the district. Wyllys was charged with possessing a copy of Hinton Rowan Helper's *The Impending Crisis of the South* as well as other Abolitionist material. He was accused of having distributed Abolitionist tracts to local residents including one literate black man. Dr. A. B. Crook, Chairman of the Committee of Vigilance and Safety, wrote to Perry that Wyllys was to be denied bail and that the case would not be mentioned in the district's press:

I think when you have examined the Book you will agree with me that no man who will give aid to its circulation should be permitted to go at large in our community, but that he should be kept in a safe place until he can be tried and hung [sic]. If we really live under a general Government incapable of protecting us from such attacks, the sooner we get rid of it the better."<sup>1</sup>

Political activity in Greenville accelerated during 1860. On March 5, a large public meeting gathered to discuss Southern manufacturing and commerce. It adopted resolutions calling for a boycott of Northern goods, for increasing commercial activity within the South, and requesting the state legislature to levy a discriminatory tax between Northern goods and those imported directly from Europe. It created a special committee to aid in the industrial development of the area. This committee consisted of the most active Secessionists in the district: A. B. Crook, Perry Emory Duncan, C. J. Elford, William King Easley, George F. Townes and Samuel D. Goodlet. The preamble to the above resolutions scarcely mentioned manufacturing, but rather elaborated on the "fiendish scheme" the North had designed to "deflate the entire South."<sup>2</sup>

To all who supported increased Southern manufacturing and

<sup>1</sup>"A. B. Crook to Benjamin F. Perry, December, 1860 (Perry Papers, Alabama State Archives: Montgomery, Alabama). Wyllys was spelled several different ways. This is the most frequently encountered spelling. The opinions of Crook were not followed in this case. Wyllys was brought to trial the following April and found guilty of "circulating inflammatory publications." He received one year's imprisonment rather than the ultimate punishment proposed by Crook, *Southern Enterprise*, April 3, 1860.

<sup>2</sup>"*Southern Enterprise*, March 6, 1860. There was a statewide movement to industrialize the South during the winter months. Schultz feels that its primary accomplishment was to encourage prospective manufacturers to support secession for pecuniary reasons. Schultz, *Nationalism and Secessionism*, pp. 224-225.

commerce, secession provided hope that a Southern confederacy, once established, would offer an encouraging market. There were several manufacturers in Greenville District, adding annually over \$213,000 to the economy.<sup>14</sup> Included in the industries in Greenville were: five cotton factories, two paper mills, a carriage and wagon factory, a furniture factory, one gun factory, a copper and tin factory, and seven tanyards.<sup>15</sup> Of the twelve leading manufacturers in Greenville, only one was active in politics before 1860 -- Micajah Berry, a Unionist. By November 1860 four other manufacturers, including Vardry McBee, an active local businessman who owned a cotton mill and a paper mill, had participated in Secessionist activities.<sup>16</sup>

On April 30, William L. Yancey, one-time Greenvillean but then from Alabama, led delegates from five Southern states out of the national Democratic Convention meeting in Charleston. Benjamin F. Perry was one of two South Carolina delegates who remained in their seats, taking no part in this dramatic walk-out.<sup>17</sup>

After the debacle of the Charleston Convention the extremists now began their bid for power throughout the state. Their plan was to elect new delegates to a Richmond Convention where disaffected Southern Democrats were to assemble on June 11. It was essential that Secessionists be selected from every district for the state convention to meet on May 30 to ensure a South Carolina delegation to the Richmond Convention which would act in concert with the delegates from Alabama and Mississippi. On May 21 the Democrats of Greenville gathered to appoint delegates to the state convention. The Secessionist forces had complete control over this meeting.

<sup>14</sup>*Southern Enterprise*, January 12, 1853.

<sup>15</sup>*Greenville Mountaineer*, November 18, 1840. *Southern Patriot*, February 28, 1851.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, February 28, 1851; *Southern Enterprise*, November 17, 1860. Channing quotes a letter from Vardry McBee to Vardry A. McBee, November 26, 1850 (Vardry McBee Papers, Duke University) which indicates the sentiments expressed between these two family members: "This miserable matter in the dissolution of the Union is dreadful to think of [.] But these Abolition Fanatics have set themselves never to cease until the Negroes are all free and regardless of the manner whether it is by cutting throats or any other means never seem to enter their imagination or reflect on the consequences." Channing, *Crisis of Fear*, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup>Kibler, *Perry*, pp. 1-4, 313-316. Lemuel Boozer of Lexington District was the other delegate remaining in the Democratic Convention with Perry. Schutz, *Nationalism and Secessionism*, pp. 216-216.

However, these men were anxious lest dormant Unionist sentiment should flower at the moment of their triumph, and democratic methods, normally a part of such a meeting, were abandoned. The five delegates and alternates to the convention were appointed by a committee of fifteen Secessionists. Resolutions, which were approved with but two dissenting votes, were first submitted to a committee of five who effectively controlled the meeting. All five were very active in the Secession campaign during the ensuing months as was the chairman, Reverend James Clement Furman, and the two secretaries, W. P. Price and G. E. Elford.<sup>33</sup> In the summer of 1860, the only former Unionist to make public statements supportive of the Union was Benjamin F. Perry, and there were public requests that Perry should be silenced. The pro-Secession view, on the other hand, received repeated support. During the summer of 1860 Secessionists in Greenville imported speakers to address various public meetings. En route to Alabama from the Richmond Convention, William L. Yancey arrived in the village on July 2. He was met at the train by an entourage of citizens who escorted him to the Mansion House, the area's finest hotel. That evening the man who had castigated Calhoun's disunion activities in the 1830's delivered a fiery secessionist address for an hour and a half.<sup>34</sup> Two days later T. S. Adams arrived to deliver the oration for the Fourth of July celebration. Speaking on the topic, "The Necessity for a Southern Confederacy," Adams urged immediate secession as the only way to rescue the South from its "degrading position" within the Union.<sup>35</sup> During the fall term of court numerous Secessionists spoke in the village. Benjamin F. Perry succinctly stated the primary theme of these speeches: "Disunionists want Lincoln elected to bring about secession. Their aim has been to sectionalize parties as the Black Republicans [have done] in the North."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup>*Southern Enterprise*, May 17, 24, 1860. This committee of five was composed of the following Secessionists: W. N. Campbell, H. Lee Thruston, W. K. Easley, James Harrison, and S. G. McClanahan.

<sup>34</sup>Channing, *Crisis of Fear*, p. 242.

<sup>35</sup>*Southern Enterprise*, June 14, July 5, 1860.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, July 5, 1860.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, September 13, 20, November 15, 29, 1860.

Special military units took part in the political excitement during the last months of 1860. In October a Greenville Minute Men unit was formed in association with similar units being created throughout the state. A central committee of Minute Men in Columbia coordinated the activities local groups. While the military significance of these units was generally negligible, they did participate in public demonstrations to inflame local sentiment.<sup>43</sup> W. H. Campbell, editor of the *Mountaineer*, was elected captain of the Minute Men. H. Lee Thurston resigned as captain of the Butler Guards, a local militia unit, to become first lieutenant of the new organization. Both men were active in the "Association of 1860" for which the Minute Men appear to have functioned as a propaganda agency. Wearing blue cockades to symbolize what they considered to be a similarity between "Revolution for Freedom" and the "Revolution of '76" they created a martial atmosphere of a decidedly Secessionist attitude.<sup>44</sup> On November 15 the Minute Men unanimously accepted a flag consisting of a lone star above the inscription "'Secession' and the Palmetto Tree." These proceedings were enlivened by the Furman University Riflemen, created in 1856, who saluted the flag with a volley and then "gave three cheers for the new Republic." The "Lone Star" flag flew from a "Liberty Pole," also dedicated on this occasion.<sup>45</sup>

Two days after the above ceremonies, citizens of Greenville gathered in a public meeting to nominate a slate of candidates for the Secession Convention which the legislature had summoned to meet on December 17. Sixty-seven men, a few old Secessionist warhorses among a host of neophytes, were named as vice-presidents of the meeting. There were six secretaries selected, including both of the village's newspaper editors. The public meeting selected unanimously five delegates to the state convention: Reverend James Clement Furman, William H. Campbell, Dr. James Harrison, Perry E. Duncan, and William King Easley. This was a fitting reward for these men who had supported secession for years. All five were pledged to immediate state secession, with or without cooperation from other

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, *Mountaineer and Secessionist*, p. 126. *Southern Enterprise*, November 1, 1860.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, November 29, 1860.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, November 15, 1860.



southern states.<sup>46</sup> Four of these candidates were lifelong friends of Benjamin F. Perry who ran against them on a "Co-operation" ticket. But times had changed and the Greenvillians gathered at the meeting elected the Secession ticket despite the district's long-time Unionist tradition.<sup>47</sup> In addition to selecting these delegates to the state convention, the November 27 meeting adopted a series of resolutions. The most pertinent resolved "that South Carolina should as soon as possible, cut the last cord that binds her to her enemies, and declare herself free and independent as when she entered the Union."<sup>48</sup>

Those who stood in front of the Court House in Greenville on November 17 were in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed by W. K. Easley when he asserted that majority rule was proper only so long as the majority was composed of representatives from various sections of the nation. Such was no longer the case, he asserted, for the majority and minority were sectionalized. He continued:

The two great sections of the union contain two distinct peoples, differing from each other in spirit, in interest, in habits, in social institutions, and in all which go to make up individual character of nations, and so widely differing that they are now arrayed against each other in all the bitter hostility which the discord of antagonistic institutions and opposing interests has engendered, nurtured and matured.

The sectionalism of the union then is complete, and can never be obliterated until the institutions of one section have been destroyed, and its individuality merged and lost in the other. There is an irrepressible conflict between the North and the South.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup>*Southern Enterprise*, November 22, 1860. Speakers at this meeting, all of whom favored separate secession, included W. K. Easley, Dr. A. B. Crook, George F. Townes, E. P. Jones, S. D. Goodlett, James H. Price, C. J. Eiford, W. P. Price, and James Harrison.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, December 13, 1860.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, November 22, 1860.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*