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"It Was Awful, But It Was Politics": Crittenden County and the Demise of African American Political Participation

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**“IT WAS AWFUL, BUT IT WAS POLITICS”: CRITTENDEN COUNTY AND THE
DEMISE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

“IT WAS AWFUL, BUT IT WAS POLITICS”: CRITTENDEN COUNTY AND THE
DEMISE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in History

By

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University of Arkansas
Bachelor of Arts in History, 2005

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ABSTRACT

Despite the vast scholarship that exists discussing why Democrats sought restrictive suffrage laws, little attention has been given by historians to examine how concern over local government drove disfranchisement measures. This study examines how the authors of disfranchisement laws were influenced by what was happening in Crittenden County where African Americans, because of their numerical majority, wielded enough political power to determine election outcomes. In the years following the Civil War, African Americans established strong communities, educated themselves, secured independent institutions, and most importantly became active in politics. Because of their numerical majority, Crittenden's African Americans were elected to county offices and maintained significant political power after Reconstruction had ended. "Fusion" agreements in the 1880s ameliorated deep-seated racial tensions until pressure brought on by a sharp increase in the county's African American population and by state-wide agrarian discontent. Economic hardships prompted Arkansas farmers to confront their issues politically by embracing the rhetoric of third-party alliances. By 1888, the Union Labor Party, a third-party Republican alliance, challenged Democrat's control over state politics. Fearing what a Union Labor Party victory would mean for their political party and evidently weary of fusion; Crittenden County's white Democrats expelled its African American officials and other locally prominent African American citizens before the fall 1888 elections. Although, Democrats were successful in taking control of Crittenden's local government, their use of fraud, intimidation, and violence did not translate into political dominance. Crittenden County's African Americans continued to vote and control county elections. Circumstances such as those in Crittenden County forced Democrats to explore new

ways to control the political power of the county's black majority through statutory disfranchisement.

This thesis is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

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Introduction

In 1904, Winfield Scott Morgan authored *The Red Light: A Story of Southern Politics and Election Methods*; this work provides a fictional account of two Arkansas counties' political development after the Civil War.¹ Morgan fills his pages with stories of political cooperation between Republicans and third party agrarians, racism, intimidation, election fraud, violence, corruption, and murder. Even though Morgan's book is to be read as fiction, Morgan presents a thinly veiled recounting of actual events that took place in the 1880s and 1890s. Morgan devotes multiple chapters to events occurring in "Critwell" County during the summer and fall of 1888. Astute readers would immediately recognize the fictitious "Critwell" as the actual county of Crittenden. Morgan's *roman à clef* offers the reader a glimpse into the very real struggle of African Americans to maintain their political footing against a formidable white minority. A scholarly examination of what transpired in Crittenden County sheds light on more than just the dynamics of Reconstruction and Redeemer politics in Arkansas. This case study of the political participation of African Americans in county government and their abrupt and forceful removal from office provides a window on the antecedents of formal disfranchisement in Arkansas.

Even though a rich body of scholarship exists discussing how and why Democrats sought restrictive suffrage laws, historians have not fully captured how the architects of disfranchisement were influenced by what was happening in counties where African Americans, because of their numerical majority, wielded political power sufficient enough to determine outcomes of elections. Instead of focusing on how disfranchisement emerged throughout the state, this thesis brings attention back to how concern over control of local government drove disfranchisement.

¹ W. Scott Morgan, *The Red Light: A Story of Southern Politics and Election Methods* (Moravian Falls, North Carolina: Yellow Jacket Press, 1904).

Crittenden County is unusual because the county's black population by 1890 outnumbered its white population six to one, its proportions having grown since emancipation. An examination of Crittenden County reveals that its African Americans, after the Civil War, established strong communities by acquiring land, educating themselves and their children, and securing independent institutions. Most importantly, African Americans in Crittenden County became active in politics. What is particularly important is that Crittenden County's African Americans, because of their numerical majority, were elected to county offices, which in Arkansas at the time held the most immediate influence over the lives of its citizens because the 1874 constitution had handed power to the local officers, particularly county judges. African Americans, thus, held a significant amount of power in the county even after Reconstruction officially ended. This was an affront to the idea of white dominance. "Fusion" agreements in the 1870s and 1880s had allotted a certain number of county offices to white Democrats and a certain number of county offices to African American Republicans. By adopting a fusion government, white Democrats were able to control some aspects of county politics. But for Crittenden's white Democrats even having to share power with African Americans amounted to the "Negro Domination" their party decried.

But more than a black numerical majority troubled local Democrats. The 1870s and the 1880s ushered in harsh economic times and prompted many Arkansas farmers to embrace the rhetoric of farmer organizations and third parties. By 1888, the Union Labor Party existed as an alternative to both the Democrats and Republicans. By endorsing the platforms of the Knights of Labor, the Agriculture Wheel, and the Farmers' Alliance as well as by forming an alliance with the Republican Party, the Union Labor Party challenged Democrats' control of the state's political machinery. Fearing what a Union Labor Party victory would mean for their political

party as a whole and evidently weary of fusion; Crittenden County's white Democrats forcibly expelled black officials from office and locally prominent African American citizens from the county before the summer and fall 1888 elections. Using fraud, intimidation, and violence, Democrats defeated the Union Labor candidate L. P. Featherston in the First Congressional District in the 1888 election. Featherston contested the election; and with the help of testimony from the exiled black officials and others, the U.S. House of Representatives found evidence of gross acts of fraud and intimidation in the 1888 election and awarded Featherston the seat in February of 1890.

The installation of Featherston made clear that the expulsion of the county's African Americans officials and other prominent citizens had not translated into political dominance. Even though the expulsion of the county's black leaders demonstrated that fusion government was no longer possible, Crittenden County's African American majority continued to participate in politics. Circumstances such as those in Crittenden County forced Democrats to explore new ways to control the political power of the county's black majority and agrarian radicalism through statutory disfranchisement.

Chapter 1 discusses the existing historiography that focuses on African Americans' inclusion and eventual dismissal from politics in the late nineteenth century. Beginning this chapter is a discussion of the historiography of Reconstruction, when groundwork was laid for both the political advance and political repression of African Americans. Additionally, an examination of what historians have written about Reconstruction sheds light on the evolution of race relations in the post-war South. Also covered in this chapter is the historiographical debate about the origins and the implementation of disfranchisement. This chapter not only provides a

background in the historiography that is pertinent to this thesis, but also uses Crittenden County to point out gaps in existing scholarship.

Chapter 2 provides background information on Crittenden County's agriculture, race relations, and politics from its creation in 1825 through 1874, when Reconstruction ended in Arkansas. In the antebellum period, enterprising settlers came to Crittenden County to take advantage of its fertile soil. These settlers, along with their slaves, cleared forests, cut roads, built towns, and farms. Given certain environmental impediments in northeastern Arkansas, plantation agriculture and slavery were slower to develop there than in other parts of the state. Throughout the 1850s, Crittenden County experienced exponential growth, but this growth was halted by the Civil War. Reconstruction significantly altered race relations and seemed to establish a pattern of political and racial violence directed toward African Americans.

Chapter 3 focuses on the expansion of Crittenden County agricultural economy, the multitude of economic problems that surrounded the cultivation of cotton, and the rise of third parties. More importantly the chapter focuses on the expulsion of Crittenden County's African American political leaders from office in 1888 and its consequences.

In 1904, Morgan cavalierly summarized the events that transpired in Critwell (Crittenden) by stating, "It was awful, but it was politics."² What is important in Morgan's statement is that he suggests Crittenden's troubles were a part of a larger, more intricate development in Southern politics. In an attempt to relate a larger story of political violence at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, this thesis examines how one county's struggle with political violence helped to fashion a one-party system and African American disfranchisement.

² Ibid., 288.

Chapter One:

African Americans in Politics

Southern disfranchisement has proven to be of special interest to historians, particularly since the 1970s, when the first in-depth analyses of the development appeared. Scholars have differed over the reasons behind disfranchisement, the methods used, and the chief objects of political exclusion. By placing Crittenden County within the historiography, it is hoped that historians will gain a clearer understanding of why African Americans were stripped of the right to vote and what methods proved to be most effective in eliminating black and Republican opposition to the Democratic hegemony. In order to understand how and why African Americans became disfranchised, it is important to examining the literature concerning African American involvement in politics during and after Reconstruction, their agency, and the significance of their perseverance in the political process and in local government.

Writing in the early twentieth century, William A. Dunning and his students constructed a thesis regarding the black franchise that proved dominant until the 1950s, arguing that the South was a victim of aggressive Radical Republicans who destroyed initial successes of Reconstruction under President Abraham Lincoln and his successor President Andrew Johnson. Radical Republicans repudiated the return to power of former Confederates and sought the passage of reconstruction laws that divided the South into five military districts, required states to adopt new constitutions, introduced African American suffrage, and forced the ratification of 14th and 15th amendments. These scholars were apologists for disfranchisement and Jim Crow, and the violent suppression of political dissent. They portrayed black suffrage as the work of Radical Republicans intent upon inflicting harsh policies upon ex-Confederates. The Dunning school felt strongly that Reconstruction gave African Americans power that they were not yet

ready for or capable of wielding responsibly. They discounted the agency of African Americans in claiming their own political and civil rights and in establishing economic autonomy. As apologists for the Redeemers of the post Reconstruction era, scholars of the Dunning school were meticulous, eloquent, and certainly influential.³ Yet their arguments proved less persuasive to later, less biased researchers and historians.

One of the first historians to challenge the Dunning school was W. E. B. DuBois. DuBois's *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in American, 1860-1880* was the first scholarly work to recognize African American agency in defining the terms of their freedom. DuBois examined the African American experience state by state, detailing the rise and fall of the expectations of freedman. According to DuBois, emancipation redistributed power and opened economic, social, and political possibilities for African Americans and the South as a whole. Unlike the Dunning school historians, DuBois acknowledged the meaningfulness of African American voter participation and leadership during Reconstruction. Furthermore, DuBois believed that African Americans and poor whites could have united for democratic change against planter rule. But instead of identifying with African Americans, poor white southerners chose to pursue racial alliances rather than class-based ones. Charging that an attempt to create a truly democratic South failed because an effort was made by whites to systematically "subordinate the Negro," DuBois concluded that African Americans were denied

³ William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political & Economic, 1865-1877* (New York, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1907).

any real opportunity to become free.⁴ In his scholarly opinion, Reconstruction proved little more than a “splendid failure.”⁵

Although DuBois’s *Black Reconstruction* undermined the conclusions of the Dunning school, setting the stage for broader assaults on the Dunning thesis and eventually prompting historians to reconsider the role of black agency during Reconstruction; his work had little to say about African Americans’ empowerment at the local level. DuBois’s broad study hints at changes occurring at the state and municipal level but, with little scholarship available to inform his study, DuBois cannot capture the more locally oriented struggles that truly limned the attempts of freedmen to reconstruct democracy. His brief discussion of Arkansas (lumped in with a larger discussion of change in both Tennessee and Arkansas) does not examine the social, economic, or political gains that occurred in places like Crittenden, a fairly large county located across the Mississippi River just west of Memphis, Tennessee. In Crittenden County, African Americans found themselves in the majority during Reconstruction, thus serving as a case study in support of DuBois’s thesis. With nominal assistance from the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, the black citizenry sought employment, established groceries, merchant stores, printing offices, and actively participated in county government, undermining the Dunning school’s claims of political and economic naïveté and lending weight to DuBois’s thesis of civic engagement.

Influenced by the rise of social history, scholars, such as Eric Foner, have fleshed out this portrait of African Americans’ agency in pursuit of land ownership, institution building, cultivation of new familial relationships, and political power. According to Foner’s

⁴ W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in American, 1860-1880* (New York, New York: Russell & Russell, 1935), 673-677, 691.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 708.

Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877, as African Americans sought religious, economic, and social institutional autonomy, they attempted to gain political inclusion in white society. For freedmen, political organization occurred within churches, schools, and mutual benefit societies- all focal points of black life. According to Foner, during Reconstruction, freedmen were able to carve out a place for themselves within society, despite opposition to their initial democratic gains. However, Foner, more than DuBois or other scholars who challenged the Dunning School, emphasized the importance of black empowerment in local government. Foner asserts that transformation most readily occurred at the local level, "where decision(s) of public officials directly affected daily life and distribution of power."⁶

Ironically by decentralizing government, Arkansas's 1874 Constitution, designed by the Democrats, inadvertently increased black electoral power at this crucial local level, a circumstance uniquely fortuitous for the black citizenry of Crittenden County. In eliminating the power of the governor to appoint county officials, Arkansas provided a foothold for the election of African American officeholders in black majority counties, such as Crittenden, unimpeded by Democratic control of state government. By dint of their majority, Crittenden's African American community held the reins of political power. Foner ends his discussion in 1877; but if Reconstruction remained an "unfinished revolution," Crittenden County's African Americans were able to maintain their ability to vote and held political offices for years after Reconstruction ended. The demographic realities of Crittenden County, with its attendant economic and social implications, tested the limits of political accommodation in the county, proving the effectiveness of black political and social organization. Crittenden continued to elect African

⁶ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 355.

Americans throughout the 1880s and early 1890s, until formal disfranchisement laws were enacted statewide.⁷

This period intervening between Reconstruction and disfranchisement is given its closest examination in John Graves' *Town and County: Race Relations in an Urban –Rural Context, Arkansas 1865-1905*.⁸ Graves examines the emergence of fusion governments in the 1880s, the growth of the Agriculture Wheel in Arkansas, and the “Journey Backward” during the 1890s as whites began to enact suffrage laws. Graves agrees with Foner that African Americans were able to maintain their political gains after Reconstruction and asserts that a key factor in protecting these gains was the formation of fusion governments, in which Republicans and Democrats, and blacks and whites, divvied up offices. According to Graves, fusion governments were beneficial to both races in black majority counties. For whites, fusion allowed them to hold powerful posts though in the minority; and for African Americans, it allowed them to rebut charges of “Negro Domination” while actively participating in local politics. Graves’s assessment of fusion government holds true in Crittenden County to the extent that Republicans and Democrats successfully shared elected county offices and that both whites and African Americans benefited from the amelioration of racial tension until the summer of 1888 when Crittenden’s black officials and prominent citizens were exiled from the county. Graves shows that this violent expulsion of Crittenden’s leading blacks represented a crucial element in the demise of fusion government, but it would prove insufficient to end Crittenden’s black political participation or the threat posed by Republican and third party alliances. Closer study shows African Americans continued to be politically active until the 1890s. Because of his extensive research and careful

⁷ Thomas S. Staples, *Reconstruction in Arkansas, 1862-1874* (New York, New York: Columbia University, 1923), 62.

⁸ John Graves, *Town and County: Race Relations in an Urban –Rural Context, Arkansas 1865-1905* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: The University of Arkansas Press, 1990).

attention to detail, other books on Arkansas race relations, such as Grif Stockley's *Ruled by Race* and Fon Louise Gordon's *Caste and Class: The Black Experience in Arkansas, 1880-1920*, have drawn heavily from his work.⁹

Steven Hahn's *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggle in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* builds upon DuBois's and Foner's work and provides a new perspective on the resilience of African American political participation after Reconstruction. Hahn emphasizes that African Americans continually made and remade their own politics; and though influenced by liberal and Republican ideas burnished by the Civil War and Reconstruction, blacks did not have their history made for them and emerged from slavery ready to participate in the franchise. While examining the success of African Americans, Hahn also points to the attempts of white Republicans and white Democrats to limit African Americans' growing political power. Hahn suggests that Reconstruction brought to the forefront the "paramilitary character" of southern politics, which would have clear application to events in Crittenden in 1888. "Paramilitary organization had been fundamental to the social and political order of slavery; it remained fundamental to the social and political order of freedom."¹⁰ Klan-style vigilantism, intimidation, threats of dismissal from employment, election fraud, and riots were various devices to get rid of Republican and black power. Hahn disagrees with Foner's bleak assessment of Reconstruction's aftermath. Hahn acknowledges that the collapse of Reconstruction ushered in a new era of organized violence to keep blacks in their "place" but

⁹ Grif Stockley, *Ruled By Race: Black/White Relations in Arkansas From Slavery to the Present* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2009); Fon Louis Gordon, *Caste and Class: The Black Experience in Arkansas, 1880-1920* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

¹⁰ Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, From Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 266.

strongly asserts that African Americans were not defeated politically by the withdrawal of federal troops and the triumph of conservatism over radicalism. Reconstruction, Hahn states, extended far beyond the traditional 1877 cut-off, as some African Americans were able to negotiate complex power-sharing agreements with Democrats who could not control strong enclaves of African Americans, such as existed in Crittenden County.

Historians have different understandings of how Democrats ultimately met the challenges posed by both third party and black political power in local government in the post-Reconstruction period. Some scholars emphasize the role of violence in the elimination of African Americans and third parties; where as other scholars place greater emphasis on statutory or constitutional disfranchisement.

Appearing in 1971, Lawrence Goodwyn's article, "Populist Dreams and Negro Rights: East Texas as a Case Study," examines the role of political violence in local politics, specifically in Grimes County, Texas. Grimes County had a stable African American political operation, which allowed them to possess a certain amount of bargaining power in local politics as well as withstand Democratic acts of intimidation. Goodwyn finds that poor whites and African Americans shared an animosity toward Democrats, which only intensified during the 1890s. This shared animosity allowed for biracial coalitions to form, which posed a serious threat to the Democratic Party. According to Goodwyn, Democrats sought to split biracial coalitions by raising the cry of "Negro Domination" to dissuade disaffected whites from aligning themselves with blacks. When this failed, Democrats resorted to "extra parliamentary" violence in an attempt to regain political control. Democrats were so successful in their campaigns of violence, which included the murder of African American leaders and a black exodus from the county, that African Americans were no longer, at least in Goodwyn's case study, a factor in politics.

Furthermore, Goodwyn argues that Populism's challenge to racial hierarchy "under duress and intimidation" failed and "under terrorism it completely vanished."¹¹

Goodwyn was not alone in emphasizing the significant role violence played in the suppression of opposition and the maintenance of Democratic Party hegemony. Focusing on Arkansas specifically, Kenneth C. Barnes, in his work, *Who Killed John Clayton? Political Violence and the Emergence of the New South 1861-1893*, shows that illegal political violence was central to New South Democrats obtaining, maintain, and extending power. Barnes uses Conway County, Arkansas as his backdrop to illustrate that in the late nineteenth century prominent members of the local community, first through the Ku Klux Klan and then through the Democratic Party, used violence to regain power. In Conway County, this violence is best evidenced in the murder of congressional candidate, John Clayton. According to Barnes, discontented white yeomen farmers and a vibrant Republican Party bolstered by a growing number of African Americans increasingly tested the Democrat's political authority by rallying behind third parties. The Union Labor Party, consisting of a coalition of Populists; the Knights of Labor; Greenbackers; and other working class groups, threatened Democrats hegemony. In response to this perceived threat, Democrats resorted to flagrant acts, such as stealing ballot boxes, intimidating voters, and even murder to end the political aspirations of poor whites and black farmers. Violence, as Barnes describes, defined and controlled the political system in the Post-Reconstruction South.¹²

Mark Summers's *Party Games: Getting, Keeping, and Using Political Power in Gilded Age Politics* shows how both major parties employed the use of fear, intimidation, and violence

¹¹ Lawrence Goodwyn, "Populist Dreams and Negro Rights: East Texas as a Case Study," *American Historical Review* 76 (December 1971), 1452.

¹² Kenneth C. Barnes, *Who Killed John Clayton? Political Violence and the Emergence of the New South 1861-1893* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998).

when necessary. Central to Summers's text is his discussion on the fear driven violence that crippled full participatory democracy in the South. Addressing Crittenden County specifically, Summers explains clearly that the violent expulsion of African American officeholders occurred because local whites had exacerbated the fear of "Negro Rule." Unlike Goodwyn and Barnes, though, Summers discounts third party activism as futile because third parties encompassed members who had at one point had a strong allegiance to either the Democrat or Republican Party, and these two major parties had the means to lure them back.¹³

Published only three years later, in 2007, Matthew Hild's *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South* rejects Summer's assessment of the inability of third parties to pose a political challenge, arguing that producerist movements, such as the Greenbackers, Agriculture Wheel, and the Knights of Labor were formidable foes of the Democratic Party. But he similarly highlights the significance of violence and fraud in meeting this challenge. Hild claims that these producerist movements happened in Arkansas earlier than in other part of the South because the Agricultural Wheel and the Knights of Labor created a new political party- the Union Labor Party. In 1888, the newly formed Union Labor Party forged an alliance with the Republicans, which essentially united poor whites and blacks together challenging the Democratic Party. Democrats' use of intimidation, fraud, violence, and eventually disfranchisement stifled and ultimately ended dissent.¹⁴

While well aware of the extent of violence and fraud, other scholars focus more on Democrats' use of statutory and constitutional means to finally secure their hegemony. In *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South*,

¹³ Mark Summers, *Party Games: Getting, Keeping, and Using Political Power in Gilded Age Politics* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Matthew Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2007).

1880-1910, J. Morgan Kousser maintains that disfranchisement was necessitated by Democrats' fear that political opposition could possibly gain enough momentum to pose a potential threat to their consolidated power. Kousser explains that the system of disenfranchisement insured absolute control of southern politics by those who stood to benefit the most – black belt Democrats. Kousser describes these Democrats as being affluent, well educated, and sons of former elite planters who had a particular distaste for “black rule” in their own communities and lower class whites who posed a threat through third parties. Kousser explains that Republicans remained a vibrant force in politics after Reconstruction and until disfranchisement. According to Kousser, the implementation of suffrage laws greatly reduced voter participation, both among African Americans and whites. Kousser stresses that in Arkansas, Democrats from black majority counties relied on the secret ballot to screen out African American voters, greatly reducing Republican power. Using quantitative data to measure the impact of disfranchisement, Kousser provides evidence of Democrat's partisan desire for power, showing that while the elimination of blacks from the political process was central to the Democrat's strategy, it was by no means the only goal. Poor whites also represented a potential threat to hegemony. Kousser asserts that Democrats throughout the South first turned to violence and fraud to reduce the influence of opposition votes without prohibiting them from voting; but because this left the possibility that dissenters might gain power, they turned to methods that actually eliminated voters from politics by statute. Kousser claims that the removal of both lower class whites and African Americans from politics ultimately transformed a competitive party system into a one-party Democratic South.¹⁵ In contrast to most of the South, as portrayed by Kousser, where the

¹⁵ J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1974).

threat from below emerged from both whites and blacks; in Crittenden, the threat was uniquely black. In Crittenden, blacks constituted enough of the population that eliminating them would be enough to recapture local control. Consistent with Kousser's formulation, Arkansas's formal disfranchisement measures, the secret ballot and the poll tax, and the white primary had the desired effects on voter turnout among Crittenden's African American population.

Michael Perman's work, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888-1908*, builds upon Kousser's conclusion about the mechanics of the Southern political system but provides a much more detailed examination of how and why disfranchisement developed. For Perman, disfranchisement represented a distinct era in the political history of the South. Throughout his book, he stresses that disfranchisement was not a part of one unified movement launched by Democrats. Instead, Perman claims that disfranchisement evolved differently in each state for multiple and varied reasons. Perman departs from Kousser traditional interpretation by emphasizing that the elimination of African Americans from politics was essential to whites' assertion of racial domination and was paramount in the construction of disfranchisement laws. But, Perman agrees with Kousser in that, in Arkansas, Democrats from black majority counties were instrumental in the formation of disfranchisement statutes that destroyed what vestiges remained of a competitive two-party system.¹⁶

The Crittenden experience shows the centrality of the sort of violence Barnes, Summers, and Hild emphasize to the establishment of Democratic hegemony but also how essential the disfranchisement measures Kousser and Perman study were. Crittenden County's white Democrats believed that removing African American county officials, intimidating black voters, and committing election fraud would deter African American political participation and prevent

¹⁶ Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888-1908* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 59-67.

the Union Labor Party from achieving electoral success. But exiling the local black leadership proved insufficient. The county's African Americans continued to vote after 1888, and some were even elected to state offices. For the county's white Democrats, the surest way to eliminate the threat of "black Republican rule" turned out to be eliminating the African American vote.

Crittenden's postwar struggles illuminate the broader themes outlined by scholars of Southern political and social history. The turmoil that accompanied African American political ascendance in Crittenden reflected the tumult that characterized politics in the post-Reconstruction South. Compromises designed to address the concerns of blacks and whites instead incited violent reactions. Violence may have ended Crittenden's fusion government, but it was insufficient to end black politics and the threat of Republican-third party alliances. Statutory disfranchisement was the only way to eliminate African Americans from Arkansas politics.

Chapter Two:

Crittenden County's Development

The roots of Crittenden County's political struggles in the late 1880s extend back to its establishment in 1825 and are intrinsically linked to its economic development. In the decades before the Civil War, settlers arrived in Crittenden County to take advantage of its rich soil and plentiful water. Crittenden County, along with the rest of Arkansas, was considered a frontier. Slavery was slow to develop in eastern Arkansas because swamps and the dangers that they presented inhibited development for a while, but with rapid migration, beginning in the 1850s and the rise in cotton prices in that decade, a vibrant plantation economy was established in Crittenden County. For many white landholders in Crittenden County, land and slaves endowed them with unquestioned power and authority and were central to their very identity and economic success. Four years of warfare and then Reconstruction fundamentally altered the relationship between African Americans and whites. The new freedom conferred to African Americans and their claims to all the benefits associated with citizenship threatened white control over Crittenden County with seismic implications for the local economy and politics.¹⁷

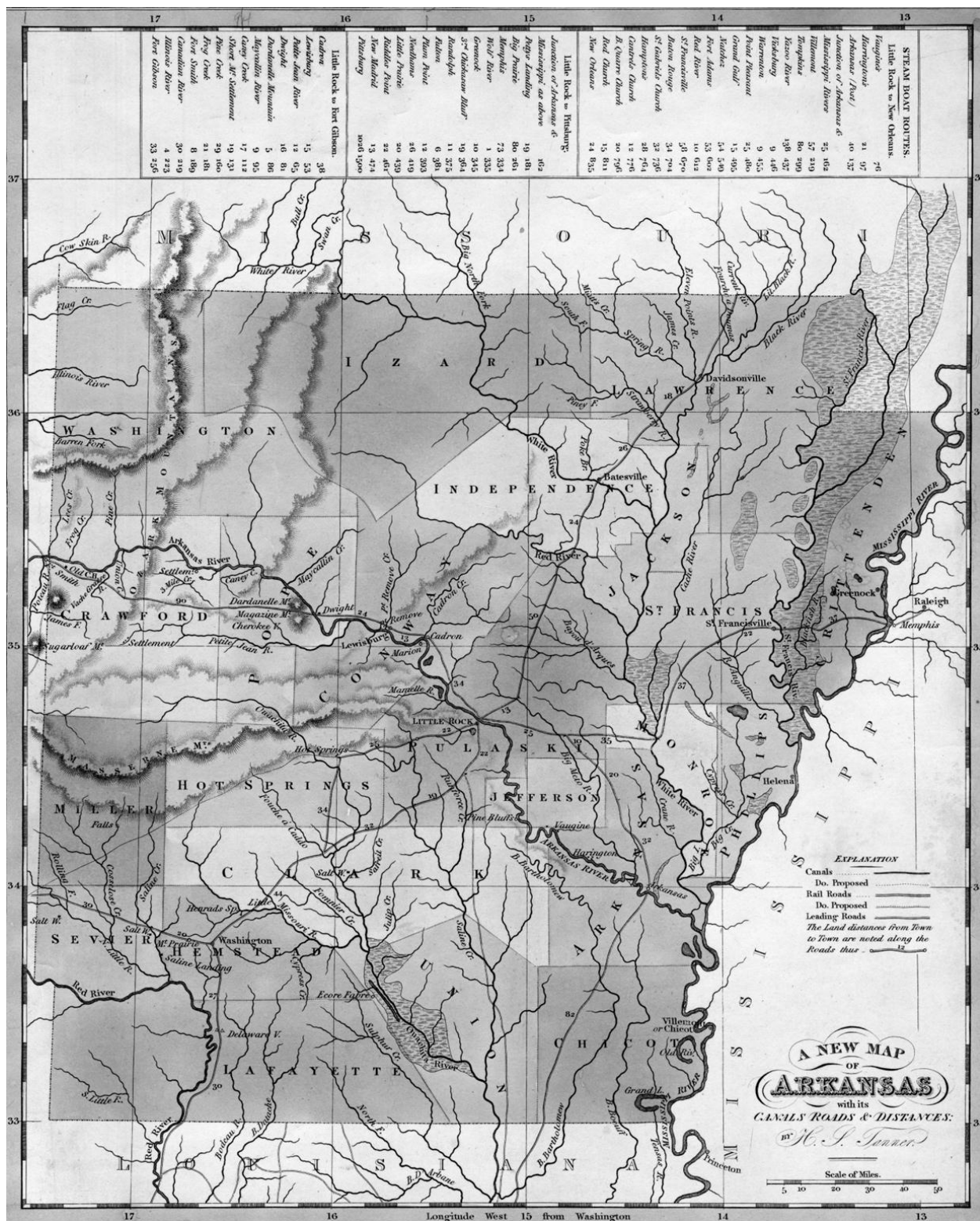
Crittenden County lies in eastern Arkansas on the west bank of the Mississippi River. It has a maximum length of 42 miles and a maximum width of 24 miles. Originally the county was created from Phillips County and included all land between the St. Francis River eastwards toward the Mississippi River and from the Missouri-Arkansas south to four miles north of Marianna, Arkansas. Over a forty-year period, Crittenden County was reduced to half of its

¹⁷ Jeannie Whayne, *Delta Empire: Lee Wilson and the Transformation of Agriculture in the New South* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University, 2011), 12-17.

original size as land was being taken away in order to form other counties including: Mississippi County (1833), Cross County (1862) and Lee County (1863).¹⁸

¹⁸ Margaret Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County* (Marion, Arkansas: n.p., 1991), 2-3, 51; *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas* (Chicago, Illinois: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1890), 391.

Figure 1 Map of Arkansas, 1833



Source: H.L. Tanner, A New Map of Arkansas, 1833

Settlers who decided to come to Crittenden County in the antebellum period were motivated by the fact that Arkansas possessed vast amounts of cheap land that could be cultivated by any enterprising settler. The county's first known white settler was Benjamin Flooy, who came to the county in 1795 and established Flooy's Point.¹⁹ In April 1803, the United States government bought the Louisiana Territory of which Crittenden County was a part of, from the French government for \$15,000,000. Soon thereafter a flood of English-speaking people began to migrate west. In 1806, the first American settlers came to Crittenden from Tennessee, Mississippi, and Kentucky to seek new lives for their families.²⁰ By 1810, two townships existed, Hopefield and St. Francis, and the county had a population of 188 persons, 29 of whom were slaves.²¹ Another wave of immigrants swept into the state in 1814, mostly consisting of veterans who fought in the War of 1812 and who had received warrants or land bounties that entitled them to free land.²² Arkansas became a separate territory in 1819, and Crittenden was officially made a county by Arkansas's Fourth Territorial General Assembly and the approval of Governor George Izard on October 22, 1825. The county had been named in honor of Robert Crittenden, who came to Arkansas from Kentucky in 1819 and served as Secretary of the Territory of Arkansas from 1819 until 1829. Crittenden County's government consisted of only four positions when the county was created: county judge, county clerk, county

¹⁹ Works Project Administration Federal Writers Project 1935-1941, Arkansas History Commission Box 2, Folder 2, Country History, 1; David O. Demuth, "The Burning of Hopefield," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 36 (Summer 1977), 123. Flooy after establishing Flooy's Point accepted a job as an Indian agent at the Spanish post Camp de la Esperanza, which translated means Camp of Hope. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the name Hopefield was adopted. Hopefield was at the site of present-day West Memphis.

²⁰ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas*, 390-391.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

²² WPA, Box 2 Folder 2 County History, 2.

coroner, and sheriff who dually served as the tax collector.²³ These elected officials had the most immediate influence over public life in Crittenden. The county judge held the greatest amount of power because he was the county's chief executive officer. The position of county judge, after 1874, held even greater authority and was, at that point, as Diane Blair suggested perhaps "the closest thing to an uncrowned king that the American political system had to offer."²⁴ The county's first offices holders, in 1825, were T.M. Collins, J. Livingston, W. Goshen, and W.D. Ferguson. These men and other prominent citizens specifically, Charles Kelly, Francis Duvall, John H Bowie, William Cherry, George C. Barfield, Arthur C. Welch, and Isaac Burgett were instrumental in establishing Crittenden County's first seat of government at Greenock, which was later, moved to Marion.²⁵

From the early 1800s, Crittenden County citizens realized the agricultural potential of the loamy, fertile Delta soil. Whites along with their slaves worked to clear land and build farms.²⁶ Crittenden County and Mississippi County are the only two counties in Arkansas that are totally alluvial in character. The Mississippi River and its local tributaries deposited the geological sediment, which exceeds a total thickness of 100 feet, on the surface of Crittenden County. The rich alluvial soil had accumulated over centuries, allowing hardwoods, such as sweetgum, cottonwood, hackberry, pecan, bald cypress, sycamore and many other species of trees to

²³ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 2-3.

²⁴ Diane Blair and Jay Barth, *Arkansas Politics and Government*. 2nd ed. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 222-232; For greater explanation of county government organizations see Henry M. Alexander, *Government in Arkansas: Organization and Function at State, County, and Municipal Levels* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Pioneer Press, 1963).

²⁵ Charlie Daniels, *Historical Report of the Secretary of State 2008* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Arkansas Secretary of State's Office, 2008), 76, 377; WPA, Box 2 Folder 2 County History, 2.

²⁶ Donald P. McNeilly, *The Old South Frontier: Cotton Plantations and the Formation of Arkansas Society, 1819-1861* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 1-7.

flourish.²⁷ Additionally, the county was suitable for an assortment of vegetables, fruit, and grains that supported a variety of livestock in the county. Most importantly, the loamy soil of Crittenden County enabled the cultivation of cotton. This rich soil served as a magnet for farmers who saw the prospects, profitability, and power that cotton could afford them. Since 1810, the county's population had grown to 1,272 people, comprising 1,101 (87%) whites, 165 (13%) slaves, and 6 free blacks in 1830. By 1840 Crittenden's population increased to 1,561, including 1,096 (71%) whites, 454 (29%) slaves, and 11 free blacks.²⁸ In 1840, Crittenden County farmers produced 28 bushels of wheat; 90 bushels of oats; 130 pounds of tobacco; 59 pounds of wool; 69, 669 bushels of corn; and 2,320 pounds of cotton.²⁹ By 1840, it was clear that cotton would be Crittenden County's dominant agricultural product. As more farmers dedicated their land to cotton, more slaves were purchased and brought into Arkansas to cultivate it.

Of all of crops produced by American farmers before the Civil War, cotton became the most important for export. Even though Arkansas was a relatively new state to the "Cotton South," it possessed many characteristics that were found in other southern states that had been involved in cotton cultivation since the late 1700s. Arkansas, like many other southern states, is divided into two primary topographic regions represented by "highlands" and "lowlands." The two regions set the parameters of the culture, politics, and economy of the counties located within its boundaries. The lowlands, including Crittenden County, encouraged the establishment

²⁷ John C. Branner, *Arkansas Geological Survey* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Brown Publishing Co., 1890), 7; James L. Gray, *Soil Survey of Crittenden County, Arkansas; United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service in Cooperation with Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station* (Washington D.C.: Soil Conservation Service, 1974), 2.

²⁸ Bureau of the Census, *Fifth Census of the United States, 1830* (Washington D.C.: Duff Green, 1832), 154-155; Bureau of the Census, *Sixth Census or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States, 1840* (Washington D.C.: Blair and Rives, 1841), 420-421.

²⁹ Bureau of the Census, *Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States, 1840*, 323-325.

of plantation society and thus slavery.³⁰ Counties located in the Arkansas Delta, including Crittenden, were ideal places for farmers to grow cotton because of the fertility of the soil and the five major rivers flowing into the Mississippi River, providing access for steam and flat boats to ship the crops to local and global markets. In Crittenden County, keelboats and flatboats were used until the advent of the steamboat. Using the rivers to transport crops, eventually lead to the creation of many stop along Crittenden's Mississippi River bank, such as Holly Grove, Paradise Island, Bradley's Landing, Mound City Landing, and Bledsoe's Landing.³¹

During the 1850s, Arkansas experienced rapid expansion and showed continual signs of growth. Arkansan Jesse Everett in a letter to his relatives in the North stated, "I would advise any man who has no home of his own to come to the South where it is in the power of everyone that wishes to make himself an independent farmer in one of the most fertile countries on the face of the earth."³² Despite Arkansas being ranked near the bottom of other southern states in cash value of its farms and real personal property, census data confirms the existence of an economic boom throughout the state in the 1850s. According to the census, the average value of farms in Arkansas increased from \$859 in 1850 to \$2,761 in 1860, representing a 221% increase. Additionally, from 1850 to 1860 Arkansas had increased the value of farming implements and machinery by 161%. The per capita value of personal property tax rose from \$117 to \$195, while the per capita value of real estate grew from \$107 to \$361 during the same period.³³

³⁰ McNeilly, *The Old South Frontier*, 1-3; For a greater discussion of the development of cotton in the southeast Arkansas counties see Jeannie Whayne, *Shadows over Sunnyside: An Arkansas Plantation in Transition* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1993).

³¹ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 51.

³² J. Everett to Dear Brother, December 1, 1844, in Sandford-Everett Family File, University of Arkansas Little Rock.

³³ Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Compendium*, Table VIII (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 26; Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Agriculture* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864),

Crittenden County shared a significant part of the state's prosperity, solidifying its transformation into a plantation society, which characteristically supported a higher exploitation of slave labor. In 1850, Crittenden County farmers had improved 8,475 acres of land for cultivation; and by 1860, the number of improved acres increased to 19,897.³⁴ Given that the county consisted of 407,680 acres, the amount of land in cultivation remained relatively small, a reflection of the environmental impediments there.³⁵ Between 1850 and 1860, Crittenden County cultivated acres and the remaining land, whether covered with mixed hardwoods or not, sold at \$10 to \$35 an acre.³⁶ More dramatically, the value of the average farm in the county increased from \$2,506 to \$11,923.³⁷ Furthermore, the goods produced on the farms in 1860 had reached \$33,251,334. Crittenden County during that same decade increased the value of farming implements and machinery from \$24,833 to \$51,871, representing a 109% increase. Labor

6; Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Statistics of Manufacturers*, Table IV (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1853), 43; Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Manufactures*, Table II (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 21; Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: States and Territories*, Table X (Washington D.C. : Government Printing Office, 1853), 553; Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Population*, Table VI (Washington D.C. : Government Printing Office, 1864), 21; Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Compendium*, Table CLXXXIII, Table CCXVI (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1853), 169, 190; Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Statistics* (Washington D.C. : Government Printing Office, 1864), 296, 333. Even though, Arkansas was predominantly an agricultural state, Arkansas's number of manufacturing establishments increased from 261 to 518 with investment rising from \$324, 065 to \$1,316,610 in 1860.

³⁴ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Historical Census Browser," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/> (accessed September, 2010) [hereinafter, "Historical Census Browser"].

³⁵ Daniels, *Historical Report of the Secretary of State 2008*, 377.

³⁶ *Biographical and Historical Memoir of Eastern Arkansas*, 392.

³⁷ Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Compendium*, Table VIII, 26; Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Agriculture*, 6.

statistics further confirm that farming had increased in importance with 70% of the white labor and a majority of the African American population engaged in agriculture.³⁸

By 1860, the per capita value of personal property tax stood at \$757, where as the per capita value of real estate was \$1,071.³⁹ Crittenden County paralleled the state in its development of manufactures. According to the 1850 census information, the county had no manufacturing establishments; but ten years later in 1860, Crittenden County could boast of having invested \$28,600 in businesses that had \$143,880 as the value of its annual product.⁴⁰ Out of the state's forty-four counties with returns to the 1860 census only Washington, Ouachita, and Montgomery Counties had an annual product of higher value than Crittenden.⁴¹

Census data from the period shows that the cotton-based economy was having a positive impact on the material well-being of all its white citizens. Where as an increasing manufacturing base contributed to the expanding economy, its driving force was agriculture. Many Arkansans understood the profitability of raising cotton. One Arkansas farmer writing to his sister emphasized that above any other farm good "cotton is the principal staple of our country and is the only article we can obtain ready money for."⁴² Captivated by the idea that anyone could

³⁸ Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 Manufacturing*, Table II, 21; Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 Population*, Table VI, 21, Table III, 19.

³⁹ Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Statistics of Manufacturers*, Table IV, 43; Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Manufactures*, Table II, 21; Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: States and Territories*, Table X, 553; Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Population*, Table VI, 21; Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Compendium*, Table CLXXXIII, Table CCXVI, 169, 190; Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Statistics*, 296, 333.

⁴⁰ Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Manufacturing*, 21. The businesses mentioned above were all lumber –related businesses.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴² E.F. Strong to Dear Sister, March 28, 1854, in Strong-McColloch Family Papers, Arkansas History Commission.

become a planter and gain considerable wealth from cultivating cotton, people from all over Arkansas and the United States migrated to Crittenden County in hopes of fulfilling their dreams. Crittenden County's population in 1850 comprised 1,842 (70%) whites, 801 (30%) slaves, and 5 free blacks. In that same year, Crittenden County farmers produced 279,200 pounds of cotton and cotton production did increase in the following years.⁴³ In 1852, levee construction was underway in Crittenden to reclaim land for future production.⁴⁴ Over the next decade, Crittenden County population swelled to 4,920 with 2,573 (52%) whites and 2,347 (48%) slaves and produced 1,870,000 pounds of cotton. With a 193% increase in the slave population and a 570% increase in cotton production, Crittenden County clearly had shifted from general farming to plantation agriculture.⁴⁵ Concomitant with this shift in agriculture, the political and social power of large landholders increased. Only 13 (.7% of white population) out of Crittenden County's 69 (3.7% of white population) slaveholders, in 1850, could be consider as planters (owning twenty or more slaves). They were Thomas Bradley, Isaac Burgett, Thomas Collins, William D. Ferguson, George S. Fogleman, Daniel Gibbin [Gubbin], Starkey Hare, John Harklewodes, Richard Higgins, James Merriwether, Reuben T. Redman, Peter Reeve, and Linn Woodward.⁴⁶ According to Goodspeed's *Biographical and Historical Memoir of Eastern Arkansas*, Thomas Bradley had a large plantation eighteen miles north of Memphis and owned ninety-five slaves at

⁴³ Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Population*, 535, 556.

⁴⁴ *Daily National Intelligencer*, February 16, 1852. The *Daily National Intelligencer* was republishing a story that appeared in *The Memphis Eagle and Enquirer*.

⁴⁵ Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Population*, 13, 18; Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Agriculture*, 7.

⁴⁶ Robert Walz, "Arkansas Slaveholdings and Slaveholders in 1850," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 12 (Spring 1953): 42, 52-74.

the time he was member of the State Secession Convention, which met in Little Rock in 1861, but he virulently opposed secession.⁴⁷

Table 1 Crittenden County 1850 Planter Slaveholders

Name	Age	Birth Place	Real Estate	Slaves
Bradley Thomas H.	42	Virginia	30,000	31
Collins, Thomas M	38	Tennessee	35,000	42
Ferguson, William D	50	North Carolina	40,000	40
Fogleman, George S.	49	North Carolina	50,000	32
Gubbin [Gibbin], Daniel	30	Alabama	1,200	31
Hare, Starkey	54	Virginia	25,000	42
Harklewodes, John	35	Missouri	12,600	22
Higgins, Richard	45	Kentucky	40,000	40
Merriewether, James H.	30	Virginia	26,000	32
Redman, Rueben T.	33	Tennessee	20,000	21
Reeves [Reves], Peter G.	56	Virginia	20,000	42
Woodward, Linn	70	Virginia	15,000	34

Source: Robert Walz, "Arkansas Slaveholding and Slaveholders in 1850," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 12 (Spring, 1953), 52-74.

By 1860, 153 citizens of Crittenden County owned slaves (121% increase) and the number of men who could call themselves planters more than doubled to 36 (176 % increase).⁴⁸ The establishment of cotton's regency would reorder the Crittenden County landscape both economically and politically for generations to come.

By the time the Civil War broke out, slavery was deeply embedded in Crittenden County, underlying its economic success, shaping its social spheres, and molding its politics. After the firing on Fort Sumter, Arkansas left the Union on May 6, 1861. Crittenden County citizens, like

⁴⁷ *Biographical and Historical Memoir of Eastern Arkansas*, 391.

⁴⁸ Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 Population*, 12-21; McNeilly, *The Old South Frontier*, 133. Ashley, Clark, Drew, Hot Springs, Monroe, Prairie, Pulaski, St. Francis, and, Saline were the only counties out of the twenty-four counties considered by McNeilly as "lowland counties" that had a lower number of planters owning twenty or more slaves.

Arkansas's population more generally had mixed feeling about secession. But many of the county's citizens believed going to war was necessary in order to stop the North from undermining their slave-based society as well as destroying their economy that was built on the back of slave labor. Mary B. Eskridge of Crittenden County wrote in a letter in 1861 that she believed that white Southerners were fighting a war against "emissaries of the...evil one" who were determined to destroy their way of life.⁴⁹ Even before Arkansas had officially seceded, many Crittenden County men had already begun to mobilize into companies as well as gather supplies. Crittenden County men formed their own unit, Company C "The Crittenden Rangers" of the 6th Battalion Arkansas Cavalry. The Crittenden Rangers were organized at Marion, the county seat, in April 1861 and were enlisted into Confederate service at Pocahontas, Arkansas July 29, 1861.⁵⁰ Men from Crittenden County also eagerly joined the Arkansas 6th (Phifeir') Calvary Battalion, the Arkansas 23rd Infantry Regiment, the 4th Arkansas Brigade, the Arkansas 1st Regiment, the Arkansas 1st Calvary, and the Third Arkansas Calvary, which according to General Nathan Bedford Forrest was the "best regiment the sun shines on."⁵¹

⁴⁹ M.B. Eskridge to W.E. Woodruff, June 4, 1861, William E. Woodruff Papers, Arkansas History Commission.

⁵⁰ *Biographical and Historical Memoir of Eastern Arkansas*, 445; Edward G. Gerdes "6th Battalion Arkansas Calvary" Civil War www.couchgenweb.com/civilwar/6batcavc.html. "On April 20, 1862, twenty-five men of the Crittenden Rangers were transferred to the Helena Artillery, and the remainder of the company was consolidated with Company E, the Border Rangers of White County; and on May 15, 1862 the consolidated Rangers troop became Company A, 2nd Regiment Arkansas Calvary. In January 1863, the company was transferred to the 3rd Arkansas Calvary as Company E." According to this source not many records of the Crittenden Rangers have survived. However, this website provides names, enlistment dates and places, assignments, and pension information for 70 soldiers in Company C "The Crittenden Rangers."

⁵¹ *Biographical and Historical Memoir of Eastern Arkansas*, 395, 403, 428, 435, 445; Stewart Sifakis, *Compendium of the Confederate Armies Florida and Arkansas Vol. 5* (New York, New York: Facts on File, 1992), 58-59,109.

Under the leadership of Major J.F. Earle, O.P. Lyles, Captain John B. Baxter, and Captain Baxter C. Crump, Crittenden County soldiers participated in engagements against federal troops in Iuka, Mississippi, as well as Hatchie Bridge and fought in the battles of Corinth, Shiloh, and Chickamauga. Other Crittenden County soldiers worked on operations on the Mississippi Central Railroad from La Grange, Tennessee to Coffeeville, Mississippi and scouted from Helena to Madison, Arkansas. Furthermore, these soldiers fought skirmishes at both Marion and Madison, Arkansas and in the spring of 1865 patrolled between the Black and St. Francis Rivers for deserters.⁵² Not all of Crittenden County's white men participated in the Civil War, however, Albert Sinclair was among a few in the county who was able to hire a substitute who served for him, while Anthony M. Clement moved his family across the Mississippi River to Humbolt, Gibson County, Tennessee and avoided participation in the war.⁵³

Whether or not Crittenden County's men actively participated in the Civil War, every citizen's life in the county was altered. At the beginning of the Civil War, the railroad shop at Hopefield and the round house were converted into armories for altering and repairing guns. Furthermore, Confederates used Buck Island for arms smuggling operations before Memphis was taken in June 1862.⁵⁴ Even though there were no full-scale engagements in Crittenden County, many citizens experienced personal hardship and irregular warfare.⁵⁵ Captain H.W.

⁵² *Biographical and Historical Memoir of Eastern Arkansas*, 395; John F. Walter, *Capsule of Military Units in the Civil War Vol. 2* (New York, New York: J.F. Walter, 1977), 306-308. Crittenden County soldiers also were involved with the Battle at Brownsville, Kentucky, Rowlett's Station, Kentucky, Port Hudson Siege in Louisiana, and Price's Missouri Raid. For more information on these engagements see Stewart Sifakis, *Compendium of the Confederate Armies Florida and Arkansas Vol. 5*.

⁵³ *Biographical and Historical Memoir of Eastern Arkansas*, 437.

⁵⁴ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 54, 61-62.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 52-54. South of West Memphis is the remains of two confederate rams, the *Jeff Thompson* and the *P.T. Beauregard*, which were lost in a naval engagement in front of Memphis on June 6, 1862. Since this engagement took place on the Mississippi River, historians have

Sebree was the principal owner of various boats that traveled along the Mississippi River from 1859-1876. During the war, three of his boats were destroyed: the *Queen of Memphis*, the *Hartford*, and the *Star Argus*.⁵⁶ While Major James F. Barton was off fighting, Federal troops burned his home leaving his family with nothing. Cynthia A. Ward, writing on behalf of the plantation of J. E. H. Ward, stated that on the evening of October 19th 1862 Lieutenant-Colonel L. Smith's 46th Regiment of Ohio Volunteers burnt his house, slave cabins, cistern house, blacksmith shop, two story stable, horse wagon and cart, and tools. In addition, they burned 50 bushels of corn, 9 bushels of navy beans, 40 bushels of peas, 5 bushels of grass seed, 5 tons fodder, 3 tons hay, and 1,000 feet of lumber. Furthermore, the 46th Regiment took 3 farm animals, 500 pound bale of cotton, silverware, musical instruments, jewelry, surgical instruments, surveyors' platting instruments, private papers, wine, and Reuben and Lizzie- both slaves.⁵⁷ Federal troops also sought to destroy Crittenden County's local economy by burning all cotton held within the county.⁵⁸

The federal occupation of Memphis combined with a strong federal presence in Crittenden disrupted slavery within the county, prompting slaves to flee to Union lines, and produced a visceral reaction among Crittenden's white citizens, which resulted in a full-scale guerilla war.⁵⁹ In January 1863, federal forces on the Mississippi River burned Mound City; and

asserted that no full-scale engagements occurred in Crittenden County even though the remains lie on the Arkansas side of the river.

⁵⁶ *Biographical and Historical Memoir of Eastern Arkansas*, 436.

⁵⁷ Cynthia A. Ward, Itemized List, Walter Lee Brown Collection (MC 1200), Box 1, Folder 2. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville; *Biographical and Historical Memoir of Eastern Arkansas*, 400.

⁵⁸ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union & Confederate Armies Series I- vol. 10 Part III* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), 559.

⁵⁹ Bobby L. Lovett, "African Americans, Civil War, and Aftermath in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 54 (Autumn 1995), 305-358.

then in February 1863, the town of Hopefield was burned in retaliation for the sinking and burning of the *Hercules*, *Grampus No. 2*, and the *Jacob Musselman*, by a Confederate cavalry commanded by Captain J. H. McGehee.⁶⁰ Captain Joseph K Lemon, 63rd Infantry, and a member of one of the four companies sent to Hopefield in 1863 reported they secured a guard around the city and gave the inhabitants one hour notices to leave before “the lighted torch was applied and the place was consumed.”⁶¹ According to the *Memphis Daily Bulletin*, “The little white houses, with their green shutters, and little fenced yards so peaceful as we gazed upon them from the bluffs yesterday, are at this moment smoking cinders or red pillars of vengeful fire [...] The village at sunset was a heap of smoking ruin and blackened chimneys. The work of devastation was done. Poor Hopefield.”⁶²

By the end of the Civil War, Crittenden County was in disarray. Farm operations had either slowed down or ceased during the war. Many of the able-bodied men enlisted into service had either died during the war or right after fighting had ceased, while other simply left the county. Intense guerilla activity had laid waste to Crittenden County; and with their farms destroyed and cotton burned, citizens were forced to start over. The Confederate loss left a memory of vicious conflict between the North and the South, but what was perhaps more important was that a Confederate loss freed former slaves and ushered in a change in Crittenden’s power structure. A new relationship had to be formed between whites and African Americans following the war. Whites responded to this new social paradigm with violence.

⁶⁰ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 52-54; WPA box 2, Folder 2, Country History, 4; *Memphis Appeal* January 3, 1863: For further detail regarding Captain J. H. McGehee’s report on action in Crittenden County and the burning of Hopefield see Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 100 ; David O Demuth “The Burning of Hopefield,” 124-128.

⁶¹ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 101.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 102.

Crittenden County at the close of the Civil War and the beginning of Reconstruction had already begun experiencing a population shift that had lasting effects in shaping the county's history for decades. From 1860 to 1870, Crittenden's white population fell sharply from 2,573 to 1,253--a 51% loss.⁶³ But, its black population rose. African Americans by 1870 represented 67% of Crittenden's total population and for the first time the county had a black majority.⁶⁴

⁶³ Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population*, 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

Table 2 White Populations of Lowland Delta Counties

County Name	1860	1870	Percent (+/-)
Arkansas	3923	3982	1.50%
Ashley	4829	4278	-11%
Chicot	1722	1816	5.40%
Crittenden	2573	1253	-51%
Desha	2655	2185	-18%
Drew	5581	6106	9.40%
Jefferson	7813	5556	-29%
Mississippi	2434	2662	9.30%
Monroe	3431	5135	50%
Phillips	5931	4871	-18%
Pulaski	8187	18348	124%
St. Francis	6051	4268	-29%

Source: Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population, 13-14*

Table 3 Black Populations of Lowland Delta Counties

County Name	1860	1870	Percent (+/-)
Arkansas	4921	4212	-14%
Ashley	3761	3764	
Chicot	7532	5393	-28%
Crittenden	2347	2575	9.70%
Desha	3784	3934	3.90%
Drew	3497	3854	10%
Jefferson	7158	10167	42%
Mississippi	1461	971	-34%
Monroe	2226	3200	44%
Phillips	8945	10501	17%
Pulaski	3512	13708	299%
St. Francis	2621	2446	-6.70%

Source: Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population, 13-14*.

During the 1860s and 1870s, Arkansas gained more new African American residents than any other southern state. Migration of African Americans into Arkansas was triggered, in part, by the Southern Homestead Act of 1866, which opened up government land for cultivation. Labor agents also recruited African Americans to come to Arkansas and work on plantations.⁶⁵ In addition to economic motivations, African Americans came to Arkansas to escape brutal violence in other southern states.⁶⁶ The African Americans who migrated to Crittenden, as well as the African Americans who were already living there, had to continually deal with social and economic changes that were imbedded within the process of Reconstruction.

One organization that played a key role in African Americans' adjustment from slave to freedman was the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, which was established by Congress in 1865 and in Arkansas in June 1865. With the help of the local office of the Bureau, located in Marion, Crittenden County's African American population found ways to make a living by working as bakers, porters, shoemakers, hospital attendants, plantation laborers, cooks, and teachers. Some African Americans established grocers, merchant stores, and printing offices; and by August 1867, a group of them had saved \$250 to purchase a building for a school and a church to support their continual population growth.⁶⁷

Crittenden County had a strong and growing African American community aided in part by a stable and active local Freedmen's Bureau. This perceived stability, however, only served to obscure the racial antagonisms lurking within the community. In a report to his superior J.R.

⁶⁵ Jeannie Whayne, *A New Plantation South: Land, Labor, and Federal Favor in Twentieth Century Arkansas* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 61-62.

⁶⁶ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 185.

⁶⁷ Randy Finley, "The Freedman's Bureau in Arkansas" (PhD diss. University of Arkansas 1992), 30; Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Record Group, 105, Washington D.C. National Achieves, Bureau Record Field Offices, J.R. Walker to T.D. Elliot, August 1, 1867.

Walker, Crittenden's local Bureau agent declared that a "very good feeling existed between a majority of the whites and colored citizens, but there is a number of the lowest order of whites who [...] neglect no opportunity when it presents itself with safety to annoy and molest industrious freedmen."⁶⁸ The Freedmen's Bureau's success in helping Crittenden's African American population is hard to assess because the Bureau's goals were unclear and many citizens within the county, including Bureau agents themselves, held disparaging opinions of the capabilities of African Americans. One agent, E.G. Barker, in a letter to T.D. Elliot, chairman of the Committee of Freedmen's Affairs in Washington D.C., remarked that "colored people having been suddenly changed from slaves to that of citizens of the U.S. are but children in their new position, and easily led astray."⁶⁹ Even though racist and paternalistic ideas informed many of the Bureau's actions, there were agents who recognized that African American were fully capable of functioning within society when provided with equal opportunities. But the idea of equality in any form antagonized the white community and reduced the Bureau's effectiveness. Furthermore, Crittenden's white citizens loathed the intrusion of federal power into what they perceived as local autonomy and in many instances resorted to intimidation and acts of violence in response to this intrusion. Despite his condescending view of freed people, agent E.G. Barker was riddled with buckshot in his face and hands when someone fired through the window of his room, prompting him to ask for a leave of absence.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, J.R. Walker to Elliot July 23, 1867.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Barker to Elliot January 12, 1868.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Barker to Bennett August 14, 1868.

Violence committed by local whites in Crittenden also was directed toward the county's African American population.⁷¹ Because Crittenden County was a black majority county and offered African Americans greater opportunities to establish a thriving community, Crittenden's African Americans were met with hostility by local whites. According to the *Arkansas Weekly Gazette*, "the enfranchisement of the Negro has stirred the slimy sediment of society."⁷² Just as lower class and elite whites resented the Freedmen's Bureau agents, Crittenden County whites detested the advancements of African Americans living within what they believed to be their county. Additionally, they believed that the failure of their crops and the hardship that they were enduring were caused by "the Bureau and the 'Nigger'."⁷³ The intimidation and violence that was used in Crittenden County to hamper the success of the Freedmen's Bureau as well as limit the advancements of the newly freed slaves intensified when the Ku Klux Klan appeared in Arkansas in 1868, just as Marion bureau agent E.G. Barker noted a rise in racial prejudice.⁷⁴ Crittenden County's highly organized Ku Klux Klan inflicted violence against both African Americans and whites who supported the Republican Party in the county, in many cases acting as the defacto military wing of the Democrat Party. In a report written to his superior, E.M. Main explained that in Crittenden "the Ku Klux are thoroughly organized armed and equipped and well mounted numbering about 135" and that every night they sent out a detail to murder

⁷¹ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden*, 80-81. Out of Crittenden County's twelve townships, five townships held a greater black to white ratio, while only four townships held a greater white to black ratio.

⁷² *Arkansas Weekly Gazette*, May 14, 1867.

⁷³ Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Barker to Elliot January 12, 1868.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, "Record of the Assistant Commissioner for Arkansas" Station Book 1865-1869. Barker to Bennett May 31, 1868; John P. Walker Report July 23, 1867.

and run off freedmen.⁷⁵ The *Arkansas Gazette* reported on March 3, 1868 that the Ku Klux Klan had killed six men in ten days and further reported that a number of murders that had taken place in the county that could more than likely be attributed to Klan activity.⁷⁶ Many white citizens, after suffering the pains of the Civil War, detested violence and believed that “the bullet and assassins [held] the county in terror.”⁷⁷ In response to the Klan’s activities and corruption surrounding the 1868 November elections that occurred throughout the state, Governor Powell Clayton declared martial law in ten counties including Crittenden from November 1868 to March 1869 to control the violence. Clayton divided the state into four military districts: Northeast, Northwest, Southwest, and Southeast. Crittenden County belonged to the northeast military district. After military districts had been established, Clayton named district militia commanders and ordered them to occupy counties that were being terrorized the Ku Klux Klan and to restore civil order with the help of citizens that had been conscripted into militia service.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the Arkansas legislature supported the governor’s actions and passed “An Act to Maintain the Public Peace.” The act mandated that members of organizations, such as the Knight of the White Camellia and the Ku Klux Klan, could be subject to fines no less than five hundred dollars and imprisoned for a period of time no less than a year and no more than ten years.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Main to Mills October 31, 1868; Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 102.

⁷⁶ *Arkansas Gazette* March 10, 1868.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, March 10, 1868.

⁷⁸ Charles Rector, “D.P. Upham, Woodruff County Carpetbagger,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 59 (Spring 2000), 68. In addition to Crittenden County, the Northeast District was made up of Craighead, Cross, Fulton, Green Independence, Izard, Jackson, Lawrence, Mississippi, Monroe, Phillips, Poinsett, Prairie, Randolph, Sharp, White, Woodruff, and part of Desha County.

⁷⁹ *Acts, Resolutions, and Memorials of the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas passed at the Adjourned Session, 1868-1869* (Little Rock, Arkansas, 1869), 63-69.

Command of the Northeast District was placed under the control of General D.P. Upham. Klan activity was especially intense in Crittenden County because the Klan in Memphis reinforced their brethren across the river. On December 11, 1868, Upham ordered the Second Regiment of the Arkansas State Guard, under the command of Colonel James T. Watson, to suppress Klan violence. Watson organized four companies of infantry: one Helena company, one St. Francis company, and two Crittenden companies. All Watson's men, excluding two lieutenants, were African Americans, and many were veterans of the Union army.⁸⁰ While in Crittenden, Watson's faced a strong Klan resistance. In an account written to Governor Clayton, Watson stated that "Many citizens of the county, both Republican and Democrats, told me the organization of the Ku Klux Klan was so nearly universal that no man, if he were opposed to the existing state of affairs, dared to speak to his neighbor on the subject. Consequentially, no organized movement could be made, and there was no possible solution of the matter except by martial law."⁸¹

Because Watson's militia consisted mainly of African Americans, with the exception of a few white officers, racial tension flared. The very presence of African Americans in positions of authority condoned by the state government angered and frightened many white citizens. Racial tension between African Americans and whites grew deeper since African Americans in Crittenden County joined the militia, and because they joined the militia, many were threatened with dismissal from their work, which would then make them subject to vagrancy laws. Some

⁸⁰ *Biographical and Historical Memoir of Eastern Arkansas*, 394; Charles Rector, "D.P. Upham, Woodruff County Carpetbagger," 70; Powell Clayton, *The Aftermath of the Civil War in Arkansas* (New York, New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1915), 126-127; *Daily Cleveland Herald*, January 23, 1869; Trelease, *White Terror*, 161-168.

⁸¹ Clayton, *The Aftermath of the Civil War in Arkansas*, 127-135.

were outright physically abused.⁸² Whites in the county believed that the “Devil’s loose in Arkansas” and that African Americans were ready to exact revenge for years of enslavement.⁸³ Newspapers inflamed these passions by printing articles, such as the one that appeared in the *Memphis Appeal*, claiming that Clayton’s black militia was four hundred strong and roaming the county sacking stores and private dwellings and jailing many prominent citizens.⁸⁴ Additionally, the *Appeal* and the *Avalanche* published daily what were purported to be accounts of killings that had happened in Crittenden County, listing as victims people who had never lived in the County.⁸⁵ Inflammatory at the very least, articles such as these appeared in the *Arkansas Gazette* and the *Memphis Appeal* throughout 1869. The coverage focused extensively on the heavy handed tactic of the black militia but left unmentioned the actions of white citizen that may have prompted such extreme actions. White citizens of Crittenden County had acknowledged the presence of the Klan yet never officially renounced Klan activity and tactics. E.M. Main believed Crittenden County’s situation was worsening:

Mounted men in disguise, - Night Rider, Ku Klux, or what you please to call them, - raided and re-raided the county, leaving a trail of blood wherever they went and filling the land with the wail of orphan and the agonized shriek of wife and mother. Then it was that the cry was raised, ‘Murder and no law!’ Then it was that the colored citizens, - the proscribed ‘Yankee and Nigger,’ – fell victims of this thirst for blood. Specific cases with incontrovertible proof were not lacking, but the law was paralyzed, - the public conscience was dead.⁸⁶

⁸² Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Main to Mills August 31, 1868.

⁸³ *Arkansas Gazette*, January 6, 1869.

⁸⁴ *Memphis Appeal*, January 8, 1869, January 25, 1869, March 25, 1869; *Arkansas Gazette*, January 6, 1869, January 12, 1869, January 27, 1869, January 30, 1869, March 30, 1869; Trelease, *White Terror*, 168.

⁸⁵ Clayton, *The Aftermath of the Civil War in Arkansas*, 128-129.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

Tired of living in fear, a group of Crittenden's leading citizens sent a resolution to Governor Clayton renouncing their involvement with the Klan and demanding an investigation into the violence engulfing the county.⁸⁷ In response to this request, Clayton visited the county in an effort to resolve the issues outlined in the resolution. Clayton found 228-militia men "who were under good control and discipline" but also found four men guilty of illegal conduct that were subsequently tried and executed for their crimes.⁸⁸ Upham's militia -- and later on Colonel E. M. Main's militia -- made several arrests of local Klansmen from December 1868 to March 1868. Included in the arrests were four men who were apprehended for attempted murder of E.G. Barker and three men charged with several murders. Among other arrested were the sheriff of Crittenden, who was released from custody after he submitted his resignation, and Major Joshua F. Earle, leading figure in the Democratic Party and head of the local Klan, who was acquitted of all crimes by the civil court in Crittenden.⁸⁹

Scattered Klan activity continued in Crittenden County after Clayton lifted martial law but became less reported on by the *Arkansas Gazette* and Memphis newspapers. Reconstruction in Arkansas ended with the Brooks-Baxter War in 1874. Republicans led by Governor Clayton were able to maintain control throughout the state as long as ex-Confederates were disenfranchised. In 1872, a split in the Republican Party pitted Joseph Brooks against Elisha Baxter. Baxter won the election and took office while the election was being contested. During Baxter's tenure as governor, a key piece of legislation was passed restoring voting privileges to ex-Confederates.⁹⁰ Brooks charged that the election had been fraudulent and that he had, in fact, been elected governor, and physically expelled Baxter from the governor's office. Baxter

⁸⁷ *Arkansas Gazette*, January 27, 1869.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, January 28, 1869; February 7, 1869.

⁸⁹ Trelease, *White Terror*, 168-171. Many Klansmen fled to Memphis, Tennessee to avoid arrest.

⁹⁰ Thomas Staples, *Reconstruction in Arkansas*, 421.

appealed to President Ulysses S. Grant and in May 1874, the president recognized Baxter as governor. Three days later the Arkansas legislature passed a bill calling for an election for a constitutional convention. Given the enfranchisement of white Democrats, many of them former Confederates, the convention was heavily dominated by those who wished to overturn Reconstruction. Excitement surrounded the convention. Many believed that they could reverse what they saw as corruption during Reconstruction by “[chopping] down every fraudulent elected officer, every usurper, and every ballot-box stuffer.”⁹¹

By July 1874, the constitutional convention was approved and delegates were to convene in Little Rock. Even though most of them were white Democrats, there were some African American Republicans who were elected to the convention. Crittenden County, because of its relatively heavy African American population, was one of six counties represented by an African American.⁹² One of the convention’s goals was for citizens to enact more direct control over public officials by reducing terms of office. In addition, the convention sought to make county governments powerful within the state, increase the number of county offices from two to ten, give a significant amount of power to county judges, and require all county office holders to be elected rather than appointed by the governor.⁹³ The convention completed work on the constitution in early August and submitted it for ratification in an election set for October 13, 1874. When Republicans assembled for their state convention in Little Rock on September 15th, party leaders discouraged cooperation with Democrats in the adoption of the constitution.⁹⁴ The following day Powell Clayton, in a speech, denounced the new constitution by saying it was

⁹¹ *Little Rock Daily Republican*, May 28, 1874,

⁹² Walter Nunn, “The Constitutional Convention of 1874,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 27 (Autumn 1968), 188.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁹⁴ *Arkansas Gazette*, September 16, 1874.

“born in adultery and has written across its forehead -bastard.”⁹⁵ Despite the rejection by majorities in Chicot, Crittenden, Desha, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Phillips County (all counties with heavy black populations), the new constitution was approved on October 13, 1874 and with a new election the Democrats swept all state offices. Thus, Arkansas had been redeemed.⁹⁶

With redemption Crittenden County’s politics descended into turmoil. Despite the strength Democrats seemed to have in Arkansas politics, Republicans held the upper hand in Delta counties that had a large African American majority population and could, thus, elect powerful local officeholders of their choice. These counties were strong areas for “black” rule. It was only the Democrat’s primacy in the local economy that allowed them to wield influence. This economic authority gave Democrats power to control African American labor as well as the means to sponsor political events that were designed to promote and legitimize their socio-political status.⁹⁷ But with the proportion of African Americans in the population rapidly growing, increasing black political power had the potential to undermine their control over labor.

Crittenden County’s African American citizens took an active interest in politics. Adam Johnson was the first African American Republican to represent Crittenden County in the Arkansas House of Representatives in 1871. He would serve again in the Arkansas House in 1873.⁹⁸ In 1872, Crittenden County citizens elected their first black officials to the local government. B. Westmoreland was elected as coroner and William L. Copeland was elected

⁹⁵ Ibid., September 17, 1874.

⁹⁶ James Harris Fain, “Political Disenfranchisement of the Negro in Arkansas” (MA thesis., University of Arkansas, 1961).

⁹⁷ Carl Moneyhon, “The Impact of Civil War in Arkansas: The Mississippi River Counties” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 51 (Summer 1992), 105-118; Eric R. Wolf, *Envisioning Power: Ideologies of Dominance and Crisis* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1999), 5-6, 275-280.

⁹⁸ Blake Wintory, “African American Legislators in the Arkansas General Assembly, 1868-1893,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 65 (Winter 2006), 399-401, 421; *Little Rock Daily Republican*, February 4, 1873.

assessor. The county's citizens reelected both of these men. In 1874, under the new constitution, Westmorland was elected treasurer. A white man killed Westmoreland before his term had expired; but the circumstances surrounding his death are unknown. Copeland was elected in 1873 and then again in 1874 to the Arkansas House of Representatives. Other African Americans elected for the 1874 - 1876 term were Daniel W. Lewis, circuit clerk; John Terry, coroner; J. Brown, surveyor; and Jubilee Adams, assessor. Crittenden County would later elect four more African Americans to serve in the Arkansas House of Representatives: James Wofford (1877), Daniel W. Lewis (1883), Sandy Shepard Odum (1887), and George W. Watson (1891).⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 34; Wintory, "African American Legislators in the Arkansas General Assembly, 1868-1893," 400-429.

Table 4 Crittenden County African American Legislators, 1871-1891

Legislator	Term	Birth	Antebellum Status	Occupation	Literate
Copeland, William L.	1873 (H) 1874-1875 (H)	Ohio (ca. 1846)	Free	Lawyer, Policeman, County Assessor	Yes
Johnson, Adam	1871 (H) 1973 (H)	Mississippi (1825/1830)	Slave	Farmer, Lawyer, Teacher	Yes
Lewis, Daniel W.	1883 (H)	Kentucky (1851)	Slave	Teacher, Lawyer, County Judge, Justice of the Peace, Merchant, County Clerk	Yes
Odum, Sandy Shepard	1887 (H)	Mississippi (1852/1858)	Slave (?)	Teacher, Baptist Minister	Yes
Watson, George W.	1891 (H)	Mississippi	Slave (?)	Deputy Sheriff, Magistrate, Teacher, Farmer	Yes
Wofford, James	1877 (H)	Georgia (1843/1846)	Slave (?)	Farmer, Principal, County Assessor	Yes

Source: Blake Wintory, "African American Legislators in the Arkansas General Assembly, 1868-1893," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 65 (Winter 2006), 400-429; *Little Rock Daily Republican*, February 4, 1873.

The 1878 election in Crittenden was one of the most contentious and hard-fought campaigns in county history. Almost every office up for election had a Democrat and a black Republican candidate. L.P. Berry, a Marion attorney, recalled that when the time came to count the vote some young white men pushed their way through a crowd of 500 armed white men and seized the returns that were overwhelmingly Republican and, presumably, destroyed them. Furthermore, Berry indicated that he had been “present at a number occasions when excitement was very high and danger evident” but had “never seen any just like this.”¹⁰⁰ As a result of this incident, the county offices were filled by R.B. Barton, T.W. Gibbs, Samuel Floyd, W.F. Beattie, Shipp Cobb, S. A. Martin, and L.P. Berry; all of whom were white Democrats.¹⁰¹

In hopes of squelching these violent political struggles and maintaining racial concord, both Republicans and Democrats were encouraged to cooperate and make political concessions - the Democrats to Republicans’ growing numbers and the Republicans to Democrats’ wealth and firepower. “Fusion”, not entirely unique to Arkansas, was a principle encouraged by Arkansas’s first Redeemer governor, Augustus H. Garland, and was a compromise between Republicans and Democrats involving power-sharing agreements. This fusion arrangement emerged in various Delta counties and in heavily black areas in other southern states. By meeting prior to an election, each party would allot political offices on the ballot, allowing the candidate to run uncontested. Fusion insured that a single party did not dominate local government. In Jefferson County, Republicans were generally named sheriff, circuit clerk, and three representatives in the lower statehouse, while Democrats chose the county judge, county clerk,

¹⁰⁰ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 34.

¹⁰¹ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 34; *Historical Report of the Secretary of State 1968* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Secretary of State, 1968), 525.

the assessor, and the state senator positions.¹⁰² Crittenden County by 1880 followed a similar arrangement. Republicans prior to the 1888 election conceded to the Democrats the positions of sheriff, treasurer, and surveyor while taking for themselves the offices of circuit clerk, county judge, assessor, and a representative in the state legislature.¹⁰³

This method of reducing racial and political tension was a pragmatic political accommodation that did not satisfy either race. African Americans reluctantly adopted it in hopes of maintaining harmony and forestalling violence. Many whites feared that dividing offices with African Americans would undermine their political success at the state level. After 1880, it was clear that in Crittenden County African American Republicans controlled how the county would vote in gubernatorial and state elections. According to the *Biennial Report of the Secretary of the State of Arkansas*, Republican candidates in the 1882 and 1884 gubernatorial elections received an overwhelming majority of votes cast in the county over their Democrat opponents. Even though neither of the Republican candidates were elected governor, Crittenden County African Americans held considerable power at the local level because of their growing voting majority.¹⁰⁴

In addition, many white politicians who directly benefited from such fusions disliked dealing with black leaders on an equal plane. But, ironically, the 1874 Constitution designed by

¹⁰² Graves, *Town and County*, 54, 65.

¹⁰³ Committee on Contested Elections, *Featherston vs. Cate*, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890. H. Rep. 306, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Secretary of State, *Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Arkansas October 1, 1880* (Little Rock, Arkansas: James Mitchell, 1880), 34; Secretary of State, *Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Arkansas October 1, 1882* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Mitchell & Bettis, 1882), 74; Secretary of State, *Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Arkansas October 1, 1884* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Mitchell & Bettis, 1884), 16. In Crittenden County in 1882, Republican candidate for Governor, W.D. Slack, received 1,553 votes, while Democrat candidates, James H. Berry, received 558. Two years later Republican nominee for governor, Thomas Boles, won 1,323 votes in Crittenden County, while Democratic nominee, Simon P. Hughes, won only 642 votes.

the Democrats to protect county officials from state government had accentuated black electoral power at the local level by limiting the power of the state to intervene. By decentralizing Arkansas government, such as by eliminating the power of the governor to appoint county officials, it transferred authority back to the county electorate. A letter in the *Arkansas Gazette* in 1888 by an anonymous writer illustrates this point by complaining “the greatest blunder that Arkansas made was the abolition of the Constitution of 1868 [...] the honest, intelligent men of Eastern Arkansas are as completely disenfranchised and debarred from office by the present constitution.”¹⁰⁵ Continuing, the writer professed that the use of “fraud and force [...] desperate as these remedies are” and “distasteful as they are to every honest man they are not to be indiscriminately condemned so long as self-preservation continues to be the first law of nature.”¹⁰⁶

Such opinions were strongly held by many of the white citizens in Crittenden County. Blacks outnumbered whites in the county, and Republicans usually won county elections by overwhelming numbers. The fusion agreement reached in 1888 in Crittenden would usher in four black Republicans to major county offices and minor ones as well: Daniel W. Lewis, a former representative as judge, David Ferguson as clerk, J.R. Rooks as assessor, and S.S. Odom as a representative.¹⁰⁷ The white Democrat county officials named were W.F. Werner as sheriff and A.H. Ferguson as treasurer.

The Civil War and Reconstruction altered the relationship between landowners and their property, ultimately altering race-relations. The Civil War had ended slavery and offered African Americans freedom to make a life for themselves, while at the same time depriving former slave-

¹⁰⁵ Thomas S. Staples, *Reconstruction in Arkansas*, 62.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁰⁷ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 34.

owners of their free labor. If the Civil War had not made clear the deep-seated racial tension permeating the county, Reconstruction did. This period in Crittenden County's history marked vast gains for the African American community but also increased intimidation and violence by the emergent Ku Klux Klan. After the Democrats had swept the state elections in 1874, they then controlled Arkansas's government. Arkansas had been redeemed; and in many counties, African Americans, now left stranded by the federal government, fell back to a subjugated position within their counties. Crittenden was unusual in that it was a black majority county; and by sheer numbers, African Americans were able to control, through elections, their county government and have strong influence in statewide elections. This, however, provoked violence in Crittenden over politics. Violence forced Crittenden County to adopt a "fusion" government sharing offices between Republicans and Democrats. This arrangement seemed to work in Crittenden County until the late 1880s when racial hatred was coupled with the rise the Union Labor Party, which threatened the overall control of the Democratic Party in Arkansas.

Chapter Three: Redemption

Even as an uneasy truce prevailed between whites and blacks, Crittenden's economy continued to grow. Just as before the Civil War, Crittenden County's economy remained rooted in agriculture and cotton production continued to expand throughout Reconstruction. Lands that had been confiscated by Union troops were returned, in most cases, to their previous owners; and during the Freedmen's Bureau tenure in Arkansas, agents negotiated contracts between landowners and their black laborers. This system of contractual labor gave way to a new labor arrangement based on sharecropping and tenancy, which defined the relationship between Crittenden County's white and black populations. As tenancy spread throughout Arkansas, more farmers found themselves mired in debt. A multitude of economic problems forced many farmers to confront their issues by embracing third-party politics. With the rise of the Agricultural Wheel and the Union Labor Party in the late 1880s and the possibility of their electoral alliance with Republicans, Democrats in Crittenden had not only to deal with their minority status locally but fear for their party's power at the state level. Partially because of fear, partially because of abhorrence of what they saw as "Negro Rule," Democrats took it upon themselves to use whatever means proved necessary to take control of the county.

The importance of cotton to Crittenden's economy increased exponentially in the 1870s and 1880s after railroads connected rural Arkansas to the rest of the United States. The expansion of the market encouraged Crittenden County farmers who were not yet engaged in large scale cotton production to now shift from subsistence to commercial production.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Carl Moneyhon, *Arkansas and the New South 1874-1929* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: The University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 4; *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas*, 392.

According to the census, by 1880, Crittenden County had 24,413 acres of land in cotton, produced 16,039 bales, and devoted 55% of its tilled land to cotton production.¹⁰⁹ Crittenden County's dependence on cotton grew through the 1880s, and census data confirms its dependence indicating that by 1890 Crittenden County had 44,309 acres of land in cotton, produced 19,186 bales, and devoted 70% of its 63,216 improved acres to cotton production.¹¹⁰

Like other counties in Arkansas, Crittenden County farmers contracted with tenants to work shares. Most tenants were share-renters or sharecroppers, and the terms of their contract varied depending on their agreement with their landowner. The share-renter owned his own livestock and implements and the share-renter paid 1/4 of his cotton and 1/3 of his corn to the lien holder. Sharecroppers, on the other hand, lacked equipment and capital, which was provided by the landlord. It is important to note the most significant difference between the share-renter and the sharecropper: the sharecropper did not own the crop; the lien holder owned the crop and paid the sharecropper 1/2 of his corn and 1/2 of the cotton crop. This arrangement gave the lien owner economic power over his tenant but, perhaps more importantly, provided a lever with which political control could be exerted as well. Realizing the control merchants could exert over the crop-lien system, many landowners became merchants who could then extend credit directly

¹⁰⁹ Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Report on the Production of Agriculture* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883), 32-33, 214; Eugene W. Hilgard, *Report on Cotton Production in the United States* (Washington D.C. : Government Printing Office, 1884), 3

¹¹⁰ Hilgard, *Report on Cotton Production in the United States*, 3-5; Bureau of the Census, *Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890: Statistics of Agriculture* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Press, 1895), 393.

to their tenants. The number of farms worked by tenants increased slightly from 701 out of 910 (77%) in 1880 to 1,070 out of 1,367 (78%) in 1890 and 1,720 out of 2,008 (86%) in 1900.¹¹¹

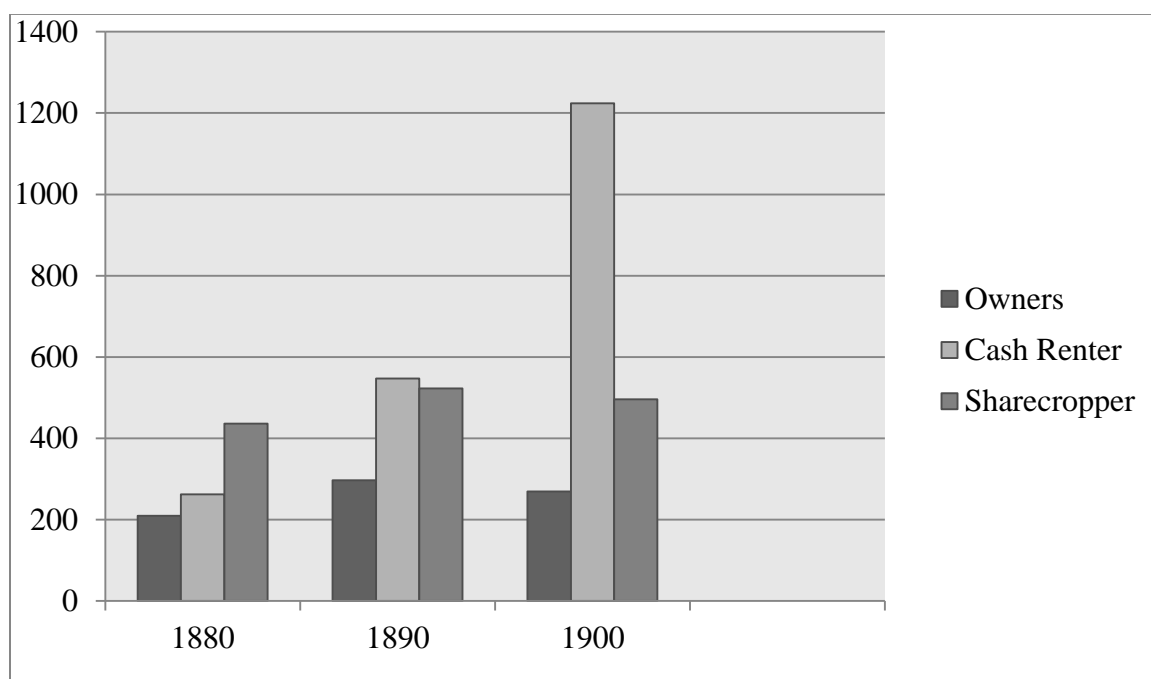
Figure 2 Total Farms Operated by Owners, Cash Renters, Sharecroppers, 1880-1900

Year	Owner	Cash Renter	Sharecropper
1880	209	262	439
1890	297	547	523
1900	269	1224	496

Source 2: Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880 Agriculture*, 32-33. Bureau of the Census, *Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890, Agriculture* 122. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Agriculture* 60.

¹¹¹ Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Agriculture*, 32-33; Historical Census Browser University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center Accessed April 14, 2006, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus./index.html>.

Figure 3 Total Farms Operated by Owners, Cash Renters, Sharecroppers, 1880-1900



Source 3: Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880 Agriculture*, 32-33. Bureau of the Census, *Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890, Agriculture*, 122. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Agriculture*, 60.

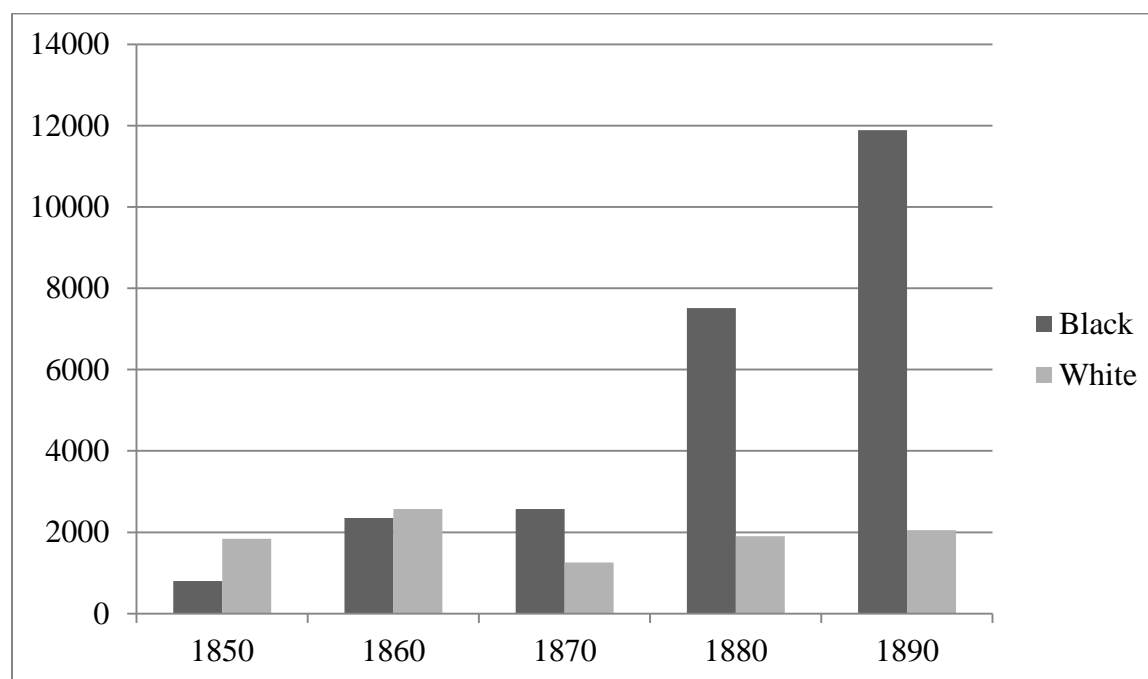
African American tenants in particular were more susceptible to the abuses of the crop-lien system. Contract agreements were in many cases verbal, instead of in written form as they had been under the Freedmen's Bureau, and end-of-the-year accounting left African Americans with no profit, or worse, substantial debt. African American tenants' situations were made worse by the fact that many of them were illiterate and were not able to interpret their creditor's bookkeeping. Out of 852 persons described as illiterate in 1870 in Crittenden County 802 (94%) were African American. African Americans who were able to find fault with the creditor's records had no recourse, as they had before with the Freedman's Bureau. There is no evidence

that local blacks who were landowning farmers treated illiterate blacks any better than white landowners, but of course there is no evidence to suggest that they did not either.

Throughout this same period, Crittenden County continued its transformation into a black majority county. In 1870, Crittenden County had a total population of 3,831 persons, composed of 1,253 whites and 2,575 (67%) blacks. By 1880, the number of whites increased to 1,899 while the black population shot up to 7,516 (80%). Crittenden County's population gap between whites and blacks grew even bigger throughout the 1880s; and by 1890, Crittenden's blacks outnumbered whites 11,890 (85%) to 2,050. While growth of the black population could in part be attributed to natural increase, much of it was the result African Americans immigrating from other Southern states to work Crittenden's new acres in cultivation.¹¹² The total number of acres in cultivation increased from 44,311 in 1880 to 63,216 in 1890 and 76,585 in 1900.¹¹³

¹¹² Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 119-120.

¹¹³ Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Agriculture*, 105; Bureau of the Census, *Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890, Agriculture*, 122. Historical Census Browser University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center Accessed April 14, 2006, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus./index.html>; Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Agriculture*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 60-62.

Figure 4 Black and White Populations, 1850-1890

Source 4: Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850 Population, 13, 18*. Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Population 535, 556*. Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population 13-14*. Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Population, 336*. Bureau of the Census, *Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890, Population*.

Crittenden County's 192% increase in its African American population put pressure on the county's already strained fusion government and reinforced white Democrats' concern of "Negro Domination." At the same time Crittenden's Democrats were dealing with the reality of their minority status, agrarian discontent was running high throughout the rest of Arkansas. Farmers, generally, had no source of income until the crop was sold at market at the end of the season. It was then, however, that they had to pay off indebtedness. Debt inevitably forced them to borrow money at the beginning of the year in order to buy supplies. Denial of commercial loans to farmers, both owner and tenant alike, required them to seek financing from a credit

system known as a crop-lien.¹¹⁴ In the antebellum years, farmers could put up the value of their land and slaves as collateral. The Civil War reconstituted labor-relations throughout the South; but in its aftermath, farms had been destroyed, livestock had been lost or taken, and most importantly millions of dollars invested in slaves had disappeared. Furthermore, the value of land had dropped considerably. The only thing of value that farmers had was their crop; as a result, crops were used as security against loans. Because cotton was the only crop that proved to be profitable and somewhat stable, creditors rarely granted loans for other crops, thus reinforcing a single-crop system in Crittenden County and elsewhere in Arkansas and the South, in general.¹¹⁵ Although the crop-lien system of advancing credit fulfilled a need for farmers, many were forced to buy on credit from merchants or in plantation commissaries where they paid up to 50% more for their supplies. Having been forced to put up a lien or mortgage to insure payment to creditors, farmers, susceptible to the vagaries of agriculture, found themselves in a tangled web of debt with limited options for raising further capital.¹¹⁶ As a result, many farmers were not able to extricate themselves from this system.

To further complicate the financial lives of tenant farmers, the 1875 Arkansas General Assembly passed two acts: one upholding the right of lien holders against a tenant's share of the crop and a second protecting lien holders against claims of fraud. An act on February 3, 1875 fixed a penalty of imprisonment for a minimum of one year and maximum of two year for the crime of "removing from the state, or county, or disposing of, or exchanging without the consent

¹¹⁴ Garland Bayliss, "Public Affairs in Arkansas, 1874-1896" (PhD diss., University of Texas, 1972), 280.

¹¹⁵ Moneyhon, *Arkansas and the New South*, 6-7.

¹¹⁶ Graves, *Town and County*, 134-135.

of the creditor any property on which there was a lien.”¹¹⁷ The second law, passed later in the same month, provided that all mortgages executed on crops already planted or to be planted, would have the same “force and effect to bind such crops and their products as other mortgages then had to bind property already in being.”¹¹⁸ These two acts ultimately established that the landlords’ lien was superior to all others. Additionally, in 1883 the general assembly reinforced creditors, amending mortgage laws by ensuring that farm owners and tenants who borrowed money would pay by making a failure to carry out the terms of their contract a criminal offence and a basis for forfeiture of all properties.¹¹⁹ Consequently, farmers drifted toward farm tenancy because of foreclosures by creditors.

Farmers’ problems were exacerbated in the 1880s by a series of natural disasters. Drought, in 1881, was followed by devastating floods in 1882 that wreaked havoc on cotton production. As if all of the weather difficulties were not enough, farmers had to deal with the bottoming out of cotton prices. Cotton prices had dropped from 43 cents per pound in 1865 to 17 cents per pound in 1870. Thus, a bale of cotton was worth \$215 in 1865 but only \$85 in 1870. Despite the drastic drop in cotton prices over the span of five years, farmers, at this point, were still able to turn a profit from their crops. By 1880, prices were at prewar levels; but by 1886, cotton prices fell to 10.25 cents per pound and were continuing to drop. By 1894, cotton prices had dropped to 6.5 cents per pound or \$32.5 per bale. At the same time, farmers, unable to

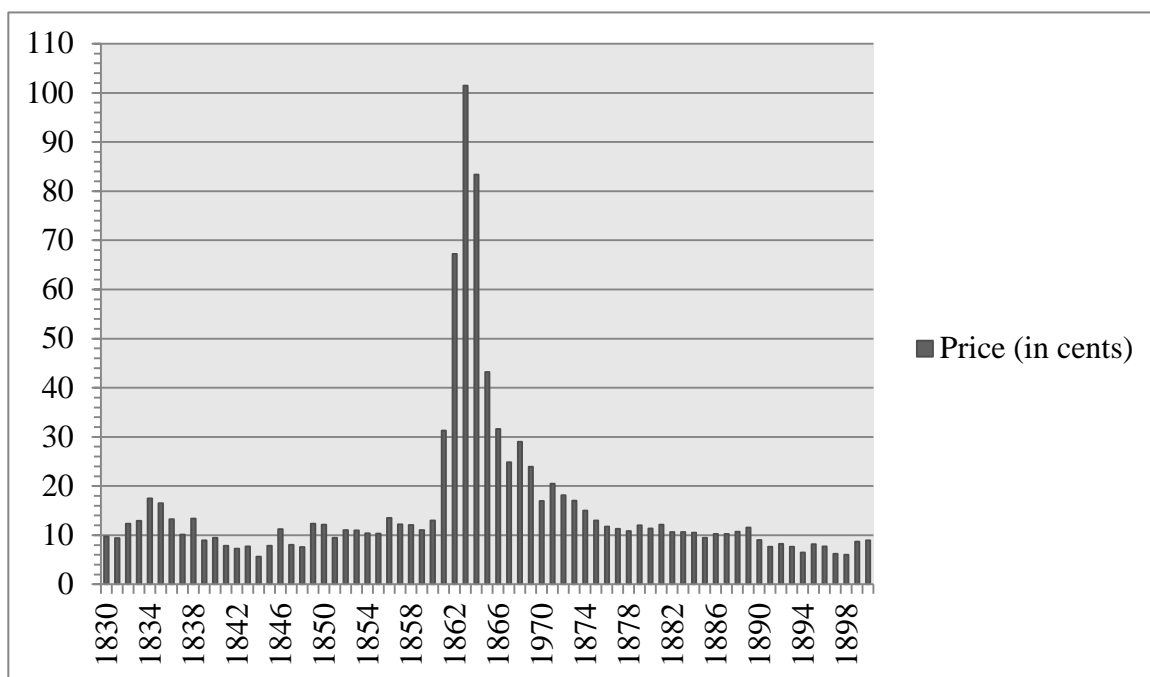
¹¹⁷ *Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly: Public and Private Acts and Initiated Acts and Constitutional Amendments Proposed and Adopted By and Joint and Concurrent Resolutions and Memorials of the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Union Printing and Publishing Company: 1882), 130-131.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹¹⁹ *Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly: Public and Private Acts and Initiated Acts and Constitutional Amendments Proposed and Adopted By and Joint and Concurrent Resolutions and Memorials of the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas* (Little Rock, Arkansas: n.p. 1874/1875), 129-130, 149; Moneyhon, *Arkansas and the New South*, 70.

increase the productivity of their cash crop because the land was reused year-after-year to grow cotton, were producing fewer bales of cotton per acre.

Figure 5: Cotton Prices, 1830-1900



Source 5: James Lawrence Watkins, *King Cotton: A Historical and Statistical Review, 1790-1908* (New York: J.L. Watkins & Sons, 1908), 29-31. Cotton prices shown above are an average according to “middling upland” pricing.

By the end of the late 1870s and the early 1880s, economic problems prompted farmers throughout the state to join farm organizations that sought to help farmers deal with their impoverished situation by means of educating them about cooperatives, progressive farming methods, as well as demanding that the government help alleviate their financial stress.¹²⁰ The Grange, or the Order of the Patrons of Husbandry, was one of the first of these farm groups to appear in Arkansas. Emerging in the early 1870s, local granges embraced education as a way to

¹²⁰ Clark Elkins, “The Agricultural Wheel: County Politics & Consolidation, 1884-1885,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 29 (Summer 1970), 154.

improve farmers' agricultural conditions. Although nonpolitical, the Grange pushed for legislation restricting monopolies, corporations, and regulating the railroad. Both Republican and Democratic candidates paid lip-service to farmers' concerns; but once elected, they abandoned the struggling farmers' agenda and continued to serve the needs of landed elites and commercial interests.¹²¹ Political frustration felt by farmers led to the decline of the Grange, and many of its leaders sought greater political activism and formed the Arkansas Greenback Party. Both the Grange and the Greenback Party posed a potential threat to Democrat hegemony; however, they did not, in the end, represent a meaningful challenge.¹²²

In 1882, after the Greenback Party dissolved, another organization arose that would mount a potent challenge to the Democratic Party, the Agricultural Wheel. Seven Prairie County farmers formed this organization originally as the Wattensas Farmer's Club on February 15, 1882.¹²³ Like the Grange, the Agricultural Wheel emphasized education and the restriction of monopolies, regulation of railroad rates, and elimination of "the infamous trusts" that had "become an incubus upon the body politic."¹²⁴ By 1883, the organization and its membership had spread throughout Arkansas with farmers forming local wheels. Few records exist for the local Arkansas Wheels, which make identification of local wheel chapters and local wheel members difficult. But Goodspeed's *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas* provides

¹²¹ Moneyhon, *Arkansas and the New South*, 78.

¹²² Graves, *Town and County*, 137-144; Judith Barjenbruch, "The Greenback Political Movement: An Arkansas View," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 36 (Summer 1977), 108-109. Barjenbruch, "The Greenback Political Movement: An Arkansas View," 110-117; See Matthew Hild, "Labor, Third-Party Politics, and New South Democracy in Arkansas, 1884-1896," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 63 (Spring 2004), 24-43.

¹²³ Moneyhon, *Arkansas and the New South*, 79; For more information concerning the Agricultural Wheel and its history see W. Scott Morgan, *History of the Wheel and Alliance and the Impending Revolution* (St. Louis, Missouri: C.B. Woodward Company, 1891).

¹²⁴ Morgan, *History of the Wheel and Alliance*, 68; *Arkansas Gazette* November 2, 1883; See also Clark Elkins, "The Agricultural Wheel: County Politics & Consolidation, 1884-1885," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 29 (Summer 1970).

evidence of the Wheel's activity in Crittenden, noting that Carlile Daniels, a substantial farmer of Wappanocca Township, was a member of the county Wheel.¹²⁵ The existence of a county Wheel indicates that even prominent farmers were facing economic hardship and saw the Wheel as offering solutions. Other farmers in the county also embraced the Wheel, evidenced by the establishment of at least five subordinate Wheels in Crittenden.¹²⁶ Because Goodspeed's rarely published information on African Americans; that source does not confirm that there were black Wheelers in Crittenden County. However, the *Arkansas Gazette* states that Fred Simmons, an African American, was a delegate to the National Wheel's Sixth Annual Convention in Little Rock, and the *Memphis Daily Appeal* indicates that a white man had come to Crawfordsville to organize a Wheel that had sixty-five African Americans as members.¹²⁷

Whatever presence the Wheel had in Crittenden, it increasingly seemed like it might pose a threat to Democrats' control of state government. Because many members of the Agricultural Wheel were Democrats, the organization did not initially put forth its own candidates for elections - instead pushed for pro-Wheel candidates within the Democratic Party.¹²⁸ As early as 1884, though, the *Arkansas Gazette* reported that the Wheel was taking an active interest in politics.¹²⁹ An early alliance offer from Republicans as well as rumors of the Wheel forming a secret political organization created speculation as to the Wheel's dedication to the non-political

¹²⁵ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas*, 412.

¹²⁶ Morgan, *History of the Wheel and Alliance*, 69-70. In order to organize a county wheel, a county had to have at least five subordinate wheels.

¹²⁷ *Arkansas Gazette* May 1, 1888; *Memphis Daily Appeal*, July 14, 1888. York Byers, in an interview with a *Memphis Daily Appeal* correspondent, indicated that Crawfordsville had a strong Wheel presence that was politically active.

¹²⁸ *Arkansas Gazette*, July 26, 1884.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, May 20, 1884.

stance spelled out in its constitution.¹³⁰ Democrats believed that farmers had the right to organize clubs to deal with economic problems but denounced active participation in third-party politics because such actions were detrimental to their organization's survival and effectiveness. Articles printed in the *Arkansas Gazette* tried to discourage farmers from mobilizing politically through the Wheel, suggesting that they had the power to control elections; and "if they have been badly served, they can discharge their unfaithful stewards and choose others who are trustworthy."¹³¹ Whether in a state of panic or denial of the possibility of an alliance between Republicans and the Wheel, the *Arkansas Gazette* published fervent opinion pieces lambasting Republicans. Within these pieces, Republicans were described as disingenuous and wanting to take advantage of disgruntled farmers; they were characterized as men who "strut their brief hour upon the state and then disappear to quietly await the advent of some new organization in whose field they hope another rich harvest may be gleaned."¹³² Furthermore, the *Arkansas Gazette* painted Wheelers as "honest" Democrats who would not possibly "be caught on the pinhooks dangled before their eyes by these political anglers."¹³³

It did not take long for Wheelers to realize the Democratic Party was ignoring their demands. It was in 1886, after the Agricultural Wheel consolidated membership with the Brothers of Freedom and the African American Sons of the Agricultural Star of Arkansas, that Wheelers sought major change in the political arena by supporting independent candidates.¹³⁴ That same year, the Wheel created a state ticket and nominated Charles E. Cunningham, former

¹³⁰ *Arkansas Gazette* May 21, 1884, July 26, 1884, October 15, 1885; Morgan, *History of the Wheel and Alliance*, 60-71.

¹³¹ *Arkansas Gazette* July 24, 1884.

¹³² *Ibid.*, February 28, 1886, March 11, 1886, April 27, 1886, May 15, 1886.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, March 11, 1886.

¹³⁴ *Arkansas Gazette* February 28, 1886; *Arkansas Daily Democrat* October 7, 1885. The Sons of the Agriculture Star in Arkansas had its headquarters in Monroe County.

Greenback Party member, for governor. Cunningham finished third in the election behind Republican Lafayette Gregg and Democrat winner Simon P. Hughes.¹³⁵ Even though a county Wheel existed in Crittenden, its existence did not necessarily mean that its members were willing to vote for its candidates. In Crittenden County, Republican nominee Gregg swept the election by receiving 1,805 (79%) votes, whereas the Democrat winner, Hughes received 459 (20%). Wheel nominee, Cunningham, only received 23 (1%) votes in the county.¹³⁶ Knowing that in the future the Democrats would continue to co-opt many of the farmers' issues by making the Democratic platform almost identical to that of the Wheel's, it became clear that a fusion ticket might be the only way to dislodge Democrats from their political dominance in Arkansas in 1888.

In 1888, the Wheel, with 1,747 white chapters and 200 black chapters, joined with the Knights of Labor to form the Union Labor Party of Arkansas. The formation of the Union Labor Party was decided upon at the National Wheel's Sixth Annual Convention in Little Rock, where Fred Simmons, the black Wheeler from Crittenden County, served as one of the delegates.¹³⁷ Talks soon began with the Republican Party about a possible fusion ticket. Jumping at the chance to upset the Democrats in the upcoming elections, the Arkansas Republican Party welcomed the idea of fusion. At the Republican National Convention, a reporter noted, there were "[talks] interestingly about the possibility of a combination that would end the Democratic

¹³⁵ *Arkansas Gazette*, August 14, 1886; Graves, *Town and Country*, 138-139; *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report, 1887-1888* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Press Printing Company, 1888), 47. The Wheel candidate Cunningham received 19,169 votes, compared to 54,070 cast for the Republican Lafayette Gregg and 90,650 for the Democratic Simon P. Hughes.

¹³⁶ *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report, 1887-1888*, 37-39.

¹³⁷ *Arkansas Gazette*, May 1, 1888; Clifton Paisley, "The Political Wheelers and Arkansas's Election of 1888," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 25 (Spring 1966), 4; John Giggie, "'Disband Him from the Church': African Americans and the Spiritual Politics of Disfranchisement in Post-Reconstruction Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 60 (Autumn 2001), 251; Graves, *Town and Country*, 139-140; Fon Louise Gordon, *Caste and Class*, 15.

dynasty in rock-ribbed Arkansas” and that “they expected to do so through the queerly-named organization known as the Wheel.”¹³⁸ The alliance between the Wheel and the Union Labor Party and a possible fusion with Republicans prompted many Wheel members to relinquish their membership to the organization and reaffirm their commitment to the Democratic Party.¹³⁹ The Union Labor Party nominated a full ticket including a one-legged Confederate veteran, Charles M. Norwood for governor and Lewis P. Featherston for the first congressional district of which Crittenden County is a part of.¹⁴⁰ The alliance between the Union Labor Party and the Republicans Party challenged the solidarity of the Democratic Party as well as posed a real threat to Democrat domination in Arkansas. The *Gazette* had accused Norwood of being a mask for the Powell Clayton faction of the Republicans and that Democratic Wheelers “who still remembered the hells of reconstruction, and the blessing of honest wholesome government that followed hurling these vampyres and bloodsuckers from power” could never vote for such a combination.¹⁴¹

Fearing that they would lose control of the state’s government, Democrats become more adamant about strengthening their hold on county governments. The struggle to regain political control became increasingly intense in Crittenden County as Democrats began to recognize the implications of a third-party Republican alliance that could potentially affect their district. Believing that the future of the Democratic Party in Arkansas was at stake and obviously impatient with the necessity of fusion government, Crittenden County Democrats used intimidation and violence in the summer and fall of 1888 to not only quash the Union Labor

¹³⁸ *Arkansas Gazette* June 21, 1888.

¹³⁹ Whayne, *Delta Empire*, 53-54.

¹⁴⁰ Graves, *Town and County*, 140; *Arkansas Gazette* April 8, 1888.

¹⁴¹ *Arkansas Gazette*, June 27, 1888.

Party ticket for the upcoming September and November elections but also to rid Crittenden of a number of prominent, Republican African Americans.

The frustration with Crittenden's fusion government allowing for both Republican and Democrats to be represented in county offices had come to a head when the *Arkansas Gazette* on July 12, 1888 published an article stating "Turbulent Negroes Threaten to Precipitate a War of Races in Crittenden County."¹⁴² The trouble began when the county judge and clerk, both black Republicans, charged with drunkenness. Daniel Lewis and David Ferguson expected to be brought before the circuit court on the information filed by the prosecuting attorney, W.B. Edrington, who was hired by a private committee of white citizens of Crittenden County.¹⁴³ Upon filing the indictments found against them, a trial date was set for July 12th, the court being then in session. The trial, however, never happened due to events that transpired the morning of July 12th. It was alleged that anonymous letters signed "Enemies" had been written to several prominent Marion whites including Sheriff W. F. Werner, Col. J.F. Smith, L.P. Berry, Squire T.O. Mosby, Frank Forrest, Jim Stevens, and R.F. Crittenden warning them to "leave the county in five days or take the consequences."¹⁴⁴ These men were supposedly singled out to receive the letters because they had pushed Edrington to prosecute Lewis and Ferguson.¹⁴⁵ According to a Memphis correspondent, white men from Crittenden were preparing themselves to fight against the "Negro Menace."¹⁴⁶ Fears of a supposed race war prompted white men to board the train to

¹⁴² *Arkansas Gazette*, July 12, 1888.

¹⁴³ Summers, *Party Games*, 67; *Arkansas Gazette*, July 14, 1888; Manuscript Census Returns, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Mississippi County, Arkansas*. W.B. Edrington lived in Mississippi County.

¹⁴⁴ Margaret Woolfolk, *A History of Marion* (Marion, Arkansas: n.p., 1983), 22; *Arkansas Gazette*, July 12, 1888; *Memphis Daily Appeal*, July 12, 1888.

¹⁴⁵ *Arkansas Gazette*, July 14, 1888.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, July 12, 1888.

Memphis, secure a supply of fifty Winchester rifles and ammunition, and then return to Marion on the ten o'clock train. These men would constitute the "Winchester Crowd."¹⁴⁷

In midst of these anxieties, whites in several neighboring counties -- including Cross, Phillips, and Woodruff – offered help to Governor Simon Hughes in quailing the problems in Crittenden. According to the *Arkansas Gazette*, Governor Hughes ignored the offers by stating, "I don't believe there is a word of truth in the report. I don't believe the Negroes of Crittenden County are foolish enough to raise such a disturbance, they are too conservative and know better. I have more confidence in the peaceable and law-abiding disposition of the Negroes of Crittenden than to believe the report."¹⁴⁸ This opinion did not stop local whites from taking action.

These allegations were faulty from the beginning. The personal history of both parties does not support a charge of habitual drunkenness. The case against Lewis illustrates the inherent weaknesses and points to the political motivations possibly driving the accusations. Daniel W. Lewis was a respected black official. He was born a slave on a plantation near Frankfort, Kentucky, on June 5, 1851. In 1870, he left Columbus, Ohio, where he received his education and moved to Macon, Tennessee, where he was appointed as a teaching assistant to his brother Dennis. In the spring of 1871, Lewis moved to Marion, Arkansas where he secured a position as a teacher and two years later was promoted to County Superintendent of Public Schools in Crittenden County. Aspiring to a political career, Lewis was elected in 1874 county clerk and began studying law under Judge R. F. Crittenden, one of the Winchesters, and S.P. Swepston.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., July 12, 1888.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., July 12, 1888, July 13, 1888.

Lewis had continual success in politics, being elected to the General Assembly in 1882 and eventually being elected county judge in 1884.¹⁴⁹

Lewis's career arc and political successes contravene accusations of habitual drunkenness. Rather, it is important that the charges be viewed within the context of local political machinations of a white political elite attempting to secure hegemony over a majority black population. Evidence for this contextual analysis is found within the Arkansas code, specifically statute section 561, which, to paraphrase, states that any official found to be a drunkard could be prosecuted and would be suspended from office until a trial could be held.¹⁵⁰ The significance of this statute as it pertains to Crittenden is that it allowed for the suspension of the accused, providing an opening for subversion of the electoral process by the elite.

Further evidence in support of a Machiavellian plot against Lewis and Ferguson is provided by the court's actions. Neither Lewis nor Ferguson were suspended after having been indicted, suggesting that the court did not believe the indictment could be sustained and was, therefore, unwilling to pursue the charges. Though ultimately a failed ploy, this incident would serve as a template for future schemes of political manipulation orchestrated by the Democrats. The white minority in Crittenden would no longer be satisfied in playing the role of "loyal opposition." As the *Memphis Daily Appeal* indicated, there had long been a feeling of "irritation" that existed between African Americans and whites in Crittenden County, and the cause was easily traceable to the county government that seemed to have escaped "the great tidal wave of white supremacy that rolled over the southern States in 1875 and washed from the

¹⁴⁹ Daniel W. Lewis Jr. "A Freedom Fighter...Judge Daniel Webster Lewis, Sr. Early Arkansas Magistrate" Daniel W. Lewis Sr. Papers (MC 516) Box 1, Folder 1, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries Fayetteville. *Secretary of State, Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of Arkansas October 1, 1882*, 18. *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report, 1886*, (Little Rock, Arkansas: A.M. Woodruff, 1886), 42, 167.

¹⁵⁰ Committee on Contested Elections, *Featherston vs. Cate*, 3.

surface of the local governments the taint of rottenness impressed upon them by negro rule.”¹⁵¹ Simply put, it appeared that Crittenden’s Democrats and other white citizens were tired of what they termed “Negro Rule.”¹⁵²

In his scrapbook, Louis Perkins Berry, Jr., son of L.P. Berry, referred to this incident as “The Revolution of 1888” and gave some sense of the nature of whites’ agitation.¹⁵³ Reminiscing about race relations in Crittenden, he wrote “the situation and conditions were naturally distasteful to the white citizens of the county”, and “it had reached a point where it was dangerous for the ladies and children of Marion to walk down the street. The negroes had really taken over and resented our presence in the town and county.”¹⁵⁴ It is worth noting that any degree of black office-holding seemed to be considered “Negro Rule.” Even at the peak of fusion, white Democrats held at least three of the six major county offices.

Berry also provided evidence of the collusion among certain whites in the county prior to the attack on black officeholders. He recalled that a few of the leading white citizens arranged a meeting at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis to address the growing discontent with the fusion government. The two-hour meeting included Judge S.A. Martin, Sheriff W.F. Werner, Col. J.F. Smith, Dr. W.M. Bingham, and L.P. Berry. These men were precisely the same men who supposedly received the anonymous letters warning them to leave the county and the same men who forced Crittenden’s black officials out of the county. In all, there were twenty-five men in attendance. As it turned out, no actionable consensus emerged from this conclave. Within days following the first meeting, the group met again to formulate a plan of action, which they

¹⁵¹ *Memphis Daily Appeal*, July 12, 1888.

¹⁵² *Arkansas Gazette*, July 13, 1888; Committee on Contested Elections, *Featherston vs. Cate*, 4-5. Between the years of 1886 and 1888 Lewis had been accused eleven times of drunkenness, but was never charged.

¹⁵³ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden*, 34.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

presented to Judge J.E. Riddick. Early the next morning, as Berry recalled, a crowd surfaced in town and gathered in one of the two saloons in Marion. The white men attending this meeting were overcome with emotion and were tempted to storm the courthouse, and then lynch the black officers. After much debate at this meeting, a simple plan was agreed upon, and everyone in attendance “had been persuaded everything [would be] carried off in a most orderly manner.”¹⁵⁵

On the morning of July 12th, a number of armed whites, including the sheriff marched to the courthouse and ordered Lewis, Ferguson, and his deputy, J.L. Fleming, outside. The black officials were told that some white people received letters ordering the whites out. Instead, the crowd demanded that Ferguson along with certain other African Americans in the county leave.¹⁵⁶ According to his later testimony, Ferguson promptly told the mob that he knew nothing of the letters; and if they had committed a crime, the grand jury was in session and could indict them, put them in jail, and try them. Ferguson also further stated that he would not leave. Pressing the urgency of their demands, the crowd responded by stating “God damn you, you’ve got to leave this county, this is a white man’s government, and we are tired of negro dominance; we have been planning this for the past two years, and not more Negroes or Republicans shall hold office in this county.”¹⁵⁷ Ferguson claimed that Circuit Judge Riddick knew what was going on the morning of July 12th and provided no protection from the armed white mob, further emphasizing the lawlessness of the Winchester Crowd. Judge Riddick, however, told Ferguson’s lawyers Fred Adams and Lewis P. Featherston’s opponent, William H. Cate, that he would get out a writ of habeas corpus for him. Ferguson declined the offer because he did not think that the

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 35.

¹⁵⁶ Committee on Contested Elections, *Featherston vs. Cate*, 4.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

court had jurisdiction over an armed mob.¹⁵⁸ Instead, Ferguson along with eighteen other men petitioned the circuit court for an investigation to be made of the accusations.¹⁵⁹ Ferguson's lawyers suggested that he had "better let [the petition] drop."¹⁶⁰ Of course, there was no way of letting the petition drop except by pleading guilty and that would oust him from office, which was one of the objectives for which the conspiracy had been formed. Louis Perkins Berry, Jr., essentially confirmed this version of events. He remembered having seen his father, L.P. Berry, Neely Raspberry, the coroner, John Trexter, Nat. N. Gibson, W.F. Werner, Sam Keel, S.A. Martin, W.J. Harden, and A.H. Ferguson approach the clerk's office and ask for the resignations of the officials.¹⁶¹

As if the resignations of the county judge and the county clerk would not be enough, a mob of seventy-five to one hundred men crowded the courthouse yard to round up Henry Biby, Washington Dever, J. R. Rooks, O.W. Mitchum, S.S. Odom, Ramsey, and J. R. Hunt. J.F. Flemming, Henry Biby, and Washington Dever provided testimony in 1890 to the Committee on Elections about how each were personally warned by the Winchester Crowd on July 12, 1888. J.L. Flemming was the deputy clerk under David Ferguson and was the editor of the *Marion Headlight*, a black Republican newspaper. He was twenty-seven years old at the time and had lived in Crittenden County for four years. On the day of the incident, he was with Ferguson when they were ordered out of their offices. Flemming was told that the anonymous letters demanding white citizens to leave the county within five days of their receipt were written by

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵⁹ *Memphis Daily Appeal* July 13, 1888. The other men that petitioned the circuit court for and investigation were the following: Daniel Lewis, O.W. Mitchem, Fred R. Hunt, J.L. Flemming, J.W. Ramsey, S.S. Odom, P.H. Ward, James Thompson, Henry Hensley, William Royster, C.A. Fletcher, H.D. Kelly, W.J. Still, Thomas Malone, R.Y. Logan, George Smith, York Byers, and A.W. White.

¹⁶⁰ Committee on Contested Elections, *Featherston vs. Cate*, 4-5.

¹⁶¹ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 35.

himself, Ferguson, Lewis, and others. The Winchester Crowd implied to Flemming that if they returned to Crittenden it would be dangerous and they would possibly be killed. Flemming and ten others were brought from Marion to Mound City by the armed mob, put on a ferryboat, and then escorted by three men over to Memphis, but only after his printing press was pushed into Marion Lake.¹⁶²

Henry Biby, a twenty seven-year-old native of Marion, had been the deputy assessor for four years and had been away from the county since July 12th. According to Biby, at nine in the morning on July 12th, sixteen men confronted him while he was doing work at his mother's house and inquired where a fellow by the name of Skymore was. Biby had told them that he did not know where Skymore was, and one of the men by the name of Jim Bassett said, "It's as damn lie." Bassett then proceeded to tell Biby that the "county's getting too small for you educated niggers and we white folk."¹⁶³ It was clear to Biby that the armed mob was not going to leave without him; so, Biby came out of his house and went along with sixteen armed men. He was escorted to a shade tree near the courthouse and searched along with the rest of the men the Winchester Crowd had rounded up. Around ten o'clock, Biby and others were then marched down Milder Road towards Mound City, put on a wagon, and then loaded onto a boat with nine of the men on horseback carrying Winchesters. The boat's destination was Hopefield. Once there, three men preceded to escort Biby and nine others they had rounded up to Memphis and left them there, snidely stating, "now you can go, you never have been escorted by a lot of white gentlemen before in your life, its quite a compliment to you, and unhurt, but if you ever come

¹⁶² Committee on Contested Elections, *Featherston vs. Cate*, 6. *The Marion Headlight*, Crittenden's first weekly, operated from 1886 or 1887.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 8.

back to Arkansas you must abide by the consequences.”¹⁶⁴ To Biby’s knowledge, his only offense was that he was a prominent black socially and economically, was a member of several different societies including the Masons and the Knights of Labor.¹⁶⁵ Biby in his testimony claimed that he along with the nine other men that were forced from Crittenden County on July 12th knew nothing of the anonymous letters that were delivered by mail on July 10th. Considering the seriousness of the letters, prominent African Americans within Crittenden County thought to draw up a petition to have a grand jury investigate the matter. The following day, a petition was presented to Judge Riddick by Daniel Lewis, which was highly complimented by the judge.¹⁶⁶

Another man exiled at the same time as Biby was Washington Dever who had lived in Crittenden for twenty-five years. He was a prominent black citizen with a large family, a wife and six children. Dever was also a Mason and a member of the Knights of Labor. Unlike the rest of the lot accused of writing the letters ordering white people to leave, Dever was given warning ahead of time by the sheriff who told him that his name was on the letters as a signatory. Dever asked to see the letters, but none could be produced.¹⁶⁷ He then proceeded to tell the sheriff that there was no need to drive him out of the county; and if there was any violation of law, he asked to be tried because court was in session that day. The only response from the sheriff, Dever later testified was “well, we are going to take the law in our own hands to-day.” After his warning, Dever decided to go to the clerk’s office to discuss the matter with David Ferguson but hurried to hide when he saw the armed band of men march the black county officials out of the courthouse.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 10. At first Dever was told that Col. Smith had the letters and when Col. Smith asked supposedly had told Dever that L.P. Berry had them. Ultimately, Dever never got to see these letters.

According to Dever, the armed men, headed by Dr. Barton and Dr. Bingham, preceded to his house to look for him. Luckily, Dever hid in his field across the railroad tracks. Upon finding out that Dever was not at home, the Winchester Crowd tried to hunt him down in his fields going over his cotton and corn row by row. Not finding him, they finally gave up the hunt, which allowed Dever to escape by catching the three o'clock train with F.T. Moore to Memphis that morning. After he left, his orchard, ninety-acres, house, and furniture were destroyed, and his hogs and cows were killed.¹⁶⁸

Following the expulsion of Crittenden's African American officials along with a few prominent black citizens, the mob forced even more blacks to leave. These purges focused less on officeholders and more on prominent citizens. J.P. Broadenax, a black citizen who was not forced to leave the county but did so on his own account, witnessed the crowd force Assessor Rooks, O.W. Mitchum, S.S. Odom, who had been elected to represent Crittenden in the Arkansas House of Representatives two years earlier, and several others to board a train to Memphis. In addition, J.W. Wymme, who was also not forced to leave the county, witnessed many individuals driven out in addition to officials, with twelve to fifteen of those being local black Republicans who owned property.¹⁶⁹

Among those forced to leave were York Byers, an African American who lived in Crawfordsville, owned 200 acres of land, was an unsuccessful candidate for sheriff, Wheel member, and was supposedly in charge of a two-hundred man military company; Jim Devers, allegedly a lieutenant of Byers's militia and member of Crawfordsville Wheel; R.L Rhodes, J.L. Flemming's printer; J.W. Ramsey, another deputy clerk; J.D. Lawrence, minister of the Rising

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 10.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 12-13; *Memphis Daily Appeal* July 12, 1888, July 14, 1888; *Arkansas Gazette* July 12, 1888, July 14, 1888.

Sun Missionary Baptist Church; L.R. Ragsdale, minister of St. Mark African Methodist Episcopal Church; Dr. W.J. Stith; Fred R. Hunt, assistant deputy clerk; Lewis Brown, a music teacher; Ed Flemming, a cook; C.A. Fletcher, a school teacher; and Jim Thompson, Bill Gidden, Mac Brown, and Tyronza Nell, laborers.¹⁷⁰

Assembling at Tony Turner's store on Beale Street near DeSoto in Memphis, the exiles narrated their day's experience to a group of sympathizers. In a meeting with men exiled from Crittenden County, black citizens of Memphis discussed ways they could protest against the treatment of their Crittenden County neighbors.¹⁷¹ The exiled men decided that intervention by Memphis's black citizens would not be a good idea and decided to appeal to Governor Hughes. Only four days after the incident, Dave Ferguson, J.W. Rooks, and O.W. Mitchum made their way to Little Rock and called upon the governor with a petition signed by seventeen other exiles asking for protection to return to the county and to their families. In this petition, the exiles denied having written the anonymous letters, suggesting that the letters were, in fact, secretly authorized by leading white citizens as a pretext for the expulsion of black office-holders. In order to back their theory, they informed the governor that legal redress was available to the whites and that new elections were only two months away.¹⁷² In addition, they proclaimed that without an "investigation many of the white citizens met at the courthouse [...] took the case in their own hands, and without a word of defense of the colored citizens were found guilty not by a tribunal of justices."¹⁷³ Furthermore, they stated that "we have been compelled to leave our crops of cotton and fields of corn and today, air, since the 12th of July, our crops, our stock, our

¹⁷⁰ Woolfolk, *History of Marion*, 22; *Arkansas Gazette*, July 13, 1888; *Memphis Daily Appeal* July 13, 1888, July 14, 1888.

¹⁷¹ *Memphis Daily Appeal*, July 13, 1888.

¹⁷² *Arkansas Gazette*, July 17, 1888, July 18, 1888.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, July 17, 1888.

homes and land, yes and our dear wives and loving children, are yet in said county at the mercy of a band of men who have [shown] a well formed determination to wreck and destroy everything we possess on earth.”¹⁷⁴ Yet again, the governor took no immediate action.

A *Gazette* reporter, learning that the men were in Little Rock, made a search and finally found them at J.E. Rector’s house on E. Markham Street and proceeded to get statements from them. Each recounted how they were expelled from the county. Professing their innocence, Rooks stated, “the trouble at Marion [...] last week was originated for political purposes by the white citizens of the county” and not an attempt by the black population to start a race war. In addition, Ferguson told the *Gazette* reporter that he was the first newspaperman they had talked to and certainly hoped it would not be the last.¹⁷⁵

In response to these meetings with the governor and the *Gazette* reporter, Col. J.F. Smith, L.P. Berry, E. Buck, and Richard Cheatham, all prominent Crittenden County white citizens, met with the governor to describe the state of affairs in Marion. After their lengthy interview with the governor, these men met with a *Gazette* reporter and divulged their version of the outrages. L.P. Berry told the reporter that many offices in the county were filled by blacks and these men exercised the duties of their offices in a “vicious and lawless manner.” It was not only the officers; but also the negro deputies, “many of whom had been run out of other counties for their rascality,” that had carried on in a reckless manner; their sole purpose being “to terrify the citizens and destroy the peace of the community.”¹⁷⁶

Furthermore, Berry provided evidence that the warning notices were written in David Ferguson’s office on pages torn out of a blank record. Also Berry reported that whites were not

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, July 17, 1888.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, July 17, 1888. The stories printed in the *Gazette* and the *Memphis Appeal* corresponded to accounts given by witnesses in the congressional testimony.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, July 18, 1888.

the only ones wronged by these reckless officials. Several respectable black citizens were outraged by their actions and were equally if not more critical of them.¹⁷⁷ Coincidentally, that same day the *Gazette* featured a statement signed by ninety-four African American citizens, many belonging to Crittenden's Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, condemning the black officials. They reassured readers that the troubles that had transpired were not problems of race or politics but the abuse of the local government machinery by drunk and corrupt men.¹⁷⁸ Although damning in its implications, no evidence to substantiate these allegations was forthcoming. After hearing such scandalous accusations brought against them and in hopes of appealing to popular sentiment and clearing their names, the black officials wrote a letter to the editor of the *Memphis Daily Appeal*, which was published July 19, 1888. Within this article, they described the events of July 12th and addressed the indictments against the clerk and the judge.

Other reports also suggested divisions within the black community. An article published in the *Avalanche* on the July 16th described the friction between the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church and the Rising Sun Baptist Church. According to J.D. Lawrence, the Rising Sun Baptist Church had split some time ago from the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. It was the impression of the exiles that members of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church had influenced the whites of Crittenden County to expel certain members of the Rising Sun Baptist Church as well as indict and prosecute other members in court.¹⁷⁹ Most importantly, the exiles concluded by saying that "We deny that we know anything about the anonymous letters, that we were not in any way, directly or indirectly, connected with any conspiracy to drive the white people from Crittenden County and that the petition presented by us to the circuit court was in good faith and we yet

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, July 18, 1888.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, July 18, 1888.

¹⁷⁹ *Memphis Daily Appeal* July 14, 1888, July 17, 1888, July 19, 1888; Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden County*, 36-37.

demand that a thorough investigation be made and, if possible, discover who the guilty parties are.”¹⁸⁰

Unfortunately, the petitions published by the exiles in both the *Gazette* and *Memphis Daily Appeal* had no effect. After successfully exiling these men, the mob searched their homes, Masonic halls, and offices looking for weapons and ammunition that might have been secured to carry out the threats contained in the anonymous letters. Eager though they were to find these items, none were found. Still, over the next two weeks rumors circulated throughout the county. One rumor was that the disposed officers had returned to Edmondson, a black settlement in the county, and had raised an army and were coming back to regain their offices by force.¹⁸¹ Another rumor was that the ousted officials had been lynched.¹⁸² As these rumors were spreading, the men who had forced the blacks out began to guard the county seat and took turns at sentry duty both day and night. One person recalled that they would drill right in front of the courthouse every night, and it was reported that these men were a part of the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁸³

In light of the conflicting testimony, it is impossible to determine exactly what the conditions prevailed in Crittenden County. The *Memphis Scimitar* believed the chaos was the “the work of sensationalism without foundation” and a “general hullabaloo made over the threatened riot, which was easy to do especially in this dreamy summer time, when news is scarce.”¹⁸⁴ It is clear, however, that the African Americans were removed from office and other black community leaders exiled without due process. Furthermore, after receiving strong criticisms from the *Memphis Daily Appeal* for the whites’ dereliction of justice during the

¹⁸⁰ *Memphis Daily Appeal*, July 19, 1888, July 26, 1888.

¹⁸¹ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden*, 35.

¹⁸² *Arkansas Gazette*, July 24, 1888, July 26, 1888.

¹⁸³ Woolfolk, *History of Crittenden*, 35. The *Gazette* refers to these men not at the KKK, but as the Citizen Committee; *Arkansas Gazette*, July 15, 1888.

¹⁸⁴ *Memphis Daily Appeal*, July 14, 1888.

incident, even the *Arkansas Gazette* lamented the episode and acknowledged that the initial removal of the black office holders had been illegal. However, the *Arkansas Gazette* did not condemn Governor Hughes for his passivity nor did it press for the reinstatement of the blacks.¹⁸⁵

Despite the exiles' appeal, Governor Hughes stated that he could not act unless there was assistance requested by the sheriff, significantly one of the white citizens responsible for engineering the coup. Hughes insisted that the matter lay with civil courts to decide; and "if the exiles return and are murdered, the murderers are amenable to the law."¹⁸⁶ Soon after Governor Hughes made this statement, he appointed white officers—i.e. Democrats to fill the vacancies.

Circuit Judge Riddick conducted a grand jury investigation of the troubles in Crittenden County and found that there had been many violations of law. According to Riddick, the sending of any letters to any citizen of the county as part of a conspiracy was a violation of law, and it was the duty of the citizens of Crittenden County to investigate and to use whatever lawful means to find the guilty parties. However, this ruling did not mean that Judge Riddick officially condoned the actions of Crittenden's white citizens. Instead, Judge Riddick, explained that "there is no such punishment as expatriation known to the laws of this county, and even if there were its execution could not be safely entrusted either to a set of midnight conspirators or to a lot of armed and excited citizens."¹⁸⁷ Additionally, Judge Riddick, showing his fidelity to the law, stated that the parties who ordered certain black citizens out of the Crittenden were equally in violation of the law. On July 24, 1888, the *Arkansas Gazette* reported that the grand jury investigation returned forty indictments against nineteen African American citizens who were

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, July 14, 1888.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, July 31, 1888, August 1, 1888.

¹⁸⁷ *Arkansas Gazette*, July 19, 1888.

exiled from Crittenden County. According to the article, the grand jury was successful in tracing the anonymous threats to the office of the county clerk, Ferguson. Upon entering his office, investigators found a fragment of one of the anonymous notes on the floor, and experts had determined that the handwriting on the letters belonged to J. W. Ramsey, “a young South Carolina negro in the employment of Ferguson as a clerk.”¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, the grand jury proclaimed that the motive behind the anonymous letters was that Ferguson and Lewis had been charged with drunkenness, the penalty for which was removal from office. The jurors apparently never considered as a mitigating factor that parties standing to gain from a true bill had provided the critical evidence upon which their decision hinged.

Even though excitement over the ousted black officials had somewhat subsided, racial tensions were still high. What transpired during the September elections proves that Democrats had orchestrated a conspiracy to wrestle the political control of Crittenden County away from the black Republicans by exiling Crittenden’s African American officials. Even though Crittenden’s black officials were no longer in office, Democrats still needed to be concerned about strong African American political participation in the upcoming election. Early on, Democrats tried in vain to prevent the Republicans from nominating a county ticket. According to Jordan Yates, the Winchester Crowd tried to force more men to leave the day the County Central Republican Committee called a convention. Sheriff Warner told Yates that they “better not try to hold a convention here to-day, there’s too much excitement, if you undertake it you will be hurt; we ain’t going to have but one ticket.”¹⁸⁹ After the conversation with the sheriff, Yates approached Major Crittenden who advised him to go ahead and hold the convention, which Sheriff Warner

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., July 24, 1888; *Memphis Daily Appeal*, July 14, 1888. Ramsey knew that he was suspected to have written the anonymous letters and protested his innocence before he was indicted.

¹⁸⁹ Committee on Contested Elections, *Featherston vs. Cate*, 16-17.

finally agreed to. It was at this point that several Democrats, including Sheriff Warner and Gus Fogelman, tried to bribe delegates by offering \$50 to each delegate and \$250 to Yates if they did not make a ticket.¹⁹⁰

Because the Democrats could not convince the Republicans not to nominate a county ticket and they did not prevail in preventing candidates from accepting nominations, Democrats decided the only way they were going to win the state was to control every aspect of the election. Before the Republican county judge was exiled, he had appointed the judges of the election, according to the law, so that each political party would be represented. After the exiling of Lewis, the positions were filled by the Democrats. The new Democratic county judge, S. A. Martin, who had obtained his office by force, now revoked the appointments made by Lewis and appointed all of the judges of the election from the Democratic Party.¹⁹¹ Additionally, the Democrats, by expelling the black officials, held the office of county clerk, which created the county canvassing board and certified the returns to the governor. Having secured the offices of county judge, clerk, and sheriff, the Democrats substantially controlled all the election machinery of the county.

Even though Democrats seemed to have every aspect of the election under control, they left it to members of the Winchester Crowd to intimidate voters and steal tickets. William Royster, an African American farmer and a merchant, came to Arkansas at the end of Reconstruction and had set himself up as prominent citizen.¹⁹² Royster lived next to the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 17. *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report, 1887-1888*, 51.

¹⁹¹ Chester H. Rowell, *A Historical and Legal Digest of all the Contested Elections Cases of the United States from the First to the Fifty-Sixth Congress, 1789-1901* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 442.

¹⁹² Committee on Contested Elections, *Featherston vs. Cate*, 6. William Royster used to drive the stage in Crittenden before the Kansas City road came through. Thereafter, he made his living renting horses and buggies as well as doing a little farming.

courthouse and was in charge of issuing Republican tickets at the state and county level. On September 2, 1888, Royster was issuing tickets between 8 and 9 o'clock when Ben Novel asked for a ticket. Knowing that Novel, a Democrat, was not going to vote Republican, Royster refused him a ticket. Throughout the rest of the day, Royster was approached by Mr. Cox, Jim Lloyd, and Mr. Kelly, all asking for tickets. Royster refused all requests but only after receiving mild threats from all four men.¹⁹³ According to testimony before Congress, he had received a final warning from Frank Forrest who arrived at his house that same night giving Royster "orders to wind up your business and leave the county." He asked Forrest what his crime was. Forrest responded that he had done everything that he could against the white people of the county by voting and issuing Republican tickets. Not satisfied by his answer, Royster pleaded his inability to leave the county but was told by Forrest that he could do as he "damn pleased, stay or go; but he would find out by waiting." Royster stayed in town until the next Monday when a neighbor of his was shot at. Immediately hearing of this news, he packed his clothes; and by one o'clock, he had left for Memphis. After Royster left, his house and belongings were destroyed; in addition, his bay mule worth two hundred dollars was shot.¹⁹⁴ Crittenden's Democrats also tried to intimidate voters by having the Winchester Crowd openly drill with the tacit support of the local government at every precinct.

Just as the exiles predicted, the elections in September were marked by fraud, but even then Democrats could not prevent the Union Labor Party from carrying Crittenden County. Union Labor Party candidate for governor, Norwood, received 1,579 (54%) votes whereas Democrat James P. Eagle received 1,328 (46%) votes.¹⁹⁵ The widespread fraud and intimidation

¹⁹³ Ibid., 6-7.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹⁵ *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report, 1887-1888*, 39.

that was seen in the gubernatorial election occurred in the November congressional elections as well. But, again, it did not secure Democratic victory in Crittenden. In the first district, to which Crittenden County belonged, state Wheel President Lewis P. Featherston of Forrest City, an Independent but strongly backed by a Union Labor ticket, challenged W.H. Cate, a circuit court judge. The returns showed that Cate's 15,576 votes beat out Featherston's 14,238.¹⁹⁶ But, Featherston won Crittenden County getting 869 (73%) of the county's 1,185 votes. In addition to winning Crittenden County, Featherston carried Mississippi County (54%), St. Francis County (62%), Lee County (50%), Phillips County (60%), Chicot County (82%), and Desha County (75%) all of which had large African American populations.¹⁹⁷

Featherston was aware of the fraud that Democrats had committed in the First Congressional District and maintained that he had been unfairly beaten and appealed to the United States House of Representatives in which he made specific claims relating to the elections in Crittenden, Cross, Lee, Phillips, and St. Francis counties. A special committee came to Arkansas and held hearings interviewing many of the exiles. According to Republican testimony, instead of the county court procuring the ballot box, as the law required, Sheriff Werner did not in all cases deliver poll books to the election officers. Furthermore, the ballot boxes that he did procure were boxes that contained a double slot that allowed a ticket to be deposited in the box by the judge; but in reality, it might enter the box or not depending on the choice of the judge.¹⁹⁸ Additionally, elections were found not to have been held in the Idlewild and Ferguson precincts, and the county clerk refused to certify seven precincts returns to the

¹⁹⁶ Committee on Contested Elections, *Featherston vs. Cate*, 1-56. See also *United States House of Representatives Digest of Contested Election Cases in the Fifty-first Congress Compiled under Resolution of the House*, by Chester H. Rowell, Clerk to the Committee on Elections (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1891), 77-146.

¹⁹⁷ *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report, 1887-1888*, 267.

¹⁹⁸ Committee on Contested Elections, *Featherston vs. Cate*, 22-23.

secretary of state because of irregularities recorded in the poll books. The poll books showed that Featherston received a total of 622 votes where as Cate received only 150 votes in Mound City, Walnut Grove, Bradley, Edmondson, Riceville, Gilmore, and Scanlin precincts.¹⁹⁹ By not certifying the returns of these seven precincts, the secretary of state could not include these votes cast for Featherston or Cate. Further testimony indicated that after the elections were conducted and returns showed Cate with a majority, Featherston, his lawyer, W.B. Eldridge, and his lawyers assistant Henry F. Walsh went to Crittenden to secure testimony to contest the election returns. Upon their arrival, they were met with hostility. Over their two-day stay in Crittenden, they were only offered shelter and food by African Americans. They were unsuccessful in obtaining testimony because many in the county's African American population were scared to discuss the matter. L. P. Berry, William H. Cate's lawyer, refused to serve as notary public though he already agreed to it, and threats were made against them.²⁰⁰ The Republican committee concluded that the Democrats had used election fraud in Crittenden, Lee, Phillips, Cross, and St. Francis counties. Upon receipt of its report, the Republican-controlled U.S. House on March 5, 1890, removed Cate and installed Featherston in his place.²⁰¹ The reaction of Arkansas Democrats to the removal was noted by the *Arkansas Gazette*:

The Republican majority in the House has seated Featherston, who during the remainder of the Fifty-First Congress will occupy the place to which the Democrats of the First District of Arkansas elected Cate. There was no pretense that Featherston received a majority in the election. Unfounded and unproved charged and reckless assumptions were accepted as facts, and Judge Cate was ousted because Featherston was needed by the Republicans, and demanded by Powell Clayton. A more infamous outrage on the rights of the people was never perpetrated, even by a Republican Congress.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23, 33.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1-56. See also *United States House of Representatives Digest of Contested Election*, 77-146.

²⁰² *Arkansas Gazette*, March 6, 1890.

It was clear that the installation of Featherston only demonstrated to Democrats that blacks still held a considerable amount of influence in elections. The expulsion of the county's African Americans officials and other prominent citizens had not translated into political dominance.

In the years following the Civil War, Crittenden County faced a multitude of economic, social, and political changes. Crittenden County's local cotton economy increased exponentially in the 1870s through the 1880s, which gave farmers optimism for economic recovery. Optimism was cut short for many farmers due to a decline in agricultural prices and a harsh credit system. As cotton cultivations spread so, too, did sharecropping and tenancy. Both whites and African Americans were susceptible to declining agricultural prices, rising indebtedness, and natural disasters, and both sought relief from their problems first through non-political farmers' organizations and then through a third-party alliance. Fearing that they would lose control of the state's government to third-party alliances and their increasing minority status, Democrats become more adamant about their need to exercise control over the county government. Using extralegal means to wrest control of the county government from Crittenden's African American Republicans, white Democrats exiled the county's African American officeholders along with several other prominent African American citizens to Memphis at gunpoint in the summer of 1888. What transpired in 1888 signified not only an end to African American office holding in Crittenden County but also an end to the county's fusion government. Even though the county's Democrats were successful in returning the county government to white control by using fraud and intimidating voters, they did not prevent the county's African American population from voting. Democrats had not fully achieved political dominance, which was made blatantly obvious after Featherston won the contested election. The events occurring in Crittenden County

forced Democrats to explore new ways to control the political power of the county's black majority.

Conclusion

In the wake of the violence that consumed Crittenden County in 1888, Democrats were able to secure all county government offices. Violence and intimidation may have allowed them to keep blacks out of county government, but Crittenden County's African Americans remained an electoral force to be reckoned with. In the 1890 election, Governor Eagle ran for a second term while the Union Labor Party nominated a lawyer and Methodist minister, Napoleon B. Fizer, for governor.²⁰³ In Crittenden County, Fizer polled 1,663 (71%) votes to Eagle's 668.²⁰⁴ The Union Labor Party's success in Crittenden County was a direct result of the county's black majority population. Two months later in the November election of 1890, Featherston faced Cate again to represent the First Congressional District and just as before Featherston lost the congressional seat but carried Crittenden County, receiving 1,463 (82%) votes. He also won in all other black majority counties in the district with the exception of Mississippi County.²⁰⁵ Additionally, that same year, Crittenden County elected George W. Watson, an African American, to the Arkansas House of Representatives for the 1891 term.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Melanie Welch, "Violence and the Decline of Black Politics in St. Francis County," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 60 (Winter 2001), 390; Chris Branam, "Another Look At Disfranchisement in Arkansas, 1888-1894," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 69 (Autumn 2010), 252; *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Arkansas, September 30, 1892* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Press Printing Company, 1893), 48-50.

²⁰⁴ *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Arkansas, September 30, 1892*, 48-50.

²⁰⁵ *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Arkansas, September 30, 1892*, 60; Branam, "Another Look At Disfranchisement in Arkansas, 1888-1894," Appendix. The other black majority counties that Featherston won include; St. Francis, Lee, Phillips, Desha, and Chicot. Mississippi County African Americans made up 51% of the county's total population by 1890.

²⁰⁶ It is not known why Watson, secretary of the Republican County Committee and supposed Republican campaign manager for the 1888 elections, was not one of Crittenden County's African American to be exiled. For more information regarding Watson see: Willard B. Gatewood, "Negro Legislators in Arkansas, 1891: A Document," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*

The results clearly suggest that despite the use of violence and fraud to install Democrats in office, it had not stopped the county's African American population from voting and playing an active role in the state's politics. Democrats recognized that as long as African Americans were able to vote, the Democratic Party in Crittenden County could never be assured of victory at the polls. Fearing political uncertainty and further violence, Democrats decided to exclude African Americans from politics altogether. "Fusion" agreements after 1888 no longer existed; and by 1891, the legislature was preparing formal disfranchisement measures aimed at eliminating the black electorate.

As early as 1889, an effort was made to eliminate African American voters when Democrat J.E. William's of Pulaski County introduced election legislation, that contained provisions for the use of a secret ballot, poll tax, and the creation of a state board of elections. These measures were passed by the state Senate but rejected by the House because not all Democrats were sure about the methods the legislation contemplated and a number of Republicans and Union Laborites in the House opposed it.²⁰⁷ Even though the proposal was defeated, many Democrats came to believe that election reform targeting African Americans and poor whites could solidify their political domination. Throughout 1890, the *Arkansas Gazette* rallied support for racial exclusion of African Americans.²⁰⁸ Capitalizing on state-wide support for "free and fair elections," Democrats pushed forward restrictive legislation under the guise of electoral reform. In 1891, the Arkansas General Assembly passed a law designed to eliminate African Americans and poor whites from voting by exploiting their illiteracy. The Election Law of 1891 did three fundamental things. It centralized control of the voting process in the hands of

31 (Autumn, 1972); Manuscript Census Returns. *Tenth Census of the United States, 1930, Crittenden County, Arkansas.*

²⁰⁷ Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 61.

²⁰⁸ *Arkansas Gazette*, January 11, 1890, July 10, 1890.

Democratic officials by creating a state election board made up of the governor, the state auditor, and the secretary of the state. The members of this board would be in charge of appointing election judges for each voting precinct, and those judges would then select two clerks to assist them at the polls. This provision effectively took the control over state elections away from county officials and consolidated authority with Democrats who controlled Arkansas's state government. Two other provisions of the Election Law of 1891, the state standardized ballot and the secret ballot system forced voters to adhere to a kind of literacy test. In previous elections, candidates and their political parties were given pre-prepared tickets with designated shapes, symbols, or colors to allow illiterate voters to differentiate between their party's ballot and that of another party. The secret ballot system and the standardized ballot eliminated these types of tickets and issued a uniform ballot. Additionally, the secret ballot system mandated that only the precinct judges could assist voters in marking their ballots; and ultimately, the process discouraged many illiterate men from voting.²⁰⁹

The same legislature that passed the Election Law of 1891 also proposed a new poll tax amendment to the Arkansas Constitution, a measure clearly meant to further reduce the numbers of African Americans and poor white voters. The proposed amendment required voters to present a receipt proving they had paid their current annual poll tax before they received a ballot. This poll tax receipt was to be obtained from the county's sheriff's office, which undoubtedly intimidated many people, especially African Americans. The poll tax amendment was submitted to a vote for approval in the September 1892 state elections. The results showed that the amendment received a total of 132,436 votes: 75,847 for and 56,587 against. The 1892 poll tax results from Crittenden County showed that 744 persons voted for the poll tax, where as 22 voted

²⁰⁹ Branam, "Another Look at Disfranchisement in Arkansas, 245-262; Perman, *Struggle for Mastery*, 124-130.

against the measure. This might suggest the secret ballot provision of the 1891 law had already eliminated much of Crittenden's black electorate even before the poll tax was in place.

The 1891 Election Law and the poll tax amendment completely transformed politics in Crittenden County became more apparent in the 1892 and the 1894 elections. In 1892, the September election results for the governor's race showed that Democratic candidate William M. Fishback polled 741 (89%) votes, compared to 8 (1%) for Populist candidate Jacob P. Carnahan and 77 (9%) for Republican candidate William G. Whipple.²¹⁰ For the state as a whole, J. Morgan Kousser estimates that from 1890 to 1892 the secret ballot reduced voting in Arkansas by 18%; and after the passage of the poll tax, voter participation dropped by another 19% by 1894.²¹¹ Election results from Crittenden County reflect the declining number of voters from 1888 through 1894. In 1888, 2,907 persons voted for governor and two years later 2,331 voted; but after the election law of 1891 only 829 people voted in the county. This number of voters decreased even more by the 1894 election when only 548 persons voted for governor. Altogether, Crittenden County's voter participation dropped by 77% from 1890 to 1894.²¹² Essentially, the secret ballot eliminated the non-Democrat vote in Crittenden County.

The last disfranchisement measure passed by Democrats in Arkansas was the white primary. Even though the passage of the Election Law of 1891 and the poll tax amendment successfully disfranchised a majority of African Americans, it was still possible for African

²¹⁰ *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Arkansas, September 30, 1892*, 54; Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, 124-130.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

²¹² *Arkansas Secretary of the State Biennial Report of the Secretary of the State of Arkansas, 1888-1889* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Press Printing, 1891), 47-49, 53-55; *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Arkansas, 1890-1892*, 54-59; *Arkansas Secretary of State Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Arkansas, 1893-1894* (Little Rock, Arkansas: Press Printing Company, 1895), 44-46; Branam, "Another Look At Disfranchisement in Arkansas, 1888-1894," 252.

American voters who could meet those tests to have a political influence by voting in the Democratic primaries, which allowed them the ability to exact concession from competing candidates. With disfranchisement having destroyed opposition parties, Democratic primaries were the only elections that mattered in Arkansas. Use of the primary system spread throughout Arkansas; and at a meeting in February of 1898, the State Democratic Central Committee required all counties to hold primary elections and requested that congressional, senatorial, and judicial districts to hold primaries on the same day as the county primary. In an inaugural address to the Arkansas General Assembly on January 11, 1905, Governor Jeff Davis stated in this speech that “we have come . . . to a parting of the ways with the negro.”²¹³ At the next meeting of the State Democratic Central Committee, a resolution was proposed to limit primary elections to whites only.²¹⁴ The implementation of the white primary on a statewide basis effectively deprived African Americans of the right to vote in any meaningful state election.

Crittenden County, from the time it was established, was deeply dedicated to the idea that cotton cultivation would provide economic self-sufficiency. Throughout the antebellum years, Crittenden’s white citizens relied on cotton to help them purchase more land and more slaves. Land provided power over the economy and politics to white landowners, which was used to add force to the enslavement of African Americans. Following the Civil War, race-relations were significantly altered. Crittenden County, because of its black majority population, allowed African Americans to actively participate in local, county, and state politics. The return

²¹³ Thomas A. DeBlack, George Sabo III, Morris S. Arnold , Jeannie M. Whayne, *Arkansas: A Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002) 269; Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, 72-82; James Harris Fain, “Political Disfranchisement of the Negro in Arkansas” (MA thesis., University of Arkansas, 1961), 59-65.

²¹⁴ Fain, *Political Disfranchisement of the Negro in Arkansas*, 59-65; John Graves, “The Arkansas Negro and Segregation, 1890-1903” (MA thesis., University of Arkansas 1967), 106-114; *Arkansas Gazette* February 1, 1906.

of Democrats to power in Arkansas in 1874 did not curb Crittenden's African Americans' political activity. Instead, the county's African American population was sufficient to support a viable Republican Party, which controlled the county government. Even after Democrats forcibly took control of the Crittenden's County offices by exiling its black officials, the county's remaining African American population continued to exercise their right to vote. Fear over the survival of their party and their political control prompted Democrats to seek election and suffrage reform intended to eliminate African Americans from the electoral process all together. The Election Law of 1891, the poll tax amendment, and the Democrat "white primaries" effectively eliminated African Americans as a meaningful force in Arkansas politics. These discriminatory laws along with adoption of the white primary sealed the political fate of Crittenden County's black population for decades. Disfranchisement was the final solution to Crittenden County's "Negro Rule."

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