

**THE READJUSTER MOVEMENT IN LOUDOUN,
1877-1885¹**

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The Readjuster movement in Loudoun County has long been neglected by historians. Mr. Saffer discusses its emergence in the context of the state-wide movement, and reports on voting patterns in Loudoun during the 1870s and 1880s.

Introduction:.....65

The Readjuster Period.....66

 CHAS. P. McCABE69

 JOHN R. CARTER.....69

 VIRGINIA FINANCES.....71

 THE READJUSTERS’ CONVENTION.....72

 A COLORED MASS MEETING80

ENDNOTES.....85

Introduction:

Douglas Southall Freeman, editor of the *Richmond News-Leader* and later a Pulitzer prize-winning historian, wrote in an article for “The Nation” magazine in 1924 that “in Virginia men accept the Democratic Party as they do their religious affiliation—chiefly by inheritance.” Freeman’s opinion of Virginians truly applied to Loudoun County. In 1892 a reporter for the *Loudoun Telephone* noted that “from the closing of the war until now Broad Run district has known but one political party.” He added that children had been taught from the cradle that one political party was the country, and the other the enemy. Colonel E.V. White, former Confederate soldier and leading citizen of Loudoun, stated in 1900 that he “never voted a republican ticket in my life nor ever shall.”

These attitudes of loyalty to the Democratic Party, and hatred or distrust of the Republican party, emanated from the conflict between the North and South from 1861 to 1865. Loudoun was divided by that war. Most of Loudoun’s citizens favored secession and supported the Confederacy. Some, primarily in the Lovettsville and Waterford areas, supported the Union and even formed two companies of cavalry known as the Loudoun Rangers to fight for the Union.

These divisions within Loudoun had existed prior to the war, but the bitterness of the conflict caused the feelings to be forged onto Loudouners of that generation. These same attitudes would be taught in the next generation. The war also caused the end of slavery, an institution that had existed in Loudoun from the beginning. Although many freed blacks lived in Loudoun prior to the war, about 25% of Loudoun’s population in 1860 were slaves. A society that had treated Negroes as property in 1860 was slow to accept them as equal citizens after the war.

The joint issues of loyalty to a “Lost Cause” and racial division would be the leading factors in uniting Loudoun citizens behind a single party for nearly one hundred years following the Civil War. Nevertheless, some, as the former Unionists in Lovettsville, would never accept the Democratic party and every four years would cast their ballot for the Republican nominee for president. In other elections, these Republicans would be less active, since the dominance of the Democratic party in Loudoun and Virginia would give them little hope of success.

Loudoun was not unique in the domination of the Democrats, but the presence of two minority groups—Negroes and white Unionists—does show how these two groups were consistently excluded from any real participation in the leadership of the county. There were many issues over the period from 1867 to 1966 which divided the Democrats, but except for the debt/Readjuster controversy of the 1870s, none threatened to remove the Democrats from power.

The Readjuster Period.

In 1879 the Readjuster Party of Virginia contested with the Conservative (Democratic) Party of Virginia to gain control of the state's general assembly. The Readjuster Party had been established by a convention in Richmond in February 1879, under the leadership of William Mahone of Petersburg, a former Confederate General and the president of the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad Company. Mahone was a member of the Conservative Party (formed of former Democrats and Whigs) and had unsuccessfully sought its nomination for Governor in 1877. However, the discontent within Virginia which resulted in the creation of the Readjuster Party had started with the adoption of the Funding Act of 1871 by the state legislature.

One issue hanging over Virginia since the war was the state's prewar debt. The debt of Virginia in 1861 was about \$31 million. By 1871 the state debt had increased to nearly \$46 million due to interest accruing on the state bonds during and subsequent to the war, because no payments had been made on the debt since 1861. Much concern existed about Virginia's ability to repay the debt. One-third of the state had been removed in 1863 by the formation of West Virginia. Also, much of Virginia's taxable property had been destroyed by four years of warfare across its boundaries. Finally, the elimination of slavery had deprived Virginia's largest landholders of much of their personal property and the ability to produce income. Most of Virginia's prewar debts had been incurred in the expansion of her internal improvements, especially canals and railroads. Most of these had experienced major losses during the war since they were considered military goods. Since the state lacked the funds to assist in the rebuilding of the railroads, private interests encouraged the state to sell its stock in the railroads. The Underwood constitution approved in 1869 had contained the clause—"The State shall not be a party to

or become interested in any work of internal improvement.” This provision seemed to justify the sale of the state’s stock in its railroads. In the General Assembly of 1870 William Mahone, president of three railroads—Norfolk and Petersburg, Southside, and Virginia & Tennessee—was able to pass legislation combining the three railroads into the Atlantic, Mississippi & Ohio Railroad. The bill also authorized the new railroad company to purchase the state’s stock in the three railroads at what would be a bargain price.²

The General Assembly in 1871 adopted the Funding Act under the direction of Governor Gilbert C. Walker’s administration to provide for payment of the state debt. New bonds bearing 6% interest were to be issued to replace old bonds and accrued interest on two-thirds of the debt. The remaining one-third would be replaced by certificates which would be payable when the portion of the debt owed by West Virginia was resolved.³ The Underwood constitution had addressed this issue—“The General Assembly shall provide by law for adjusting with the State of West Virginia the proportion of the public debt of Virginia proper to be borne by the State of Virginia and West Virginia.”

The Funding Act was thought to be the solution to Virginia’s debt problem, but from the beginning the tax revenue of the state was insufficient to both pay the interest on the debt and meet the state’s expenses, including for public schools. This was compounded by the acceptance of interest coupons on the bonds for payment of taxes. This practice, which was reaffirmed by the courts, significantly reduced the cash collected by the state for payment for other expenses of government, including the public-school system. Over the next few years, various efforts were made in the General Assembly to repeal or modify the funding law, but were mostly blocked by the ‘Funder-Conservatives.’⁴ The exceptions were periodic measures to reduce the rate of interest from 6 to 4 per cent per annum, and prohibiting some bondholders from using coupons to pay state taxes.

In 1874, the new Governor, James L. Kemper, who called the Funding Act “a disastrous mistake,” convened a conference with bondholders which reluctantly agreed to seek refinancing of the entire debt, and reduction of the interest rate to four per cent; the legislation reduced the interest rate, but did not refinance the debt.

By 1877, the Conservative party was beginning to split over the debt issue. Members who believed that the debt was a

sacred obligation were known as Funders. Those members seeking a reduction in the debt were known as Readjusters. Other terms used were “forcible readjusters” and “repudiators,” but the ultimate issue was how to pay the debt without taxing Virginia citizens out of existence or eliminating government services like the public-school system. However, some prominent Virginians argued that the public schools should be closed before Virginia failed to pay any portion of its debt. For example, John W. Daniel of Lynchburg famously declared that he would rather see a bonfire made of every school in Virginia, than see the debt not paid.

By 1877 several candidates supporting readjustment were running for seats in the General Assembly. The Conservative party in Loudoun had nominated Cooke D. Luckett and William Matthew for its two seats in the House of Delegates. Charles P. McCabe of Leesburg and John R. Carter of Mountville offered themselves as Readjusters. The following statements were published in “The Mirror” of November 1, 1877:

With reference to the public debt of Virginia—It is larger by many millions than the public debt of any other State in the Union, and when it was contracted Virginia held and taxed nine hundred and sixty million worth of property. At this time Virginia holds and taxes three hundred and eighteen millions; having lost since 1861 more than two thirds of her wealth. The debt that we are called on to pay is forty-one or two millions. Can we pay it? I think not! The remnant that is left of property is depreciating every year, and the debt is increasing at the rate of over a million per annum. And, if we include West Virginia’s portion, which is claimed by a large number of the people of Virginia to have been adjusted or repudiated, our public debt is over sixty millions. And as there is nothing in the funding bill to rid Virginia of the portion assigned to West Virginia, if we ever attempt to pay the forty two millions we will have all to pay.

Therefore, viewing the debt in the legal light in which it now stands. I am in favor of compelling the Bondholders to adjust the debt. I would offer to them what their bonds cost them, or I would fix the value at fifty cents on the dollar. For I believe that is as much as Virginia can possibly pay. If these propositions are not accepted by the Bondholders I would favor such legislation as would compel an acceptance. I think the

earlier Virginia gets on this basis the better it will be for her future. For, in the truthful language of Mr. Holliday, used in his open letter to the people, he says, "capital and immigration will not come to a bankrupt State."—Our pecuniary condition is deplorable and will continue so long as we make no effort to lessen the burdens that the people are carrying.

I am utterly opposed to any increase of taxation for any purposes. I favor a reduction in both State and County. I am unalterably opposed to interfering with the public-school funds for any other purpose than those for which it was collected.

In brief, the above are my views, and if the people of Loudoun desire me to represent them, I will do all in my humble power for their good.

CHAS. P. McCABE

In accepting the call of numerous friends throughout the county of Loudoun to become a candidate for a seat in the next Legislature of Virginia, I shall only say that, in this political contest for the relief of the people of Virginia, from the odious and offensive taxation which they are now bearing for the payment of a fraud perpetrated by the Legislature of Virginia, in the passage of an act known as the Funding Bill,—an act in its very conception a fraud—its inception surrounded by a gorgeous display of wines, meals, etc., at the expense of a crushed and broken people,—I endorse fully and unequivocally the policy indicated by my friend and compeer, C. P. McCabe.

In the few talks which I shall have with the people of Loudoun, I shall pay particular attention to the Funding Bill.

JOHN R. CARTER

The Conservative party convention in August 1877 had nominated Frederick W. M. Holliday of Winchester for Governor.

Holliday was a former Confederate colonel who had lost an arm during the war.

When he was nominated, he was referred to as the “one-armed hero of the Shenandoah Valley.” The Republicans did not even offer any candidates for statewide office in 1877. Therefore, the campaign in Loudoun would only be between the Funders and the Readjusters for the two Delegate seats. It is likely that the lack of a campaign for Governor failed to energize Conservative voters. The two Readjuster candidates were elected in a close contest. McCabe and Carter carried the Conservative stronghold of Leesburg, as well as Republican precincts in Lovettsville and Lockett’s Store. Less than two thousand votes were cast as compared to over three thousand in 1873. In 1876 the Conservatives had amended the state constitution to make payment of the poll tax a prerequisite for voting. Since lower taxes and public education were strong Readjusters’ issues, the poll tax requirement only served to reduce McCabe and Carter’s votes and their victory margin.

John R. Carter and Charles P. McCabe were two of twenty-two independent Delegates elected in 1877. John R. Carter was a 58-year-old Mountville farmer who had run as an independent in 1871 and 1873. Charles P. McCabe was a 46-year-old shoe & harness maker who lived and worked in Leesburg. Prior to the war McCabe was a slave trader in Loudoun.⁵ Another newly elected member of the state legislature was James S. Barbour of Culpeper who had opposed Eppa Hunton for Congress in 1874. Barbour introduced the “Barbour Bill” in the General Assembly in the next session. The bill called for maintaining the present state property tax rate of 50 cents with 25 cents going to general government expenses, 10 cents for public schools and 15 cents for interest on the state debt. Both houses of the legislature passed the bill, but it was vetoed by Governor Holliday.⁶ Holliday had not taken a position on the debt issue in the campaign, but his veto showed that he supported the Funders’ position. However, the debt problem was still unresolved, and the state finances continued to decline.

The following article from the October 5, 1878 issue of the “Washingtonian” shows the extent of the problem:

VIRGINIA FINANCES

*The State Treasury Empty—No Money to Run
The Public schools—Application of the
Governor for Loan from the Banks*

Virginia is, owing to the repudiation sentiment in the Legislature, reduced to the most trying financial straits. The public schools have just been reopened, but there is not a dollar in the State Treasury with which to carry them on or to pay arrearages and salaries due since last session. The teachers are clamoring for their pay, and in some places, they have actually refused to begin the labors of the present session until they have received the amount due them for the last. It is claimed that the taxes levied and collected for the support of the public schools have been perverted to other uses, but principally to defraying expenses of the State government. The "Readjusters" at the last session of the Legislature failed to make provision even for meeting the ordinary expenses of the State government and hence the lack of funds to carry on the schools.

In this emergency Governor Holliday on Wednesday evening last had a conference with the Bank presidents here whose banks are State repositories. . . . The object was to effect a loan of \$250,000 for the purposes of paying the expenses of the schools.

Although the above article blames the problems on the Readjusters, no attempt had been made by the Funders to revise the Funding Act of 1871. The real difficulty was that insufficient revenues were being collected to pay the state's expenses. In Loudoun, as elsewhere, the total assessed value of land and buildings declined between 1873 and 1875. This is partly due to the economic recession of 1873. Also, the district assessors were elected by their neighbors who did not want to pay any more taxes than possible. Therefore, under assessment of property was very common. Without an offsetting increase in the tax rate, revenues would certainly decline.

In December 1878 a new measure known as the "McCulloch Bill" or "Brokers' Bill" was introduced in the General Assembly to deal with the state debt problems. The bill was named for Hugh McCulloch who represented a group of

bondholders in London, England.⁷ Most of the Virginia bonds were held by individuals or banks outside the state which encouraged many Virginians to support readjustment. The Readjusters immediately attacked the McCulloch Bill saying that it was no compromise by the bondholders. The Funders had moved to exclude the Readjusters from the Conservative caucus in the General Assembly. The Readjusters called for a convention in Richmond in February 1879 to form a new party composed of Readjusters from both the Conservative party and the Republican party. The following article appeared in the "Washingtonian" of February 8, 1879:

"THE READJUSTERS' CONVENTION"

We are gratified to find so little interest taken in the convention, in this county. The conservatives of Loudoun understand this movement, and we are pleased to see they are exercising their sound discretion in letting it alone. Some of the leading Republicans regard it a scheme which will break up the Conservative party, as we learn from a recent issue of the Valley Virginian—the only Republican paper we know of in the State, in which it speaks cheeringly of the probability of this Convention breaking up the Conservative organization. If the present Legislature will not settle the debt question upon the terms and plan now before it, what can the Convention, this call proposes, do with it?

Both the leading newspapers in the county, the "Washingtonian" and "The Mirror" were supporters of the Conservative party. The editor of "The Mirror" was Benjamin F. Sheetz, who was also chairman of the Conservative party. William B. Lynch was editor of the "Washingtonian." Both papers sided with the Funders over the debt issue.

One thing the Conservatives had done in response to the debt issue was to try to reduce the cost of government. They had reduced the number of members in the legislature from 132 to 100 in the house and from 43 to 40 in the Senate. This change reduced the number of Delegates in Loudoun from two to one. Loudoun would also share a Delegate with Fauquier. In the Senate Loudoun's district had included Alexandria, Fairfax and Prince William. Now Loudoun would also share a Senate district

with Fauquier. The General Assembly reduced their sessions from annually to biennially to further reduce the costs of operation.

With this realignment in the fall of 1879, Loudoun's two Readjuster Delegates had to make a decision. John R. Carter was nominated for the state Senate seat, and Charles P. McCabe was nominated for the Delegate seat. No Readjuster candidate was offered for the House floater seat with Fauquier. The Conservative party nominated William Matthew from Hillsboro, who was elected to the House in 1869, 1871, and 1875, and lost in 1877, for the Senate. George R. Head, Mayor of Leesburg and Delegate in 1871, was nominated for Delegate. William H. Payne, former Confederate general from Warrenton, was nominated for the floater Delegate seat. The Conservatives hoped to recover from their defeat in 1877 to the Readjusters. Head should offset McCabe's strength in Leesburg, and Matthew was a popular and successful candidate in previous elections. The Readjusters hoped to press their opponents on the tax and school issues and to use their popular statewide leaders, William Mahone and John E. 'Parson' Massey. McCabe wrote to Mahone, "the simple announcement that you will speak will insure a large, a very large audience . . . the people of the County are anxious to see and hear you. Your name strikes terror to the Funders here."⁸ Parson Massey was reputedly the best stump speaker and debater in the state. Massey, a Baptist preacher, had practiced law in Loudoun in the 1840's, while his brother was pastor of Ketoctin Baptist Church near Purcellville.⁹ Therefore, he was also well known in Loudoun.

On October 13, 1879 Mahone and Massey were scheduled to speak in Leesburg, but they did not appear. The audience had to settle for Colonel Henry Peyton, speaking for the Funders, and for addresses by McCabe and Head. General Mahone and H. H. Riddleberger of Woodstock did make an appearance in Leesburg on October 30, as "The Mirror" described, "(to) quite a respectable audience at the Court House."

William Wirt Henry of Richmond appeared for the Funders and "The Mirror" of November 6, 1879 gave this account of his remarks:

The single hour allotted Mr. Henry, sandwiched as he was between his two stalwart opponents, was most happily and satisfactorily consumed. . . . Mr. Henry's entire familiarity of

the subject, and his plain, concise and forcible way of expressing himself, made him a full match for them both.

In the statewide election the Readjusters carried a majority of the seats in both houses of the legislature. The result was different in Loudoun. Matthew and Head were both elected with 53% of the vote. Carter and McCabe received more votes than in 1877 and again carried Leesburg, Lovettsville, and Lockett's Store. However, their victory margin in these precincts was much smaller than 1877, and not enough to offset their losses in other precincts. In 1877 over 1,800 votes were cast, but in 1879 there were over 2,150 votes. The Conservatives in Loudoun, having faced defeat in 1877, used their better organization to turn back the Readjusters.

The Readjusters now controlled the legislature. The "Riddleberger Debt Bill" was passed by the legislature to reduce the debt payable by Virginia. Governor Holliday vetoed the bill, the Readjusters lacked the votes to override his veto. The Readjuster legislature quickly took action to strengthen its power. General William Mahone, head of the party, was elected to replace Robert Withers in the U.S. Senate even though Withers' term did not expire until March 1881. The legislature also replaced many of the county court judges with their supporters. Loudoun was no exception. Charles B. Ball who had served as judge since 1869 was replaced by James B. McCabe. McCabe was the son of the defeated Readjuster Delegate, Charles P. McCabe. The "Washingtonian" of January 24, 1880 contained the following reference to the new judge:

On Thursday night the Leesburg Band serenaded Mr. J. B. McCabe, the recently elected Judge of Loudoun, in response to which that gentleman delivered a stirring little speech, thanking them for the compliment, and intimating that "the work of the readjustment had just begun."

The Readjusters were also trying to increase their voting power by repealing the capitation tax as a prerequisite for voting. The "Washingtonian" of February 7, 1880 had this opinion on the situation:

THE CAPITATION TAX SHOULD BE PAID BEFORE VOTING

A strenuous effort is being made by the Readjusters in the Legislature, and their organs in the State, to have repealed that provision of the constitution, which requires that each voter in this State shall pay his capitation tax, of one dollar, before he can vote.

This tax, as provided by the constitution, goes exclusively to the support of the Free Schools of the State, and by requiring the voter to pay it before voting, each citizen of the State gives that much to the support of the schools, and therefore by each one has a direct interest in the schools. . . . It is a tax which every man who favors these schools should take pride in paying. . . . The tax is equal and just, as all, rich and poor, have to pay it.

The November 1880 election would select a new president. President Hayes had decided not to run for reelection. The Conservative party of Virginia had split between Funders and Readjusters, and each faction held a convention to choose delegates to the Democratic national convention. The "Washingtonian" of May 15, 1880 published the following list of Readjuster delegates selected for the state convention:

READJUSTERS' CONVENTION DELEGATES

Leesburg District—Delegates—C. P. McCabe and W. C. Balch. Alternates—J. C. Donohue and J. C. Rives.

Broad Run District—Delegates—P. F. Vansickler. Alternate—S. C. Lent.

Lovettsville District—Delegates—C. J. Brown and L. H. Potterfield. Alternates—G. Wine and J. L. Russel.

Mercer District—Delegates—J. J. Tyler and L. Chancellor. Alternates—A. T. M. Handy and J. F. Newland.

Jefferson District—Delegates—W. F. Mercier. Alternates—D. M. Divine.

Mt. Gilead District—Delegates—J. M. Hoge and Preston Aldridge. Alternates—G. W. Hoge and John Mead.

The list includes former Delegate Charles P. McCabe, and Mt. Gilead supervisor James M. Hoge.

However, Loudoun's leading Readjuster John R. Carter of Mountville is not included. Perhaps Captain Carter's business interests were taking too much of his time, based upon the following April 10, 1880 article from the "Washingtonian:"

The 'Loudoun Marble Quarry' is situated one mile east of Mountville. The marble is said to be equal in quality to any ever yet discovered, not excepting that of Italy. All operations in quarrying have been suspended for the present—whether this is owing to the limited supply of marble, or the necessary funds for carrying it on we are not informed. Capt. J. R. Carter is engaged in utilizing the marble, which has been taken out of the quarry and is subjecting it to a rigid test, by converting it into lime. The quality of the lime is said to be excellent, either for building or agricultural purposes.

Early in 1881 William Mahone took his seat in Congress as a U.S. Senator from Virginia. Having been elected by a Readjuster-controlled legislature (U.S. Senators were selected by state legislatures, not popular vote, in those days), Mahone had to choose whether to vote with the Democrats or Republicans in organizing the new Senate. There were 38 Democrats and 37 Republicans in the Senate, and Mahone's decision would determine which party controlled the Senate since the Republican Vice-president would break any ties.¹⁰

In 1880 a new Republican newspaper "Loudoun Telephone" had been opened in Hamilton to offer some opposition to the Democratic papers—"Washingtonian" and "The Mirror"—in Leesburg. On March 18, 1881 the "Loudoun Telephone" gave this report.

Many months ago we predicted that General Mahone would finally drift into the Republican party. We fully believed it then and we believe it now. But, whether the attitude of the General in the Senate last Tuesday, may be considered a confirmation of our prophesy, is yet an open question. The Readjuster Senator did vote with the Republicans in the organization of the Senate, but he gave no promise that he would continue to vote with them; yet, we are disposed to believe he will; for, if he had no other reason, the provocation of the ill-timed bitter and relentless arraignment of himself, by the Democrats,

through their preconceived leader Senator Hill, was enough to drive any man of dignity into the ranks of the opposition.

The decision of Senator Mahone to vote with the Republicans in Congress infuriated many of the Funders. Although the Funders and Readjusters had split over the state debt issue, most still considered themselves national Democrats. However, to many Readjusters, Senator Mahone was still the leader of their party, and the debt issue in Virginia had still not been resolved due to Governor Holliday's veto of the Riddleberger Bill.

The Readjuster state convention was held in Richmond in June 1881 to nominate a slate for Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General for the fall. The Readjusters nominated William E. Cameron, Mayor of Petersburg for Governor, John F. Lewis for Lieutenant Governor, and Frank S. Blair for Attorney General. The local Readjusters also fielded William Giddings for state Senate, Peter A. Fry for Delegate, and J. F. Jones for floater Delegate with Fauquier county.

The Conservative party convention nominated Major John W. Daniel, "the lame lion of Lynchburg" for Governor. Daniel, a former Confederate major, walked with a crutch due to war wound. The Conservatives also nominated James Barbour of Culpeper for Lieutenant Governor and Philip W. McKinney for Attorney General. The local Conservatives nominated lawyers Henry Heaton of Leesburg for Senate and R. Taylor Scott of Warrenton for floater Delegate. Dr. George E. Plaster of Snickersville, who was a Delegate to the 1868 constitutional convention was chosen for Delegate. With the aid of Senator Mahone and national Republican leaders, the Republicans were persuaded not to run any candidates for statewide office. However, the Loudoun Republicans offered Chester C. Gaver as a candidate for Delegate. The "Loudoun Telephone" of June 10, 1881 offered the following comments on the election:

The late election in Loudoun County demonstrated one thing—that if ever a Republican is elected to any County office, he must be elected as a 'Republican.' The political squeamishness which has been manifested in our party must cease if we ever expect to do anything. The Democrats voted for their men almost solidly, while our voters were running at

large and captured as easy prey, by Democratic liquor and lucre.

In November 1881 the Readjusters carried the state offices. The Conservatives continued to dominate in Loudoun with the statewide candidates receiving over 62% of the vote. Heaton, Plaster and Scott were elected to the state legislature. C. C. Gaver received only 276 (7%) votes for Delegate as the Republican candidate. The "Loudoun Telephone" had proudly noted that "Mr. C. C. Gaver has turned more money into the County Treasury from fines imposed, acting in his official capacity, as magistrate than all the other magistrates of Loudoun collectively." This fact probably accounts for his lack of popularity with the voters. Gaver carried Waterford precinct by one vote over Dr. Plaster. The "Loudoun Telephone" of November 18, 1881 further reported:

As the result of the late fierce struggle in Virginia the Readjuster party has gained the entire control of our State government. They have made many promises, now it remains for them to make a record. On that record they must depend for the perpetuity of power. If they falsify their boasts about being able to creditably and finally dispose of the debt question, they will alienate the greater portion of their support which has come out of the Democratic party.

With a Readjuster Governor and a Readjuster majority in the legislature, the time for reforms had finally arrived. In 1882, the legislature passed the Riddleberger Debt Bill, increased funding to the public school system, and repealed the poll tax qualification for voting. All of the bills were signed by Governor Cameron. Another action of the legislature was to elect H. H. Riddleberger of Woodstock, author of the Riddleberger Debt Bill, to the U.S. Senate. Riddleberger was a Valley Republican who aligned with the Readjusters, and he would give Virginia two Republican Senators. The Readjusters, led by Mahone, also made many changes in state-appointed officials. Richard R. Farr was appointed superintendent of public instruction to replace William H. Ruffner who had served since the creation of the office in 1870. Farr was not content with this position, for in November he would challenge John S. Barbour for the Eighth District seat in Congress. Another Readjuster, John E. "Parson" Massey, who

had been elected by the legislature in 1880 as auditor of public accounts, was replaced in 1882.¹¹ Massey, who many considered the “father of readjustment,” openly broke with Mahone.

The voters of Virginia would choose an at-large Congressman in November 1882. The Democrats selected Massey as their candidate. The Readjuster/Republican coalition party nominated John S. Wise, son of former Governor Henry S. Wise. The Readjusters and the Republicans had combined in 1881 to elect Governor Cameron, and now they would seek to continue the success of their coalition. With the passage of the Riddleberger Debt Bill many Readjusters like Massey no longer saw a need for a separate party. Now Readjusters would choose between the Democrats and the Republicans, just like in national politics.

Republican/Readjuster John S. Wise was elected to the at-large congressional seat. His opponent Massey stated in his autobiography, “I was convinced that I was elected by a majority of about 10,000 of the legally qualified voters. I spent nearly the whole of both sessions of the 48th Congress in Washington, earnestly but vainly trying to get my contest acted upon.”¹²

Often during this period political corruption and improper vote counting were claimed. As noted earlier by the editor of the “Loudoun Telephone,” voters were lured with “liquor” and “lucre.” Buying votes was a common practice among both poor white and black voters, since they had grown up without education or the right to vote. In Loudoun the results again favored the Conservatives, now called Democrats. Massey (at-large) and John S. Barbour (Eighth District) each received 65% of the Loudoun vote. Barbour was reelected to a second term in Congress, carrying all precincts except Lovettsville, Waters, Lockett’s Store, Purcellville, and Hughesville. Purcellville he lost by two votes, and Hughesville was a draw. Over 24% of the entire Republican vote was concentrated in the Lovettsville district.

In 1883, the black voters of Loudoun were also struggling with the Readjuster County Court judge to obtain some control over the election process. “The Mirror” of May 17, 1883 contained the following report:

A COLORED MASS MEETING

(A fuller discussion of the meeting is the subject of a article on Civil Rights in this issue by Donna Bohanon.

We, the undersigned Delegates in mass meeting assembled in Leesburg, May 14th, 1883, were duly authorized by the said meeting to present this Petition:

To the Hon. James B. McCabe, Judge of the County Court of Loudoun.

We, the undersigned colored citizens of said county would respectfully call your Honor's attention to the following facts, namely, that twenty years have elapsed since the bondage of our people in the South was removed: then we were a people comparatively without property, without the means of acquiring it and business capacity to manage it. Then we were uneducated and but few of us could read or write. Time has changed and improved our condition.—Under the guarantees of the National and State Constitutions, and laws in execution thereof our people have made advances: our children are being educated, and knowledge is supplanting ignorance, and the many little homes show we are acquiring property. Thus we have become identified with the material interests of our State; we have homes to defend, lives and liberty to protect, children educated and to have a common interest in the general welfare. We were in a sad condition to have conferred upon us citizenship, but are now much better prepared to appreciate it and meet its responsibilities. We disclaim any reflection upon the administration of justice; we know that hitherto we were in such condition as not to expect to participate in the administration of either. But we respectfully submit that that time has past. Political society enjoins on us the same duties and requires of us the same that is exacted from its other members. For twenty years we have been trying to qualify ourselves for the duties of citizenship, we trust it is not presumption in us, to say, our efforts have not been unavailing; we desire in the future a fuller recognition of our rights and privileges which the laws of the land have guaranteed to us, hence we respectfully petition your Honor in

the future, to recognize our rights, to serve as Jurors and Judges of Election.

The Judge granted all of the above Petition except the right of being Judges of Elections. He, the Judge said he did not know that we, the colored people, had any right to ask to be appointed judges of election, but we think we have that right too.—The meeting adjourned to meet at Lincoln, August 4th, 1883.

DELEGATES

Lincoln—James A. Ball, John M. Neal
Middleburg---Jas. H. Boman
Snickersville—William Jackson
Lovettsville—Joseph Rivers, Henry Howard
Hamilton—Thomas Williams, Alfred Grigsby
Unison—Fielding Green, Wm. Moland
Mt. Gilead—James R. Hicks
Silcott Springs—Gregg Furr
Leesburg—Jesse Moton, John Brooks, William W. Waters
Hughesville—Lee B-zant

OFFICERS

Joseph Waters, President
Fielding Green, Vice President
James A. Ball, Secretary
William W. Waters, Treasurer
Joseph Rivers, Assistant Secretary
Gregg Furr, Assistant Treasurer

The power to appoint officers of election was controlled by the County Court judge. When the Readjusters gained control of the legislature in 1879, they had removed the judge in Loudoun and other counties and replaced them with judges more favorably to their party. Although the Readjusters in Loudoun needed the support of blacks and Republicans, they were not as generous in sharing power, as the above petition indicates.

The Democrats of Virginia held a state convention in July 1883. John S. Barbour, the Eighth District Congressman, was chosen as the new party chairman. The Democrats had failed since 1879 to control the legislature, and with new leadership they hoped to regain control in November. The passage of the Riddleberger Debt Bill in 1882, and the subsequent court decisions relating to that legislation had removed the main issue which had divided the Funders and the Readjusters. The party hoped to unite the white voters and also sought support of black voters to defeat the coalition party of the Readjusters and Republicans. With the defection in 1882 of Parson Massey the Democrats hoped to attract many of the former Readjuster votes. "The Mirror" of March 8, 1883 voiced this position.

Now let the people of the Commonwealth, those democrats who alienated themselves from each other over the settlement of the debt, come together, and reuniting their broken forces, preserve the old mother Commonwealth from the greed of political adventurers, who are ready to barter her dearest interests if they may thereby advance their own selfish ambition.

In Loudoun the Democrats continued to dominate with John F. Ryan defeating his Republican opponent S. T. Nichols. Thomas Smith of Fauquier, son of former Governor and Confederate general William 'Extra Billy' Smith, won the floater Delegate seat over Sampson P. Bayly. Both Democrats received over 64% of the vote. Ryan received 95% in his home precinct of Gum Spring.

On Saturday, November 3, 1883, a riot occurred in Danville, Virginia in which one white man was killed and several wounded, and five Negroes were killed with a number wounded. The reports of the riot were not published in Loudoun's weekly newspaper until after the Nov. 6 election. However, it is likely that most Loudouners were aware of the riot in Danville prior to the election. The news of the riot is credited with helping the Democrats win majorities in the legislature.

With the revived Democratic Party having accepted the Riddleberger debt settlement, the debt issue was less important to Virginia's voters. Therefore, the coalition of Readjusters and Republicans in 1884, a presidential election year, would now be known as the Republican Party of Virginia. The "Loudoun

Telephone” published on August 29, 1884 a report on a meeting of the Republicans in Loudoun to select delegates to a Congressional district convention. Although the former Readjuster delegate Charles P. McCabe was present at the convention, he was not chosen as a delegate, alternate or member of the executive committee. Two of the alternates—John Brooks and Fielding Green—were blacks who had joined in submitting the petition to Judge McCabe in 1883 seeking positions as election judges for colored citizens.

In the November 1884 presidential elections, Democrat Grover Cleveland carried Virginia, and Loudoun County. In Loudoun, only the Lovettsville district went Republican, although the Republicans carried some precincts in the Mt. Gilead and Jefferson districts.

The fall election for 1885 would replace the Governor along with a new legislature. The Democrats nominated Fitzhugh Lee, former Confederate general and nephew of Robert E. Lee, for Governor. John E. ‘Parson’ Massey for Lieutenant Governor, and Rufus A. Ayers for Attorney General, completed the Democratic slate. The local Democrats renominated Henry Heaton for state Senate and John F. Ryan for Delegate. Alexander D. Payne of Warrenton, captain of the famous Black Horse Troop during the war, would be their nominee for floater Delegate.

The Republicans nominated John S. Wise, who had been elected at-large Congressman in 1882, for Governor. Henry C. Wood for Lieutenant Governor, and Frank S. Blair for Attorney General, completed the Republican ticket. For the Loudoun seats in the legislature, the “Washingtonian” of September 19, 1885 gave the following report:

The Republican County Convention met at Purcellville, on Saturday last, and nominated Mr. Hugh R. Holmes candidate for Floater, from Loudoun—a very good farmer and a good citizen, but we do not think the people will float him into the Legislature, and Mr. Minor F. Chamblin a candidate to represent the county in the House of Delegates. Mr. C. was formerly, we believe, a democrat, but went with Mahone on Readjustment. We are pleased that we have a Republican ticket and will have a clean fight, without annoyance of any

independents. We have no fear as to the result. The prospects are most auspicious for a handsome Democratic victory in this district and state.

J. S. Owen for state Senate completed the Republican list of candidates.

The result of the 1885 election gave the Democrats complete victory, taking all the statewide offices, 29 of 40 seats in the state Senate, and 72 of 100 seats in the House of Delegates.¹³ The Democrats all won in Loudoun receiving over 59% of the vote. The voting by party in each precinct was nearly uniform. The division by party within precincts was the same as in 1884; except that about 170 fewer votes were cast. The election of Fitzhugh Lee as Governor had brought an end to the Readjuster movement in Virginia. The Democrats now held the governorship and majorities in the legislature. The Republicans held Virginia's two seats in the U.S. Senate, with William Mahone and H. H. Riddleberger. Mahone's term would expire in 1886. With a Democrat as president, the control over Federal government job appointments had shifted to the Democrats as well. The division over the state's debt and its effect on government services had removed the Democrats from control of the state in 1879. The Readjusters' success in obtaining power, with the support of Negroes and Republicans, had surprised the Conservatives. Rather than continuing to oppose the Readjusters, the Democrats had accepted defeat; and the Democrats' 1883 platform had agreed to readjustment, and took credit for improving schools, which the Readjusters had accomplished. The Democrats had selected a popular candidate for Governor in 1885 along with the former spokesman of readjustment, Massey, as Lieutenant Governor. The success of Lee was not obtained on issues, but instead on the good feelings and optimism for the future that his campaign generated. The former cavalry officer had led a body of Virginia troops in the inaugural parade on March 4, 1885 for President Cleveland. A pride in Virginia's past with a hope for the end of division in the future was the image most white Virginians wanted.

ENDNOTES

¹ This article is adapted from the author's previously-published book, *Loudoun Votes 1867-1966: A Civil War Legacy*. (Westminster, MD: Willow Bend Books, 2002). Editing and some additional research were provided by Edward Spannaus.

² Allen W. Moger, *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), 15.

³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵ Charles P. Poland, Jr., *From Frontier to Suburbia* (Marceline, Missouri: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1976), 232.

⁶ Moger, *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd*, 33.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁸ Nelson Morehouse Blake, *William Mahone of Virginia* (Richmond: Garret & Massie, 1935), 182.

⁹ Elizabeth H. Hancock, *Autobiography of John E. Massey*, (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1909), 20.

¹⁰ Blake, *William Mahone of Virginia*, 206.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 221.

¹² Hancock, *Autobiography of John E. Massey*, 245.

¹³ Blake, *William Mahone of Virginia*, 232.