

In the Wrong Hands:

William Brownlow, Radical Reconstruction and the Ku Klux Klan

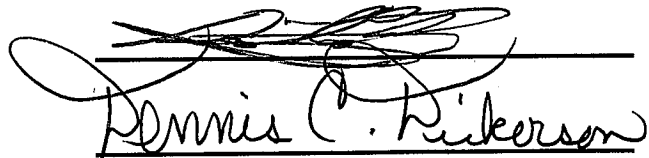
By
David Rutz

Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of History of Vanderbilt University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Honors in History

April 2010

On the basis of this thesis
defended by the candidate on
April 30, 2010 we, the
undersigned, recommend that the
candidate be awarded
Honors
in History:





In the Wrong Hands:
William Brownlow, Radical Reconstruction and the Ku Klux Klan

David Rutz

Senior Honors Thesis

16 April 2010

Tennessee has a unique place in the history of Reconstruction, the volatile period of rebuilding and reunion the South underwent in the years following the Civil War. It was the last southern state to secede in 1861 and the first state to re-join the Union following the surrender of the Confederacy in 1865. Moreover, the region of East Tennessee during the Civil War was a hotbed for Unionist sympathizers who despised the Rebel takeover of state politics that spearheaded secession. Though Tennessee was not entirely dominated by secessionists, Pulaski, located in the south central part of the state, became the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan, the white terrorist organization that harassed, intimidated and murdered African Americans around the South throughout Reconstruction. This thesis explores why this occurred, and how a racist, anti-secessionist and controversial governor, William G. Brownlow, played a role in its rise. Brownlow, who made his name publishing a pro-Unionist newspaper in East Tennessee and rose to take near-dictatorial power over the state after military governor Andrew Johnson was elected Vice-President in 1864, was a strong factor in the Klan's evolution during his administration that lasted from 1865 to 1869. His loathing of secessionists, divisive personality and zest for power were all contributors to the endangerment of African Americans in his term in Tennessee. The birth of the Klan in Tennessee and its spread throughout the rest of the South during Reconstruction, while not directly caused by Brownlow's governorship, was certainly aggravated by it.

The historiography on Brownlow discusses his relationship with African Americans and how it evolved during his administration, particularly regarding their suffrage rights. He originally opposed it but came to strongly support it as it became politically useful. The focus concerned African American enthusiasm regarding his about-face on their voting rights, and there is also a great deal of secondary material regarding how Brownlow battled Klan activity in

the state after the group began to emerge more strongly after his re-election. Noel Fisher's War at every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee does an excellent job of revealing how East Tennessee came to have such radically different opinions on secession from the rest of the state, and it helps lay the foundation for how Brownlow made himself famous as a rabid Unionist in Knoxville. Brownlow's own book, written in 1862, details his time among the secessionists and his arrest and near-execution for loyalty to the Union and how his grudge against Rebels evolved. His biography, called Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands, by William Coulter, details, among other things, his calling of an extraordinary session of Congress to deal with the anarchy being reported by the Freedmen's Bureau due to Klan activities, in addition to his well-documented hatred of secessionists and his campaign to strip them of their franchise rights as soon as he took office in 1865. His position of vehement opposition to the Klan is markedly clear in secondary literature, particularly in James Patton's Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, 1860-1869, which also examines the odious position Brownlow held in the hearts of those who started the Klan. Coulter reports numerous threats and menacing letters sent his way that desired his violent death. W.E.B. Du Bois's highly respected Black Reconstruction revealed racism was prevalent in all the states of the South. Poorer whites viewed freed blacks as unwanted competition for labor opportunities in Mississippi. The same was true in Virginia, what one observer described as "an impulsive feeling of aggression—a desire to get the Negro out of the way."¹ And mistrust and hatred for African Americans also persisted in Tennessee; simply because many of the state's residents were opposed to secession meant they were tolerant of former slaves. Brownlow's position as a racist Unionist was common among Tennesseans, "a melancholy fact that among the bitterest opponents of the

¹ Du Bois, W.E.B., Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880, New York: The Free Press, 1935, p. 144

Negro in Tennessee are the intensely radical loyalists of the mountain district.”² Yet among all the states of the South that had racist populations, Tennessee was where black males received the ballot first after the Civil War, in time for the election of gubernatorial election of 1867, and also where the Ku Klux Klan called its first home.

The historiography fails to highlight what I believe to be Brownlow’s strong role in energizing the base of the organization. Spotlighting Brownlow’s own hypocrisy on suffrage issues and actually spurring on the evils he thought to be fighting is a very interesting historical irony that merits additional research. However, I do not want to solely place the reasoning behind the rise of the Klan and its subsequent harassment and violence toward African Americans squarely on Brownlow’s shoulders. That is not the intention; that would be a gross oversimplification of a broader social tendency prevalent among many of Tennessee’s white citizens who feared they were losing the control of their state to Radical influences. But I do want to demonstrate his contribution to that feeling and his inability to comprehend the storm that was gathering in Tennessee while he was governor and how he exacerbated such racial tensions. Specifically, I will spotlight his approach to black suffrage, something he initially opposed but came to support when it became politically useful to him. He and fellow Radical Republicans wanted to maintain control over state politics. I will demonstrate the recklessness of these actions in light of the racial and social tensions that existed at that time and how they characterized Brownlow’s political career.

Primary documents from Brownlow’s own hand will establish his state of mind concerning the suffrage issues facing the state, and letters of African Americans and those who formed the Ku Klux Klan, as well as newspaper materials, will serve to illustrate how these policies made their impact on its citizens and gauge their reactions. In some cases, there is re-

² Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, p. 144

interpretation of primary writings from Brownlow's hand. The speeches to the Tennessee Senate and House of Representatives Brownlow gave at the beginning of his administration, when racial tensions were high, spelled out his antagonism for former Confederates. In the middle of his administration, as the Klan began to establish itself, Brownlow increasingly antagonized whites with his pro-black suffrage policy. These documents help illustrate the way he changed his positions regarding suffrage over time to better suit himself politically and how that affected the state. Using the available historiography to supplement, I hope to show the irony previously mentioned while simultaneously shedding light on this period of state history. The significance of this study derives greatly from the Ku Klux Klan's devastating impact on Reconstruction and its re-evolution in the early twentieth century as a white terrorist organization. After he became governor, Brownlow kept Tennessee out of the hands of the loathed secessionists, and the path he took to accomplish this personal vendetta was one that endangered many lives and did much to "antagonize the races," something he claimed he wanted to avoid.

The central questions this thesis explores are: How did Governor William G. Brownlow change the lives of so many African Americans in Tennessee from 1865-1869 for the worse when he was seemingly doing so for the better, and why? How did his suffrage policies stir up racial animosity, and to what extent did Brownlow and Radical Republicans play a role in the origination and spread of the Ku Klux Klan? By giving the background of Brownlow's career in journalism, specifically his newspaper *The Whig*, I will illustrate how his stubborn, vindictive nature, particularly in regards to former Confederates, came about. Brownlow's fear of another secessionist takeover of Tennessee during his administration, how it influenced his decision to seek re-election in 1867 and the impact of the black vote on Brownlow's successful campaign to do so are also instrumental to addressing the central questions of the paper.

Chapter 1: The background of William Brownlow and antebellum Tennessee

“When the secessionists go to Washington to dethrone Lincoln, I am for seizing a bayonet and forming an army to resist such an attack, and they shall walk over my dead body.”

William G. Brownlow, Sept. 20, 1860

Governor William G. Brownlow's administration from 1865 to 1869 reflected the tumultuous nature of the times in the American South immediately following the Civil War. Newly freed slaves received protections under the Constitution and enjoyed full citizenship, while former Rebels encountered the indignity of disfranchisement and the elevation of the former slaves who were now their equals under the law. Brownlow had spent the last 25 years before taking office in 1865 antagonizing a large portion of the citizenry now subject to his authority. The period from 1839 to 1864 which included Brownlow's career as a journalist, imprisonment by Confederate officials and near execution, and subsequent exile to the North, did nothing to ease the tensions that existed between the pro-Union Brownlow and his contemporaries who supported secession. This perceived crime against the United States, something Brownlow criticized and denounced during the years leading up to and during the Civil War, was unforgivable. Although his great loyalty to the country in the face of imprisonment and death may seem admirable, its impact on his judgment as a public official is the subject of this thesis.

Brownlow's vindictiveness did not lend itself well to tolerance or moderation once he became governor. This chapter will lay out why Brownlow felt such devotion to the Union and the delineation between those views and his pro-slavery ones, why his personality alienated so many and what led to his arrest and near execution by the Confederacy. In addition, it will discuss why and how he was freed, why he was exiled to the North afterwards and wrote his vitriolic autobiography railing against the Confederacy and subsequently how this all had an impact on his time as governor of Tennessee. Despite his racist views toward African Americans, he became an advocate for their suffrage rights after taking office. His political, and well-publicized, battle for their suffrage rights not only went greatly against his own views but also

was reckless and actually dangerous for African Americans. It seems a strange argument to make that Brownlow should not have pushed for them to receive the ballot; that is not the argument being presented here. What was wrong was that it was for self-seeking reasons; his attempt to cement Radical Republican power in Tennessee's government, enact revenge on former Confederate sympathizers who were responsible for the state's secession and his own imprisonment was one motive. In addition, he pushed for the ballot in order to gain unilateral African American support, and it had the inflammatory effect of wounding and angering the southern white polity Brownlow took it upon himself to torment. How this did far more harm than good for African Americans, given the social and political climate of the state at that time, is what will be illustrated later. How and why Brownlow got to that point is the focus of this chapter.

Brownlow's involvement in journalism could have been expected from anyone who had heard the fiery preacher's orations throughout the south. Through his years as a Methodist preacher, Brownlow became famous, or in the viewpoints of some, infamous, for his inability to hold his tongue on any pressing issue of the day. He became a Methodist at age twenty, eventually becoming a circuit rider all across southern Appalachia. Methodists initially confronted American slavery as a national legacy of moral shame; early prophets of the Protestant faith referred to it as "un-just, un-Christian and un-natural," and it was formally denounced by the American branch of the church by 1780.³ However, slavery was a firmly entrenched institution in the American South by that time, and especially by the 1830s when Brownlow was in the midst of his ministry. While it was common for Methodist ministers to oppose slavery, like most whites they never accepted African Americans as full equals because

³ Donald G. Matthews, *Slavery and Methodism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 3

of the conditioned experiences of their living environments.⁴ The slavery debate was divisive enough to split the Methodist Church into two halves in 1844, one based in free states, and the other, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, based in slave states.⁵ Brownlow, living in East Tennessee at this time, was heatedly anti-abolitionist. By the time of the Methodist schism, Brownlow was well into his journalistic career and away from the circuit. But the fact that he shared pro-slavery views with the Southern Methodists demonstrated that he endorsed their religion more than the original Methodists who now made their home in the North.

Brownlow settled with his family in 1839 in East Tennessee and started the *Elizabethton Whig*, before moving to Jonesboro and eventually settling and becoming nationally famous as a newspaperman in Knoxville. Freedom of the press granted Brownlow a voice that could go beyond any mere pulpit; rather it was one that would allow his opinions to reach the eyes and ears of citizens across the South. And those opinions were hardly moderate in nature. His main passions were Methodism and Unionism, and he was also strongly pro-slavery, defending an institution he believed was ordained by God and just as beneficial to the enslaved as to their owners.⁶ In addition, Brownlow's pro-slavery views and pro-Unionist views were very much a product of his environment in Knoxville and the Southern upcountry in general. As Northern reporter Sidney Andrews explained in the fall of 1865, upcountry Unionism rested first and foremost on "hatred of those who went into the Rebellion" and of a "certain ruling class" that had brought about the Civil War.⁷

There was not a single white South before the Civil War, and there was certainly not a single white Tennessee. Indeed, economic specialization did not coincide with state borders at

⁴ Matthews, *Slavery and Methodism*, p. 63

⁵ William Warren Sweet, *Methodism in American History*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1953, p. 248

⁶ Steven V. Ash *Secessionists and Other Scoundrels: Selections from Parson Brownlow's Book*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999, p. 2

⁷ Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, New York: Harper & Row, 1990, p. 5

all.⁸ East Tennessee, as shall be examined more deeply later in the chapter, was very different from the rest of the state. By 1860, nearly 25 percent of the Tennessee population consisted of its 275,000 slaves, but this number was unevenly distributed throughout the three main regions of Tennessee. Only 10 percent of the enslaved lived in East Tennessee, actually down a small amount from the roughly 11 percent that lived there in 1840. In contrast, Middle Tennessee by 1860 had 54 percent of the state's slaves and West Tennessee had 36 percent. Only 10 percent of rural households in East Tennessee owned slaves in 1860, meaning most farmers who lived in the region relied on paid labor, if any at all, for their needs. In addition, the farming areas of East Tennessee focused mainly on the production of wheat and livestock for commercial purposes, which were not labor intensive activities, and the need for slaves was diminished. In Middle and West Tennessee, tobacco and cotton were better suited to be grown in those areas and slaves were in greater demand.⁹ While Brownlow and many other East Tennesseans supported slavery and looked down upon African Americans as not being equals, the institution was not as central to the economy of the region as it was to the rest of the state. Thus, it was not surprising that in the vote in the Tennessee Legislature to leave the Union in June of 1861, there was near unanimity for secession in the rest of Tennessee and unanimity against it in the East. Also, Brownlow's Methodist background was more of a means of self-promotion than anything else; the historical antislavery position of his sect clearly had no effect on his own, self-seeking brand of morals, and as stated, Methodists had slowly accepted the institution and backed off in their vocal opposition to it. It was to his pro-Union region, where he would settle for the next 25 years, which he was to always be more loyal.

⁸ Foner, A Short History of Reconstruction, p. 5

⁹ Donald L. Winters, Tennessee Farming, Tennessee Farmers, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994, p. 137

What is important to understand here, however, is not merely that Brownlow was an opinionated person, and not merely that he had negative personality characteristics, most notably obstinacy, racism and single-mindedness. Certainly, the same could be said for many people living in this volatile period in the country's history, as the United States headed toward its bloodiest conflict to date, the Civil War. It was the way that Brownlow conducted himself in his capacity as a journalist and in the political arena, which completely lacked tact. Any perceived enemies of Brownlow, and they were numerous, were not simply criticized in the *Whig*. They were skewered, and almost any ethnic or political group was fair game if Brownlow saw fit to criticize them. They included Baptists, Presbyterians, Catholics, Mormons, Democrats, Republicans, blacks, Irish immigrants, drinkers, Sabbath-breakers, bad poets, philandering husbands, rival editors, abolitionists and secessionists. A product of the Virginia frontier, and never one who considered himself wealthy, Brownlow dispelled any attempts at courtesy in his castigations of his numerous political enemies. Rather they generally consisted of nasty, ad hominem attacks with the goal, which was more than often successful, of infuriating any on his long list of foes.

To Brownlow, the most odious of his enemies were those advocating secession in the antebellum period. Secession arose due to a variety of perceived injustices being committed against the South, most notably by the 1860 election of President Abraham Lincoln, who failed to even appear on the voting tickets in many southern states due to the anti-slavery views of his newly-founded Republican Party. Brownlow readily acknowledged that he was hardly a "national" President in his newspaper; in fact he was a vigorous supporter of the Union party ticket headed by John Bell, who wound up taking Tennessee's electoral votes in the 1860 election. Brownlow wrote in the *Whig* on June 9, 1860, "We support the constitutional Union

party, and we shall fight to the bitter end the thieving, lying, all pervading corruption and wasteful extravagance of the Buchanan wing of Democracy; the fire-eating, union dissolving, political charlatanism of the Southern extremists,”¹⁰ referring to the previous President, James Buchanan. Despite those strong feelings, Brownlow still rebuked any notions of his southern compatriots of rebelling for the simple fact of Lincoln’s election, writing that any attempt to break up the Union before awaiting an overt act by Lincoln would be “wicked, treacherous, unjustifiable, unprecedented, and without the shadow of an excuse.” Brownlow very seldom minced words about the Rebels; in one response to an angry letter blasting one of his famous Unionist editorials, he declared the whole scheme of Secession to be “the most evil, diabolical and infernal scheme ever to set foot for the ruin of any country.”¹¹ With both sides having their heels dug in deeply over issues concerning the Union, it was clear there would be an inevitable clash, one that Brownlow welcomed. It was anticipation not only of Brownlow’s future stubbornness as governor, but of his inability to back away from a fight. Those two characteristics complemented one another once he took office, and they were constantly evolving over the 25 years he spent as a journalist before becoming governor.

An example of Brownlow’s intense devotion to the Union was in his own account of his experiences among the rebels leading up to the Civil War. He wrote, “I have never been a Sectional, but at all times a National man, supporting men for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency without any regard on which side of Mason & Dixon’s Line they were born, or resided at the time of their nomination...Here, I am an unconditional Union man, and advocate

¹⁰ James Patton, Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee:1860-1869, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934, p. 6

¹¹ Ash, Secessionists and Other Scoundrels, p. 2, 29. 37

the preservation of the Union at the expense of all other considerations.”¹² It was the whole country that made the United States so great in Brownlow’s eyes, not one region over another, so he dismissed the intense loyalty to their home region that so many southerners professed in their desire to secede. While the major divide in the country at that time may have appeared to lie between people who were pro and anti-slavery, Brownlow, like many other southern Unionists, was a proponent of both the Union and slavery. Former Tennessee Governor William B. Campbell spelled out his belief before secession that splitting from the Union would prove fatal to the institution itself, “a most unfortunate and injurious means of protecting slavery...unwise and impolitic, and tending to the ruin and overthrow of negro slavery. The rights of the slaveholder cannot be maintained out of the Union so well as in it, and I fear cannot be maintained at all outside of it.”¹³ He and Brownlow were of one mind in that regard.

Brownlow was bombarded with numerous letters warning of the likelihood that he would be hanged for making such vitriolic statements against secessionists, especially after the Civil War commenced. One such writer stated that he had seen, “in a late issue of your dirty sheet, that you are full of braggadocio, and that you declare positively that if Tennessee, and the South generally, secede, you will cling to that most abominable of all abominations, the Union. Now, Parson, if you adopt this policy, what do you think will be the consequence? You will certainly be hung, as all dogs should be.”¹⁴ These and other letters hardly swayed Brownlow. Rather, they merely served to strengthen his already steely resolve. “I have no doubt but there are thousands of Secessionists in the South who would be willing to see me hung, and would assist in swinging me up, could they have the slightest pretext for so doing,” he responded in January 1861. Only

¹² William G. Brownlow, Sketches of the Rise, Progress and Decline of Secession, Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1862, p. 20

¹³ Crofts, Daniel W. Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989, p. 109

¹⁴ Letter to Brownlow from W.M. Yancey, Jan. 10, 1861

three months later, the Civil War began when the Confederate army fired upon Union troops at Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. In June of that same year, Brownlow's nightmare became reality when the majority of Tennessee voters decided that the state should secede and join the Confederacy.

Just two weeks before the voters decided on secession, Brownlow had written an editorial in the *Whig* addressing the flying of the American flag over his house, something that had drawn considerable negative attention from many other Tennesseans who were preparing to cast their ballots. To the 'God-forsaken scoundrels and hell-deserving assassins' advocating secession, he wrote, "I am at all times prepared to give them satisfaction. I take back nothing I have ever said against the corrupt and unprincipled villains, but reiterate all, cast it in their dastardly faces, and hurl down their lying throats their own infamous calumnies." During the crucial day of June 8 when secession was approved, Brownlow reported voter fraud and intimidation of Unionists en route to what he perceived to be an entirely illegitimate decision by Tennessee. He was proud to say East Tennessee played no part in the endeavor, given the vote from the vast majority of its representatives in 1861 not to secede, and he crowed in his autobiography that the Union men "will have the State back or die in the last ditch!"¹⁵ On the Union's side, he said, were "the real people, irrespective of parties." Against them was the "slavery aristocracy," a group of "overbearing tyrants" who wanted "poor white men" to be their "hewers of wood and drawers of water."¹⁶ Ever defiant, Brownlow had bravely vowed to continue the fight even with the wave of the rest of the state rising against his views. Many East Tennesseans began wreaking havoc on Confederate activities with a full-scale rebellion in that section of the state. They formed military outfits and tried to acquire weapons and ammunition, and many thousands either fled the state to

¹⁵ Brownlow, *Sketches of the Rise, Progress and Decline of Secession*, p. 57, 223

¹⁶ Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, p. 159

join the Union forces in Kentucky or tried to gain contact with President Lincoln to ensure them of their unwavering support for the Union. Plans were actually made by the Union army to invade East Tennessee and in essence, free the entrapped citizens.¹⁷

While citizens from the Western, Middle and Eastern portions of the state were technically all Tennesseans, the regional differences made them, in a sense, strangers to one another. It went beyond the differences in agriculture that were spelled out earlier. The western portion of the state was not settled until the 1820s, and it evolved independently of its eastern counterpart. Middle Tennessee enjoyed rapid population growth and congressional redistricting that gave it increased political power. Knoxville, the largest city in the East region, had been the capital of Tennessee until 1817, before being moved to Murfreesboro and eventually the state's central city of Nashville, a subject of deep bitterness amongst East Tennesseans. All three sections of the state battled throughout the 1800s leading up to the Civil War for political control and state funding for internal improvements. Middle Tennesseans were responsible for blocking several bills in the 1830s that would fund railroad and road projects for Western and Eastern Tennessee, a major blow to their infrastructure and a manifestation of the decreased political power in Knoxville over state issues. East Tennessee did not fit with the rest of its state, just as Brownlow did not reflect his state's interests once he became governor in 1865. Guerilla violence would scar the state throughout the Civil War as Unionists fought Secessionists in a battle of Tennesseans versus other Tennesseans. Unionists burnt bridges to impede the travel of Confederate armies and were arrested and attacked all around the state.¹⁸

For Brownlow, these increasingly violent tensions would wind up nearly costing him his life. Two particularly pointed writings by Brownlow finally convinced the Tennessean

¹⁷ Noel C. Fisher, War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997, p. 41

¹⁸ Fisher, War at Every Door, p. 14, 15, 57

Confederates to finally rid themselves of the headache in Knoxville, and it seemed that his voice would finally be silenced by a hanging. The indignity of imprisonment and his near martyrdom for the Union served to further strengthen Brownlow's great antagonism against Rebels. Brownlow believed he wound up in prison because of his editorials. In this case, on October 24, 1861, Brownlow announced that that issue of the *Whig* would be the last for some time since the Confederacy had finally grown tired of his antics and issued a warrant for his arrest. The decision to arrest him stemmed, Brownlow claimed, from two 'treasonable articles', both of which sarcastically called on southerners to volunteer to join their fellow rebels in Tennessee in the 'noble' fight against the Union.¹⁹ He fled Knoxville in fear for the safety of his family, but in good faith he wrote Brigadier General William H. Carroll of the Confederate army offering to surrender in return for being escorted out of Tennessee safely, to which Carroll agreed. Instead, when he arrived in Knoxville, Confederate District Attorney John Ramsey was waiting for him with an arrest warrant for treason, and Brownlow was thrown into prison. The specific charges were that Brownlow had published "incendiary articles" against the Confederacy. As it was however, Brownlow was only immune to military arrest, not civil charges like the ones brought against him, so Carroll's promise inadvertently meant nothing.²⁰ Now, Brownlow would have to face the great indignity of imprisonment by his treasonous captors, or at least that was how he viewed his situation.

However, the suffering he thought he would endure was a point of pride for him, the imprisonment and pending execution a badge of loyalty to the Union for which he was about to die. In his first day in prison on December 6, 1861, Brownlow recalled being among other downcast Unionists and urging them to keep their spirits up and revel in their courage. He

¹⁹ *The Knoxville Whig*, Oct. 19, 1861

²⁰ Fisher, *War at Every Door*, p. 59

recalled saying, "Gentlemen, don't take your confinement so much to heart. Rather glory in it, as patriots, devoted to your country and your principles. What are you here for? Not for stealing...not for murder, but for your devotion to the Stars and Stripes."²¹ He made a vow there that he would face prison with dignity. Here, two of Brownlow's defining qualities met: admirable courage and great stubbornness. He scoffed at the idea of ever signing an oath of loyalty to the Confederacy to save himself from hanging, and he was very much ready to leave his family (at this point having a wife and seven children) without a head of the household in this sacrifice. The Union came before any familial connections; strange, seeing as he had even sympathized in a diary entry with a man who had to leave behind six small children to be in prison. This experience would come with a price for the future governor. Although his imprisonment may have been beneficial to his pride, the experience also greatly weakened him physically, and he witnessed many Confederate actions that confirmed his worst fears about them, or so Brownlow wrote in his usual flamboyant style. The recollection of these experiences was a major influence on his future actions against former Confederates once he took office. He kept careful track of his experiences in jail with day-to-day diary entries detailing prison activities. All the while, Brownlow sensed that he would likely not survive long with outside secessionist forces clamoring for him to be silenced once and for all. All the better, he thought, proof that his cause was righteous enough that the only way for the Confederacy to keep the truth of the evil of the rebellion silent was to kill him. "You may take a different view of the subject, but I regard this as the proudest day of my life"²², he told his fellow prisoners the day he was incarcerated.

²¹ Brownlow, Sketches of the Rise, Progress and Decline of Secession, p. 309

²² Brownlow diary entry, Dec. 6, 1861

In one entry Brownlow described a 27-year-old man, C.A. Haun, who was hanged on a charge of bridge-burning, a common form of domestic terrorism used by Unionist forces at the time in their attempt to bring down the Confederacy. Brownlow wrote on December 11, “These savage beasts of the Southern Confederacy are prepared to hang a man for saying that Secession is wrong or unconstitutional.”²³ He was approached and asked to swear an oath of loyalty to the South (Brownlow replied he would prefer to be in hell than be in such a bogus government and that it was not a government at all, but rather a big Southern mob²⁴), saw numerous prisoners beaten savagely, and saw others forced into military service of the Confederacy in order to avoid the fates of their compatriots. These were just some of numerous offenses Brownlow witnessed and heard of during his three weeks in prison. Also, the conditions of his cell were extremely poor. At the time of his incarceration, Brownlow was approaching 60 years of age, and the cold, dirty confinement of his prison inflamed bronchitis, an ailment from which he had suffered throughout his life.²⁵ Also, having seen men like Haun executed with no trial and almost no warning about his impending death, he sensed that he too would die. Brownlow, however, decided he would not go quietly. The speech he had planned to make at the gallows was a defiant declaration of many of his extreme characteristics, being abusive in his name-calling, ardently patriotic and, to what he thought would be his end, completely fearless.

Given the sense of melancholy he must have felt approaching his would-be death, the speech was compelling in its tenacity and simultaneous outspokenness against secessionism and ironclad support for the Union. It was rambling, personal in its attacks and lacking eloquence. Making up his mind to meet his fate “like a man”, Brownlow penned the speech as he watched more and more of his fellow prisoners get executed. It included ad hominem charges against

²³ Brownlow diary entry, Dec. 11, 1861

²⁴ Brownlow diary entry, Dec. 14, 1861

²⁵ Ash, Secessionists and Other Scoundrels, p. 117

several individuals responsible for his current predicament and laid out his case that the charges and process of law against him were fraudulent. More important were his castigations of several individual Confederates, detailing their numerous crimes and acts of deceit against the Tennessee people to bring about the rebellion. Although his captors could scarcely have imagined that he would rise to the position of Governor just four years later, had he been executed they would have not endured the political harassment Brownlow unleashed upon them once he was in office. His defiant hatred of the secessionists rang clearly in this speech. "I die," he wrote, "for refusing to espouse the cause of this wicked rebellion; and I glory in it, strange as you may think it. I could have lived, if I had taken an oath of allegiance to this so-called Confederacy. Rather than stultify myself and disgrace my family by such an oath, I agree to die!"²⁶ Before giving a good-bye to his family, he planned to say, "I die, with confidence that the United States Government will crush out this rebellion during the coming spring and summer. Mark my prediction! I would like to be living when that is done; but I must resign myself to my fate."²⁷ His words were powerful, if melodramatic, and they typified Brownlow's keen ability to play to an audience that he would demonstrate in the coming months when he toured the north. They never were necessary however, as the sickly Brownlow was released at the end of December of 1861 and placed under military house arrest for several months before being escorted out of Confederate territory in March of 1862. It was deemed that a personal vendetta that District Attorney Ramsey had against Brownlow had been the main reason behind the arrest and that there was no justifiable legal cause for his incarceration. It was possible that the Confederates believed the man more valuable to the Union as a martyr for the cause than alive. They were wrong, and as

²⁶ Ash, *Secessionists and Other Scoundrels*, p. 127

²⁷ Brownlow, *Sketches of the Rise, Progress and Decline of Secession*, p. 334

the invigorated Brownlow took advantage of his new lease on life and became a sensation in the north by using his well-known, acidic tongue.

Martyrdom seemed to be something that Brownlow was willing to accept, given his resignation to his own death and his unwavering devotion to the Union. His freedom and eventual tour of the north probably caused Confederate supporters a lot more harm in the long run than his execution. It provided the spotlight-hogging Tennessean a huge audience that reveled in his tale of courage and his fierce loyalty to the Union. Brownlow's *Whig* writings that railed against the Confederacy had not gone unnoticed in the North, and they had made him nationally famous. All the while, however, while his popularity in East Tennessee remained strong, his name continued to be mud among whites around the rest of the state who saw their loyalties to the Confederacy assailed repeatedly by Brownlow. After staying briefly in Nashville, which had been captured by Union forces in February of 1862²⁸, he left for the north. All across the United States, Brownlow was a hit, visiting, among other important cities, Indianapolis, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia and Boston, drawing huge, adoring crowds nearly everywhere he traveled. Listeners delighted in Brownlow's stories, which included pointed, and not always truthful, barbs about brutality by southern troops, the degeneration of southern society, deceit by the Confederate government and the unyielding courage of East Tennessee Unionists like himself. The Republican Party and the War Department actually used Brownlow as a recruiting tool for party members and troops, respectively, providing housing, travel funding and recruiting officers who would try to sign men up after hearing Brownlow's impassioned speeches.²⁹ As a national sensation, Brownlow was motivated to write a book about his experiences, many of which are cited in this chapter. Free to write what he pleased in the north and away from possible

²⁸ Ash, *Secessionists and Other Scoundrels*, p. 5

²⁹ Fisher, *War at Every Door*, p. 124

southern retribution, he pulled no punches regarding his strong feelings about the degenerates he perceived to be in charge of the Confederacy and those who had instigated rebellion in Tennessee. Philadelphia publisher George W. Childs convinced Brownlow to undertake the endeavor and he agreed, accepting \$10,000 for his manuscript, much of which he would use to re-finance the *Whig* upon his return to Tennessee. It was also a way, Brownlow said, to give the Rebels “a fair and honest but scathing version of their villainy and their murderous course and conduct from beginning to end.”³⁰ The book was published in the summer of 1862 and sold 100,000 copies over the next few months, a huge number in those days and a reflection of Brownlow’s growing influence. This would help in his gubernatorial quest in Tennessee as Radical Republicans realized that Brownlow would be a useful, popular ally to have in power after the Civil War ended.

With future U.S. President Andrew Johnson serving as Military Governor of Tennessee during its occupation beginning in 1862, Abraham Lincoln and the Union forces aimed to free East Tennessee from Confederate forces and reward the region and the majority of its population for its loyalty to the United States. It was finally freed in September of 1863, and Brownlow and his family returned to Knoxville, where he resurrected the *Whig* under the new, more appropriate name of Brownlow’s *Knoxville Whig and Rebel Ventilator*. He resumed his tongue-lashing editorials, only now with a spark of violence as well. After Tennessee came under military control of the Union, and more and more Confederates were imprisoned, Brownlow did not empathize with their plight. Voices calling out for sympathy for the rebels were scorned; in one editorial on December 14, 1864 he wrote, “Our sympathies are on the side of the Union prisoners, families and soldiers, and we wish to see justice done to them and theirs before an

³⁰ Merton E. Coulter, *William G. Brownlow: Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands*, Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1937, p. 235-240

infamous pack of traitors and second-handed murderers are provided for...Let all rebels...ground their arms and submit to the United States authorities if they want friendship and protection.”³¹ The last serious threat to Tennessee was checked when Union forces led by General George Thomas crushed an attempted Confederate invasion of Nashville led by General John Bell Hood. The Battle of Nashville took place from December 15-16, 1864, days after Brownlow’s pronouncement.

Also, steps were taken by East Tennesseans to ensure that they would have their voices heard in the state government after the Civil War as a reward for their loyalty. Partly thanks to Brownlow’s influence, at the National Union Republican Party Convention in Baltimore in June 1864, Tennessee was declared to be a state and its delegates were awarded votes in nominations for the Presidency and the Vice-Presidency.³² Johnson, then serving as governor of Tennessee and a staunch Unionist, was awarded the latter nomination as the running mate of Lincoln, a sign that the Republican Party wanted to reward Southern Unionists for their support and extend their power into the South. Through a series of political maneuvers, East Tennessee Unionists assumed control of the party politics in the state. They called a convention in Nashville in 1865 and, using their influence as Union loyalists, made a rule that every county in the state was allowed one vote in the proceedings and was given an additional vote for every 150 anti-secession votes cast during the debate over whether Tennessee was to secede back in 1861. Naturally, this stacked the deck in favor of East Tennessee, and, among other things, the old Confederate government’s acts were declared null and void, all slaves were freed and Brownlow

³¹ “A Few Plain Words”, Editorial in *The Knoxville Whig*, Dec. 14, 1864

³² Coulter, William G. Brownlow, p. 260

was nominated for the office of governor to succeed the new Vice President.³³ He was elected easily on March 4, taking over 99.8 percent of the vote.

Once in office, Brownlow knew he was in a position of great power and influence, and he was backed by a strong government of East Tennessean Unionists who had remained true to the cause during the Civil War. Less than four years before taking office in 1865, he had faced death in support of the Union. Now he had a unique opportunity to thoroughly punish ex-Rebels, people for whom he felt no more sympathy toward now after they had been defeated than before when they had dared to try and destroy his beloved Republic. At the time he took office, African Americans were of little to no concern to him, but it soon became apparent that the only way to maintain his influence would be to make use of their potential as a powerful voting bloc. Brownlow's recognition of their political usefulness and simultaneous disfranchisement of many whites in the state would cause great antagonism between blacks and whites in the state, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

³³ Coulter, William G. Brownlow, p. 260-261

Chapter 2: The Reins of Power

“We want a population in Tennessee that shall be thoroughly loyal.”

William G. Brownlow, message to Tennessee Senate, October 6, 1865

Inaugurated as governor of Tennessee in 1865 thanks to his Unionist loyalty, William Brownlow ascended to an influential position during an unstable period. The Civil War had recently ended, and the entire nation was reeling from the conflict that had claimed over 600,000 lives. Politically and socially, the tensions between blacks and whites, former slaves and former slave-owners, were palpable. Given his well-known antipathy toward secessionists, Brownlow's election was a clear danger to anyone who had sympathized with the rebellion. What was not apparent, however, was the threat that his power posed to African Americans due to the backlash by the whites the state government would antagonize. His views toward them were also well-known, because of his public support of slavery. In addition, he, like almost all other Southern Unionists, viewed African Americans as racially inferior. This chapter focuses on the legislation Brownlow supported during his administration. How his views towards ex-Confederates and his opinion on African American suffrage evolved also will be discussed. African Americans became politically important for Brownlow and his minority party. This conflicted sharply with his rhetoric against them in his early speeches to the Tennessee General Assembly and the racist attitudes he held toward them before taking political office. The background on Tennessee's history and Brownlow's personal agenda serves to demonstrate the recklessness of the governor's behavior. How his quest for political power and punishment of former enemies had a major impact on the rise of white terrorism and the subsequent harassment of African Americans in Tennessee will be discussed herein.

Brownlow assumed office as someone who was smug in victory and determined to keep the state in loyal, Unionist hands. His newspaper, *The Whig*, now under the direction of his son, celebrated its founder's political triumph with a front-page editorial on April 12, 1865. It read, "The selection of so sturdy a champion of the cause of free government and the Union, and by so

handsome a vote, was creditable to the people of Tennessee as it was complimentary to Dr. Brownlow.” The newspaper, however, gleefully ignored the political measures by which Brownlow had been put into power. In presenting all the fine characteristics of Tennessee’s new leader, the newspaper made some ominous proclamations regarding his character and devotion to the well-being of his beloved home state. It also maintained the belief that Tennessee, the last state to secede, had not done so of its own accord but rather had been pushed into rebellion by an elite group that used fraud and intimidation. Brownlow’s enemies were numerous outside of East Tennessee, but the editorial nevertheless declared instead, “his enemies are not among the masses, but are numbered among a few reckless politicians whom he exposed without fear or mercy.”³⁴ While he had a significant ally in the Tennessee Legislature, which had been elected in a similar style, Brownlow did not enjoy such support from state’s white polity. The vast majority of his votes had come from the loyalist region of East Tennessee in the fixed election of 1865. Since Unionist counties had been allowed more say than others in the 1865 election, and the result was a Radical, Brownlow-led government and a General Assembly consisting largely of northerners. They had come to reform the South to their liking and punish ex-Confederates. J.J. Noah, for example, was a district Attorney General of Tennessee at this time, and wrote the famous Radical Republican Thaddeus Stephens to inform him of the control they had over Tennessee’s future.

We have a fine working majority in the Legislature and we are busily engaged in making more stringent our laws against traitors. We are endeavoring to hold the state in our power and expect our friends in Congress will do all they can for us. We have a respectable number of Northern men, ex-officers of the army (like myself) who have settled in Tennessee who intend to incorporate as much of Yankee enterprise and loyalty to our Government as we can. The mass of the people do not meet us hospitably or kindly but we intend to stay with them and not be driven out.³⁵

³⁴ Editorial, “Parson Brownlow,” *The Knoxville Whig*, April 12, 1865

³⁵ Merlon E. Coulter, William G. Brownlow: Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee, 1937, p. 268

In short, the new people in power did not feel the need to appeal to the demands of the majority of its population because they felt their rebellion had effectively stripped them of any right to fairly participate in the political process.

Brownlow did not hesitate to show Tennessee's law-makers that his administration aimed to establish a precedent of loyalty to the Union. To that end, in the opening session of the Tennessee House of Representatives on April 6, 1865, the new governor recommended the disfranchisement of known Confederate sympathizers. "In accordance with long established custom and in obedience to the requirements of the Constitution," he wrote, "it becomes my duty to communicate to the Legislature the condition of the state, and to recommend for their consideration such matters as I may deem expedient." What he deemed expedient, even though the Civil War was just three days from being over with the Union triumphant, was the ensured devotion of all of Tennessee's citizens to that Union. Any who remained obstinately against reconciliation would regret it. The hostility in the message he handed to the Legislature was ominous for white southerners who had advocated secession. There was little held back; the bitterness he felt toward Confederates for making a mockery of the Constitution and humiliating him with arrest and trial was evident. Attempting to ensure that such actions could never be taken again against the Union, he wrote, "Secession is an abomination that I cannot too strongly condemn, and one that you cannot legislate against with too much severity."³⁶ He added that the war instigated by the rebellion had paralyzed the nation's commerce, destroyed its agricultural pursuits, lessened the value of property and involved the South in irretrievable bankruptcy and ruin.

³⁶ House Journal, 34th Tenn. General Assembly, 1st Session, April 6, 1865, p. 20

Of particular importance to Brownlow's conception of citizenship was the right of suffrage and in his mind, Confederates had lost that right. He impressed upon the House the significance of their role in determining who deserved this right:

This delicate responsibility will devolve upon you a heavy task and merits your whole attention. Many persons in the state by every act of which they were capable have disfranchised themselves... While I would not recommend you to give way to the impulse of vengeance any more than to the appeals of sympathy and pity, I would urge you to guard the ballot box faithfully and effectually against the approach of treason, in whatever character it may come. The loyal people of the state who sent you here expect you to act decisively in the matter and how child's play in determining the qualification of voters.³⁷

It could scarcely have been clearer what Brownlow meant with this message. After being elected by a small minority of fierce Unionists who had been given greater voting power in order for Brownlow's victory to be assured, their role was clear. The fact that he mentioned the "impulse of vengeance" was a clear indicator of the state of mind of the loyalists who were now given the reins of power. Confederates could clearly not be entrusted with the care of government, because of what they had done in the past. After all, Brownlow's concluding remarks to the Senate included his proclamation that "the interests of the state, and the just rights of the people, should be sacredly and vigilantly guarded, no matter who suffers ruin and disgrace."³⁸ *The Whig* added that those who had been marked as disloyal could not be trusted with the vote or the right to hold public office. "The loyal should administer the offices of the country, first of all," it wrote, "for the obvious reason that a government should be administered ... by its friends and well-wishers ... Because their consistent patriotism proves their deep and intelligent attachment to its interests."³⁹ The combination of Brownlow's firm desire to keep former rebel hands away from state power, the control of the rest of the government by Unionist sympathizers, the violence of

³⁷ House Journal, 34th Tenn. General Assembly, 1st Session, April 6, 1865, p. 21

³⁸ Senate Journal, 34th Tenn. General Assembly, 1st Session, April 6, 1865, p. 321

³⁹ "Who should hold office?", *The Knoxville Whig*, May 31, 1865

the Civil War and the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln still fresh in people's memory was enough to enact a disfranchisement bill.

Originally, the bill was mild in its punitive nature. Representative Edmund Cooper, the chairman of the joint judiciary committee on the elective franchise, presented a bill on May 22, 1865 that reflected a majority opinion concerned with disfranchising too many people for fear of violating the Constitution. It called only to take the vote from those who were exempted by Lincoln's amnesty proclamation from December 8, 1863 and also stated that such "conscious and intelligent traitors in the State of Tennessee as ought not, because of their conduct present, be admitted to all the privileges of the elective franchise," citing what he believed to be pure political wisdom and sound policy. However, in his remarks to the House, he acknowledged the vocal Radicals of the group who wished for a bill "to be entitled an act to preserve the purity of the ballot box, and to punish treason, and to ask that it also be considered at the same time as it reflects the views and wishes of several members of the Joint Committee."⁴⁰ The debate began in earnest from there in the General Assembly over which bill to pass. The more Radical legislation, House No. 138, received passionate endorsement from its sponsor, Representative Samuel Mayes Arnell. It called for far stricter measures than the bill offered by Cooper, and it was enough to convince the General Assembly, as it passed by a vote of 40-22 in the House⁴¹ and 20-1 in the Senate. Among many restrictions, the bill gave the vote to white men, twenty-one years of age who were "publicly known to have unconditional Union sentiments," provided that he had not "been engaged in armed rebellion against the authority of the United States," or who was "conscripted by force into the so-called Confederate Army, and was known to be a Union man, on proof loyalty to the United States, established by the testimony of two voters under the

⁴⁰ House Journal, 34th Tenn. General Assembly, 1st Session, May 22, 1865, p. 191-192

⁴¹ House Journal, 34th Tenn. General Assembly, 1st Session, June 2, 1865, p. 228

previous clauses.” In addition, the bill stated that those who “have been civil or diplomatic officers or agents of the so-called Confederate States of America shall be refused the privilege of the elective franchise for the term of fifteen years from and after the passage of this act,” in addition to people who had left Federal or state civil offices to aid in the rebellion. People who did not meet voting requirements but also did not fall in the prior ineligible categories were denied the vote for five years and could petition for re-admittance to a circuit or chancery court after that time. Finally, no one could vote without a prescribed certificate and could be challenged by any voting official to take an oath of loyalty the United States, which in part read

I solemnly swear that I will henceforth support the Constitution of the United States and defend it against the assaults of all its enemies; that I am an active friend of the Government of the United States; that I will heartily aid and assist the loyal people in whatever measures adopted under the Constitution of the United States, and under all laws and proclamations made in pursuance thereof...and that I take this oath freely, voluntarily, and without reservation, so help me God.⁴²

In the historiography on this bill, there is no mention of the irony of the requirement of an oath of allegiance to the United States, given that Brownlow was presiding over Congress and his own personal history with such requirements. He had been asked to take an oath of allegiance to the Confederacy while imprisoned in Knoxville in 1861 but was prepared to die before doing so. The bill’s provision for forcing former Confederates to submit to an oath to re-earn their franchise was another manifestation of Brownlow’s punitive form of government. So long as those who had dared to tear apart the Union were under his government’s direction, they would not be treated like citizens of that Union.

While the bill passed in both houses of the General Assembly, there were many who regarded its extreme measures with unease. Chief among them was Representative John Steagald, who said he had been pressured by Radical peers in the House to vote for the bill. His

⁴² Tennessee House Bill No. 138, A Bill on the Elective Franchise, June 2, 1865

response was that he could not and never would because of its unconstitutionality. Addressing Speaker William Heiskell and the rest of the congregation, he said,

Can any man say that it does not at least seem injurious to the people, or at least a large portion of them, and tend to lessen and abridge their rights? For what? For treason committed from one to four years back. ... We find in Article 4, Section 2 of the Constitution that laws may be passed excluding from the rights of suffrage persons who may be convicted of infamous crimes. But Mr. Speaker, if those excluded in the disfranchise bill from suffrage are guilty of treason, does it follow that we can pass sentence and administer punishment when the Constitution points out the only mode, and that belongs entirely to the courts of this country.⁴³

While Steagald's analysis of the bill was legally sound, his voice was lost among the Radical majority that was swayed by Arnell and his compatriots. *The Whig*, unsurprisingly, heartily endorsed the new law, writing, "the vote should be known and treasured up by all loyal men, and especially by the constituents of those who have misrepresented them, in their zeal to pardon rebel (sic)."⁴⁴ Brownlow's messages to the Tennessee Senate that October were just as clear in their intent to wipe out any expectations that former Confederates might have that they would be treated as equal citizens under the Brownlow administration. In the Senate's first session since adjourning in June of 1865, he wrote regarding the known associates of the Confederacy, "as many of them are guilty rebels, they should cheerfully submit to five or 10 years of disfranchisement, so as to give them time to wash the blood of loyal men from their hands."⁴⁵

Holding true to his roots as a Christian minister, Brownlow invoked the New Testament parable about the prodigal son, the story of the loving father of two sons, one of whom always remained loyal, and one of whom took his inheritance, squandered it, realized the error of his ways and came back to the father years later begging forgiveness, which the father gave with open arms. The fact that rebels thought they could compare themselves to the prodigal son was

⁴³ House Journal, 34th Tenn. General Assembly, 1st Session, June 5, 1865, p. 236-239

⁴⁴ "The Franchise Question", *The Knoxville Whig*, June 14, 1865

⁴⁵ Senate Journal, 34th Tenn. General Assembly, 2nd Session, October 3, 1865, p. 8

laughable to Brownlow, who believed that their treachery was beyond any forgiveness. Looking further at his allusion to this parable, Brownlow was, in effect, taking the role of the father in the story, meant to represent God. However, rather than following the direction of the parable, Brownlow did not welcome back the Prodigal Rebels with open arms. He and his like-thinking Radical comrades alone would dictate who received what rights in this new Tennessee. It was a disturbing revelation for the citizens of the state who had associated with the rebellion. Regarding their rights in the future, Brownlow told the Senate when it re-convened that October that “it will be admitted on all hands that the United States has the right to punish traitors by depriving them of their lives, their property or their franchise.”⁴⁶

With regard to African Americans, Brownlow was not as consistent in his treatment of them as he was with former Rebels. His language in speeches to Congress and in letters to his old newspaper reflected differing attitudes. Sometimes he showed utter contempt for them and other times he favored a gradual addition of rights. The debate and violence over franchise, the political right of main concern to Brownlow, would endanger many African Americans in Tennessee. His comments to Congress were illuminating in their indication both of his state of mind at the time and of the hypocrisy that had come to define the fiery Brownlow. In this long message to Congress in April of that year before the bill that disfranchised rebels, he wrote, “the negro has had no agency in bringing on our troubles and does not merit unkind treatment at our hands.”⁴⁷ It would prove to be historically ironic; Brownlow’s government’s campaign of harassment starting with Arnell’s Bill would help bring about unkind treatment toward African Americans, albeit indirectly, through its inflammation of white Tennessean fears. Brownlow did

⁴⁶ Senate Journal, 34th Tenn. General Assembly, 2nd Session, October 3, 1865, p. 12

⁴⁷ House Journal, 34th Tenn. General Assembly, 1st Session, April 6, 1865, p. 24

not openly seek the ballot for African Americans out of any sense of conscientiousness or a liberalization of his political views.

In this same address to the Senate in October of 1866, Brownlow's remarks about African American suffrage rights were also contradictory. It was one of the most important issues of the day. Ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which banned slavery was one thing, a step in the right direction as far as the freedmen were concerned. But the debate now was whether they should truly become full citizens by receiving the right to vote. Brownlow was hesitant on the topic, but President Andrew Johnson, along with the Radical Republicans who controlled Congress, insisted that it happen right away. Some of the more educated freedmen in Tennessee began to organize. One group sent a letter to the Tennessee Legislature, three days after Brownlow's message to the House, on April 6, 1865 requesting "the legal right to use the elective franchise and to testify upon oath to the truth in the several courts of the state." When that was ignored, they pushed harder and got a bill to be considered by the Senate judiciary committee that would make Indian and African Americans competent witnesses in all state courts⁴⁸, a major step at that time toward racial equality. But Brownlow's remarks to the Senate were indicative not of significant progress toward that goal, but only a mild tolerance for African American suffrage at some point in the future, and only for those that were educated enough to merit that right as he saw fit. He remained uneasy about the idea of African American suffrage changing the racial status quo of white supremacy, but he remained committed to successful politicking and set his distaste aside. "I am free to admit that," he wrote, "for the present, we have done enough for the Negro, and although Negro voting cannot suit my natural prejudices of caste, there is a class of them I would be willing to see vote at once," although he

⁴⁸ James Welch Patton, Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, 1860-1869, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934, p. 127-128

went on to state he saw many of the freedmen as “ignorant, docile, easily led by designing men, and not safely trusted with political power (whom) I am not willing to see at the ballot box.”

As his message developed, he expressed continued contempt for both African Americans and Confederates. At the same time, he deemed those who participated in the rebellion to be less worthy of civil rights. The measure regarding African American suffrage that was being discussed in the state Legislature was equal parts dismissed and upheld by the governor, depending on which of the bloc might receive the right as Tennessee underwent Reconstruction. His distrust over the loyalties of both former slaves and their former Confederate owners was evident when he wrote,

I cannot recommend the measure for your adoption. I think it would be bad policy, as well as wrong in principle, to open the ballot box to the uninformed and exceedingly stupid slaves of the southern cotton, rice and sugar fields. If allowed to vote, the great majority of them could be influenced by leading secessionists to vote against the government, as they would be largely under the influence of this class of men for years to come, having to reside on and cultivate their farms ... I am free to confess that, if it becomes necessary to franchise the blacks in order to keep the control of the country out of the hands of rebels and traitors, I am for the measure.⁴⁹

On one hand, Brownlow feared that former slaves would be still subject to the intimidation tactics of their former masters and also doubted their mental faculties. But, if there was any way in which to cement the power of Radicals like himself in office, then he was willing to see African American suffrage through, if they were adequately educated. It was a dangerous precedent to set within the first six months of his administration, but there it was for the Senate to see, a man willing to set one race against another, albeit indirectly, in the quest for political power. What was perhaps most telling of all about Brownlow's inability to forecast what his administration's policies were brewing was in one of his final stanzas of his message to the Senate that day, writing, “I do not advocate the removal of the colored race to a country of their

⁴⁹ Senate Journal, 34th Tenn. General Assembly, 2nd Session, October 3, 1865, p. 11

own because of any prejudice I entertain, but I am their friend, deeply impressed with the troubles I see ahead, growing out of the antagonism of the races.” His proposal to repatriate blacks to Liberia was not sympathetic. It was a posturing move that Brownlow hoped would be perceived as a benign intention, one most likely performed in order to enhance his reputation as an ally of African Americans. He stated his fears about the growing divisiveness between the races in Tennessee, yet he still appeared set on setting one group against the other in order to ensure former rebels would not have a say at who was in power. In any event, despite Brownlow’s fear that the vote could possibly be given to easily influenced, “exceedingly stupid” freed slaves in his words, he preferred it to being given to the former rebels, remarking, “if rebels are to be restored to the right of elective franchise, I would say let us no longer deny these political rights to slaves. In my judgment a loyal negro is more eminently entitled to suffrage than a disloyal white man,”⁵⁰ and later remarking he would “sooner be elected by dark skinned loyalists, than to be elected by the votes of fair-skin traitors.”⁵¹ And so the legislation regarding the vote would be under Brownlow’s administration, a castigation of white ex-Confederates and an uplifting of African Americans, despite his personal reservations about their mental competence and racial inferiority to men like himself.

Here, Brownlow made a major misjudgment, failing to recognize the extreme provocation his actions could arouse among an angry white populace. His intentions behind ensuring the right of franchise to African Americans were motivated by political gain. The ends were certainly justifiable, in that they had earned the vote as naturalized citizens of the United States. However, his simultaneous decision to strip so many white citizens of the vote at the same time was bound to cause a political and social firestorm. His political ambitions clouded his

⁵⁰ Senate Journal, 34th Tenn. General Assembly, 2nd Session, Oct. 3, 1865, p. 14, 16

⁵¹ Coulter, William G. Brownlow, p. 327

judgment about what was best for Tennessee at the time, as he recognized his unpopularity among white citizens given his Radical Republican views and friends and knew a powerful voting bloc of African Americans would help him stay in office. When placed in juxtaposition with his harshly anti-rebel policies that had resulted in them losing their right to the vote and forced into taking an oath of allegiance to prove their worth, he was throwing a match on an extremely flammable situation.

As long as Brownlow was governor, he would continue to upset political enemies who were enraged with his dictatorial style of leadership over the state that had allowed such a caustic bill to be passed in stripping them of their right to vote. Despite being in his 60s and in declining health, Brownlow had grown to enjoy his position of authority and wanted to ensure his re-election. This was not solely for personal pride; rather, it had more to do with his constant fear of a takeover of the state by former rebels. He believed that only he and the Radicals in power could be trusted to keep Tennessee in the Union. Things began to move very quickly in the Legislature; on May 26, a law was passed that provided African Americans the right to make and enforce contracts and have all the rights to full and equal benefits of laws for the security of persons and estates. With his loud announcement that he “would sooner go to a Negro heaven than a white Rebel’s hell”, he thundered for African American suffrage at the Philadelphia Convention in September of 1866. His fiery rhetoric made him even more wildly popular among African Americans. He showed his hand in that his decision was motivated by fear of rebels re-taking political power in the state, saying, “it is necessary for sixty or seventy thousand votes to kick the beam to weigh down the balance against rebellion.”⁵²

While Brownlow was expanding his campaign for black support, racial tensions were on the rise around Tennessee. Reports from around the state indicated whites feared emboldened

⁵² Patton, Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, p. 130-132

African Americans; even *The Whig* saw fit to report that white people in Knoxville were being insulted by blacks who “frequently elbow unprotected white women off our narrow pavements, and curse white men passing them, just to show their authority.”⁵³ In Memphis, black troops garrisoned there were repeatedly witnessed committing numerous acts of violence, including robberies, assaults and even murders. In May of 1866, racial tensions boiled over enough so that there was a full-out race riot in which 48 people, 46 of whom were black, were killed, and over \$130,000 worth of property was destroyed. 91 black homes, 12 black schools, and four black churches were among the structure burned to the ground. Some Unionist sympathizers formed Brownlow’s militias around the state in an attempt to keep the peace, but this backfired and made Tennessee’s former Confederate citizens more uncomfortable; it was as if the specter of Brownlow’s Radical government was present at all times and reminded many of the oppressiveness of his regime.⁵⁴

In early 1867, African Americans began to organize all over Tennessee, whether through church groups, small town gatherings, political rallies and other ways,⁵⁵ and made their opinion known: We want the vote, and our friend Brownlow will get it for us. However, the antagonism of the races that Brownlow claimed to fear occurring was the exactly what he was now accused of instigating. While Brownlow enjoyed plenty of favorable press in Knoxville thanks to the publication now edited by his son, *The Whig*, he did not enjoy that kind of support in Nashville. One letter to the editor of *The Republican Banner* battered Brownlow for being associated with “disunionism, diabolism and ruffianism” and “raising arms at the North to precipitate the people of his own state into a civil war, or what is worse, a war of races,”⁵⁶ referring to Brownlow’s

⁵³ *The Knoxville Whig*, from Stanley F. Horn, *The Invisible Empire*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p. 76

⁵⁴ Horn, *The Invisible Empire*, p. 75, 77

⁵⁵ Coulter, *William G. Brownlow*, p. 329

⁵⁶ *The Republican Banner*, Sept. 21, 1866 letter

known exploits in the North during the Civil War and now inciting a possible race war with his controversial suffrage policies. Whether the African Americans in Tennessee were aware that they were political pawns was unclear, but they greatly appreciated the push for their civil rights. While President Andrew Johnson advocated a gradual extension of this right to the vote, Brownlow now loudly criticized the idea of moving slowly in this endeavor.

The measure passed in February 1867, entitled “An Act to Alter and Amend an Act passed May 3, 1866”, did not directly address African Americans, but it did provide that no citizen of the state would be denied the franchise. Due to the recently-passed 14th Amendment that proclaimed all naturally America-born people to be citizens, African Americans were qualified.⁵⁷ They now enjoyed the key right of franchise, while seething former Confederates were still without a ballot thanks to Brownlow. The key political controversy in the state would now concern Brownlow’s Radicals battling the Conservatives, the names for those in the state who supported President Andrew Johnson’s less punitive Reconstruction measures and thus were not of the Radical Brownlow ilk, for the support of this powerful and impressionable new voting bloc. A Convention of African Americans in East Tennessee was reported on by *The Whig*, and their appreciation for their new rights was palpable. They passed several resolutions, including one specifically directed in admiration for the Governor and the Legislature, stating,

that we do cheerfully recognize the substantial evidences of sympathy, philanthropy and justice, displayed by the noble band of patriots in the General Assembly of our State, who earnestly labored for and voted in favor of the passings of the amendment to the franchise law, granting to colored men the right of suffrage; that we view this with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction as the evidence of a returning sense of justice, magnanimity, and a disposition on the part of the loyal citizens of our beloved Commonwealth to place themselves in history as the first of the Southern States who threw down the barriers of the development of our manhood, and recognized the rights of the colored man to wield the ballot.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee*, p. 133-134

⁵⁸ “Meeting of Colored Men,” *The Knoxville Whig*, February 20, 1867

In Jonesboro, located near Memphis in West Tennessee, a similar attitude reined, demonstrating that it was not solely in his old home of East Tennessee that Brownlow enjoyed this kind of support. Held under the direction of a Connecticut minister associated with the Freedmen's Bureau, the convention tendered "our heartfelt thanks to Governor Brownlow for his noble and patriotic course in the administration of the laws of the state, and his devotion to liberty and justice ... as an evidence of our deeply felt gratitude for those generous acts, give him our undivided support in the election in August next, for the position which he now occupies."⁵⁹ The extension of the vote to new groups did not stop there; a law was also passed that granted the vote to foreigners provided they had lived in the United States for a year and had been in Tennessee for at least six months. The state was under the administration of a man who, less than two years earlier, was troubled at the idea of extending the vote to African Americans. Now Tennessee's government had quickly evolved into a paragon of forward-thinking legislation. Legislators looked past a person's skin color in deciding whether or not he was worthy of the rights of citizenship, and instead looked at his loyalty.

Perceived as a progressive champion of African American rights, Brownlow reaped the rewards of such a status in the gubernatorial election in August of 1867. He earned a smashing victory over Conservative opponent Emerson Emeridge, a Unionist like Brownlow, but a staunch supporter of Andrew Johnson, one of Brownlow's bitterest critics. Emeridge was also a fierce opponent of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863⁶⁰ signed by then-President Abraham Lincoln, which hardly endeared him to the newly-franchised African American electorate. Out of 97,396 votes cast, Brownlow claimed 74,848, nearly 77 percent of the vote, the most lopsided victory in the history of Tennessee's gubernatorial races to that point, and all Congressmen

⁵⁹ Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee*, p. 138, from *Nashville Daily Press and Times*, April 6, 1867

⁶⁰ Baggett, James Alex. *The Scalawags: Southern Dissenters in the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004, p. 192

elected were also Radicals. The impact of the African American vote, and the disfranchisement of so many whites, was undeniable, despite there being no official data on the racial breakdown of the electorate that year. After taking 23,353 votes in his election in 1865, that meant a very large percentage of the support for his landslide re-election came from African Americans with over 50,000 more votes the second time around.⁶¹ Old, sickly but as strong-willed as ever, Brownlow would serve another two stormy years as governor, and the African American electorate that had so fervently supported him were thrilled. They celebrated not only the re-election of the man who had championed their rights but also relished the power they had in bringing about the result.

The white response to this treatment by the Brownlow government was overwhelmingly negative. The vast majority of the Tennessee population felt unrepresented and endangered by these kinds of statements and laws, such as another act passed by the Radical Legislature that denied ex-Confederates the right to possess arms.⁶² With the upcoming Presidential election of 1868, whites vocalized their increasing frustration with the disfranchisement bill that would keep Tennessee's dispensation of Electoral College votes from being truly reflective of the opinion of its citizens. From counties across Tennessee, with months until the November Presidential election, the Tennessee General Assembly received and read letters signed by thousands of Tennesseans clamoring for a repeal of Arnell's Bill. One, from Lawrence County in south-central Tennessee, cited that the repeal of the bill would serve to "effectually calm the public mind, restore the country to tranquility and prosperity to all... We do, therefore humbly beseech and pray your honorable body to take such steps as will rapidly remove the existing civil

⁶¹ Coulter, *William G. Brownlow*, p. 140, 328, 338, 339

⁶² Horn, *The Invisible Empire*, p. 75

disabilities.”⁶³ Another letter from citizens of Hardeman County, about 65 miles east of Memphis, stated its belief that the “punishment intended by these laws has been sufficiently severe, and that there is no further necessity for the disfranchisement of this class of citizens ... We believe the assembly will be entitled to the eternal gratitude of all citizens and will prevent the outrages which seem so imminent in other sections of the state.”⁶⁴ Finally, a letter signed by over 4,000 citizens from the seat of Tennessee power in Davidson County echoed their sentiments, asking for “the cordial forgiveness of past injuries, whether actual or imaginary, and future concord and amity among all classes of our citizens.”⁶⁵ The letters did not move the General Assembly to action however, as the House voted 50-20 in its special session on August 4 that it was not the proper time to take into consideration the question of elective franchise.⁶⁶

Reports of African American violence, whether validated or not, were prevalent around the state. Fear gripped a large majority of the white populace at this critical time during Reconstruction, and the re-election of Brownlow did nothing to quell those anxieties. They would be characterized later by the U.S. Congress’s Joint Congressional Committee that would inquire into Reconstruction in the southern states as a belief that “they had no right of person or of property respected by the ruling powers... They believed that they were purposely disarmed and that, being so, whatever they loved or prized was at the mercy of an ignorant race, whose ignorance and whose passions were being played upon by corrupt parties.”⁶⁷ Racist as the phrase “ignorant race” was and morally indefensible as the future actions of southern whites would be,

⁶³ Letter, from William Oliver J.P., SD. Edmister and many others, House Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, August 5, 1868, p. 51

⁶⁴ Letter, from John H. Hill, Thos J. Gardner and many others, House Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, August 6, 1868, p. 55

⁶⁵ Letter, from 4,000 citizens of Davidson County, House Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, August 6, 1868, p. 43

⁶⁶ Acts, House Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, August 4, 1868, p. 50

⁶⁷ Report of the Joint Select Committee Into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, 1871

the importance here lies in identifying the state of mind of the majority of Tennessee's white polity in response to Brownlow's actions.

On the other hand, Tennessee's African Americans lived in the first of the states in the former Confederacy to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment and also extend the ballot to them. In July 1867 in Davidson County, home of the capital city of Nashville, there were 6,000 registered voters. It broke down racially into 4,400 African Americans 1,600 whites. Before Brownlow's disfranchisement laws, there were 11,000 registered voters of whom 6,500 were white. He had also secured passage of a law to deny a majority of Tennesseans of questionable Union loyalty the right to sit on juries. In the early months of 1868, he saw fit to pardon 250 criminals, many of them like-thinking Radicals, a decision that only further convinced much of the white populace that Brownlow was enjoying far too much power. The start of Union Leagues further increased animosity between former Confederates and Unionists. They were organizations sponsored by Northern Radicals that encouraged African Americans to make threats of violence and harassment of whites, but mainly the organization was created to secure the black vote for the Republican Party.⁶⁸ During the 1867 elections in Tennessee, racial tensions were inflamed by Radical orators of one of the Leagues in Franklin, Tennessee. Marchers associated with the League flourished weapons and banged drums at night to disturb white citizens, leading to a deadly fight between angry Conservatives and a group of reveling blacks one night that left 14 people dead.⁶⁹

Brownlow also persuaded the Legislature to pass a militia act that authorized him to organize and arm a volunteer force composed of one or more regiments from every one of Tennessee's congressional districts whenever, in his opinion, the safety of life, liberty, property

⁶⁸ Patton, Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, 1860-1869, p. 177

⁶⁹ Horn, The Invisible Empire, p. 74, 76

or faithful execution of Tennessee laws required it.⁷⁰ These militias harassed the campaign of Emerson Emeridge during his unsuccessful bid to unseat Brownlow in 1867, and they did not endear blacks to the comparatively peaceful white populace. But the trouble brewing did not stem so much from Brownlow's seemingly equitable treatment toward them as it was his persistent antagonism toward former Confederates. The combination of these attitudes toward these groups created a firestorm of hostile resentment towards the Brownlow by angry whites.

The terrorist organization that came to be known as the Ku Klux Klan began its rise in 1866, as white southerners began to truly fear they would lose their state and its traditions forever under a tyrannical figure like Brownlow. Only a year after the Klan's birth, Brownlow had been easily re-elected and had set a precedent of intolerance for secessionist sympathizers. However, its rise was partially instigated by the arrogance of Brownlow, his speeches and castigation of ex-Confederates, and the galling sight of franchised African Americans who just a few years previously were toiling their fields and not even considered citizens. All of these factors helped turn a disorganized band of ruffians, Rebel soldiers and former slave-owners into a region-wide organization that would harass, abuse and kill to protect what their way of life against which Brownlow and the Radicals had declared political war. The fears of whites discussed earlier manifested themselves in a defensive organization guarding against the destruction of their civilization. The following chapter will take into account the Klan's response specifically to Brownlow's suffrage policies in order to demonstrate the reverberating impact his deceptively pro-African American administration had.

⁷⁰ Patton, Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, p. 176

Chapter 3: The Klan Emerges

“These evils are the indications of a disordered state of society, and all the wrong is chargeable neither to one nor the other of the two political parties ... Let all good men unite to calm these angry passions.”

Hon. John M. Lea, letter to Governor William G. Brownlow, July 28. 1868

William Brownlow's re-election to the governorship of Tennessee in 1867 carried drastic implications for disfranchised ex-Confederates. The overwhelming support he had received from black voters, and their opposition to Brownlow's Conservative opponents and his fellow Radicals, were warning signs that the autocratic style of government he and his Republican Legislature had exhibited in his first two years in office would continue. Despite declining health, his resolve to protect the interests of Tennessee from the treason and other supposed Confederate schemes did not waver. In response, many white southerners deemed it necessary to try and preserve their way of life before it was completely lost for good.

The rise of the Ku Klux Klan, the organization that began in Pulaski, Tennessee and soon ballooned into a full-blown secret society devoted to preserving white southern culture and terrorizing African Americans, was the next great challenge met by his administration. It was not a social club, as it claimed to be at its meanest origins in Pulaski, a city in south central Tennessee, but rather a militant, hierarchical organization with the goal of restoring Tennessee's political power to the white majority.⁷¹ The Klan denied that it was a political group, but its goals and tactics belied that fact; they wished to decimate the black vote and thus topple the Brownlow administration. For instance, in January of 1868, Klansmen set upon eight freedmen, marched them to an open field and make them swear under penalty of death to never vote a Radical ticket.⁷²

By 1869, the end of Brownlow's administration, the Klan was a powerful, well-organized network with a clear credo and an army of citizens ready and willing to carry out that mission statement by all means necessary. The Revised and Amended Prescripts of the KKK were done

⁷¹ James Welch Patton, Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934, p. 180

⁷² Allen W. Trelease, White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971, p. 35

by that year, and the character and object of the order called itself, “an institution of chivalry, humanity, mercy and patriotism; embodying in its genius and its principles all that is chivalric in conduct, hoble in sentiment, generous in manhood, and patriotic purpose.” That purpose was first and foremost, “to protect the weak, the innocent, and the defenseless, from the indignities, wrongs and outrages of the lawless, the violent, and the brutal; to relieve the injured and oppressed; to succor the suffering and unfortunate, and especially the widows and orphans of Confederate soldiers.”⁷³ The rhetoric of the order was to make the Klan seem like a defensive organization battling against the oppression of the government. The reality was that it was a racist, violent organization determined to terrify African Americans enough that they would stop supporting Brownlow’s Radicals. Brownlow, in the wake of a seeming war of Northern aggression, as many white southerners referred to it, was one among many reasons for many of the abuses protested the Klan’s credo. The Klan was committed to its mission through the use of force. The Klan’s origination and spread within Tennessee and beyond was not directly caused by Brownlow’s policies, but they were certainly aggravated by it.

To Brownlow’s credit, his administration battled hard against the Klan. The group, however, became too powerful to contain; too many people were angered and frightened by the tactics of Radicals like Brownlow and the organization spread like wildfire throughout the South. It is important to note that the racism of Brownlow was not the racism of the Ku Klux Klan. Brownlow was first and foremost a politician, bent on staying in power. He viewed blacks as inferior but saw them as useful political allies above all else. The racism of the Klan was far more sinister. They viewed blacks as not only inferior, but as a true threat to the institution of white-dominated civilization. Already separated by their differing views on Unionism,

⁷³ Chester L. Quarles, The Ku Klux Klan and Related American Racist and Antisemitic Organizations: A History and Analysis, Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1999, p. 195-196

Brownlow and the men who formed the Ku Klux Klan were indelibly different in this way too. This chapter will explore that notion by probing the motives of the original Klansmen in Tennessee in the wake of numerous actions by his administration that were considered offensive to their way of life, as well as how the Klan grew in the wake of Brownlow's action. Taking into account the larger political waves of Radicalism overtaking the South at the time, how Brownlow responded and how the lives of African Americans were impacted by the Klan's activities will also be discussed.

Given the immense power it would soon enjoy itself, the Ku Klux Klan started modestly. The actual birth date of the organization remains disputed among historians, with dates ranging from 1865 to 1866, although the latter seems most likely. A group of former officers in the Confederate army met in a lawyer's office in Pulaski, Tennessee and were merely planning to start a social club, a fraternity of sorts to relieve their post-Civil War boredom with no more battles to fight and no gainful employment to fill their time. The first action of the KKK was to ride through the streets of Pulaski, their faces masked in white sheets and pillowcases and amuse people in the streets with humorous gestures. The original purposes of the group were merely to impress the other members of the group with the best prank or joke to be played on other people. However, these "jokes" frightened African Americans greatly; gangs of whites engaging in these kinds of scare tactics, which was only heightened by the ghostly costumes, was deeply disconcerting. The whites engaging in these activities may have perceived their exploits as humorous, but the implications of these tactics were deadly serious for African Americans. The power they were beginning to enjoy was unwelcome to their former masters and other whites, who were letting them know it. What was worse for blacks was that this was only the beginning of a campaign of steadily increasing methods of intimidation and outright terror.

The ruined economy and landscape of the South in the wake of the war helped to spur this early Klan activity, but Brownlow's antagonism enflamed it. While Unionists and African Americans were allowed to vote on land reform, law and tax issues, former Confederates were unable to do so because of Brownlow's efforts. There were many cases of widows of Confederate soldiers who had property and houses seized, and heavy taxes were being levied despite the war-torn economy all over the South. In addition, the same African Americans also had the right to hold office. Many white southerners feared retribution for the years of abuse inflicted upon blacks during the institution of slavery; in some aspects, the KKK was born out of a sense of protection and appealed to the chivalrous nature of many Tennessee men, who irrationally feared that harassment of women by African Americans would take place with their newfound power. Indeed, the first word the object of the Klan was that it was to be an institution of 'chivalry', and it was not helped by Radical policy that stripped Confederate widows of their property. It was, quite simply, a terrible time to be a former Confederate. In their fear, anger and hatred, the many men who had fought behind Robert E. Lee and other Rebel sympathizers bonded together to create this organization.

Thus, organization became a reactionary force. It was not a reaction to simply Brownlow the person. It was a cold fear that Brownlow's way of thinking would come to permeate all of Tennessee, the South and white civilization as they knew it. Rather than be defensive however, the Ku Klux Klan became offensive in its tactics in order to transform the south into their vision of how it should be.⁷⁴ The frustration of white southerners in other states with losing the Civil War, the total collapse of their economy and the indignity of dealing with carpetbaggers caused the Klan to spread from Brownlow's state and make the organization a force serious enough to require federal intervention. As Ku Klux Klan historian Allen W. Trelease noted, "in the context

⁷⁴ Quarles, The Ku Klux Klan, p. 37

of Reconstruction politics after 1867, it became a counterrevolutionary device to combat the Republican party and Congressional Reconstruction policy in the South. For more than four years, it whipped, shot, hanged, robbed, raped and otherwise outraged Negroes and Republicans across the South in the name of preservation of white civilization.”⁷⁵

But Tennessee remains the focus here. The Klan’s initial activities were subtle but grew increasingly menacing. Although viewed at first by the public as non-threatening due to their extravagant costumes and noisy parading, it became steadily more apparent that the Klan’s purpose was a serious, reactionary one to the activities of Brownlow, the Union Leagues and Radicalism in general. In February of 1868, the Nashville *Union and Dispatch* printed an article on the Klan that reflected the mixed feelings these masked men inspired in other Tennesseans, writing of a Klansmen that,

He gets over the ground with a gliding motion, as if fearful that the horrible cowl which hides his face, and from which a pair of glittering eyes almost pierce the beholder, might by some untoward accident be thrown aside or lose its power of concealment...when first organized it was generally understood that the society was a benevolent association, its design the relief of the widows and orphans of Confederate soldiers...if what is alleged of them now can be anywhere near the truth, it can not be doubted that the unprecedented conduct of armed Leagues organized to terrify Conservatism has led to the retaliation.⁷⁶

Entitled “The Ku Klux Klan—A Wonderful and Mysterious Order”, the tone of the item suggested both a respect and fear for this new organization. The writer’s mentioning of the armed Leagues action served to somehow justify the Klan’s existence, but simultaneously the description of the Klansmen as almost otherworldly suggested a feeling of unease with the group.

Over time, the Klan made no secret of its venomous hatred for its Governor. It did not surprise Brownlow that this new devilry to beleaguer Tennessee consisted of former Rebels. He

⁷⁵ Trelease, *White Terror*, preface

⁷⁶ Stanley F. Horn, *The Invisible Empire*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1939, p. 78-79

told the Tennessee Senate on October 10, 1867 that blacks “have rapidly won the good opinions and respect of the loyal portion of the white race, while their rebel opponents ... have shown less disposition to return to the loyalty than was fully expected.”⁷⁷ From the Klan, Brownlow received threatening letters that came with pictures of coffins, knives, guns and the gallows, and to the Klan, Brownlow stated in the *Whig* on March 25, 1868 that “whenever these vile miscreants make their appearance among us, mounted, booted and spurred, and however disguised, let the white and colored Radicals meet them promptly, and in their spirit of their own lawless mission, disperse them, and if need require this in dispersing them, exterminate them.”⁷⁸ Indeed, what was most disturbing about these developments in Tennessee was the fact not only that the Klan existed, but that it had such widespread support within the white populace. The situation continued to deteriorate throughout the state, as the Klan, with the support of the white populace who no doubt had many comrades clothed in the white sheets, wreaked havoc unchecked and unmasked. Reports of lynch mobs by unchecked Klansmen were prevalent around Tennessee, and they boldly paraded in cities and towns where civil authorities were either supporters or too intimidated to stop them.⁷⁹

The threat of civil war in the state had become a serious possibility. Brownlow was unable to call upon the state military, and his request for federal troops was denied. A group of former Confederate officers, all likely members of the Ku Klux Klan, met with Brownlow in Knoxville and promised an end to the bloodshed, which *The Whig* reported involved “murdering loyal men, white and colored, and applying the torch to their dwellings,” if Brownlow would agree to protection of the people, meaning a reinstatement of the civil rights stripped away by the Radical disfranchisement bill. Brownlow became desperate enough to call an extraordinary

⁷⁷ Senate Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, October 10, 1867

⁷⁸ Coulter, *William G. Brownlow*, p. 355

⁷⁹ Trelease, *White Terror*, p. 32

session of Congress in July of 1868 to discuss the terrors of the Ku Klux Klan and what could be done about them. He was furious with the impotence being displayed by the Tennessee government in the face of terrorism, complaining that he had paid off militia and then disbanded them on the good faith belief that former Confederates would be strictly observing the codes of law and order in the state. Now, he knew better:

It turns out that the rebellious elements of the State were at that time secretly among themselves and perfecting a military organization known as the Ku Klux Klan, composed of ex-rebel soldiers and those were in sympathy with them; thus violating their paroles at the time of their surrender, and violating the laws of the state, and plotting and planning murder in every respect ... Their schemes have involved the overthrow of the existing state government, the abolition of colored suffrage, the immediate franchisement under the revolutionary constitution of every rebel who fought to destroy the government, and a wiping from the statute books of all the wholesome and patriotic laws enacted since April, 1865.⁸⁰

The group had grown so emboldened that they had even attacked a representative of the Legislature, S.M. Arnell, who wrote Brownlow in June of 1868 about the threat the Klan posed now in Columbia, Tennessee and had sponsored the infamous disfranchisement bill in 1865. "The KuKlux searched the train for me last night, pistols and rope in hand. Empower me to call upon the military here, if necessary, in your name, to suppress all armed and masked forces in this vicinity. I propose to fight it out," he wrote. *The Whig* reported on July 1, 1868 that Brownlow was receiving daily reports of assassins and thieves calling themselves 'Klansmen of the KuKlux' who were murdering both white and black loyal men and setting fire to their homes.⁸¹ Now that Brownlow saw his trust being betrayed by the actions of the Ku Klux Klan, he was determined to bring the organization down. The Klan had a smugness about them, however, that suggested a feeling of invulnerability. Brownlow offered a bounty of \$1,000 for the capture of a single Klansmen, and one member fondly recalled a speech by Grand Wizard

⁸⁰ Senate Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, 1st Session, July 28, 1868, p. 9

⁸¹ Coulter, *William G. Brownlow*, p. 357-358

Nathan Bedford Forrest at a Den meeting of the group where he stated, “Brownlow says he will bring his militia down here and get us. I say, let him ‘fetch ‘em, and you boys be ready to receive ‘em.” Reports of a possible invasion of Nashville, the seat of Brownlow’s power, reached the ears of citizens during his administration. If Brownlow wanted a war, the Klan was quite ready for it; the Klan-friendly Gallatin *Examiner* in 1868 replied to his call for the death penalty for any and all captured Klansmen by saying that fighting would come at his own peril; “he will find our entire population ready for it. If peace, he can have it. The fearful responsibility rests with him and his Legislature.”⁸² In an open letter to Brownlow and both houses of the General Assembly of Tennessee, signed by, among others, Forrest himself, the Klan denied Brownlow’s charges that a group with Confederate sympathies sought to overthrow the state government. But the language of the letter suggested that they felt they had the state effectively held hostage; when Brownlow backed off, there would be tranquility in Tennessee once again.

We believe the peace of the state does not require the organization of a military force by your honorable body and respectfully submit that such a measure might more strongly tend to bring about and promote collision than to conserve the harmony and good order of the country. And inasmuch as the supposed danger to the peace of the State is apprehended from that class of the community with which we are identified, as inducement and reason to your honorable body not to organize such military force, we pledge ourselves to maintain the order and peace of the State with whatever influence we possess; to uphold and support the laws, and in their execution, trusting that a reciprocation of these sentiments by your honorable body, will produce the enactment of such laws as will remove all irritating causes, now disturbing society, for when it is remembered that the large mass of white men in Tennessee are denied the right to vote or hold office, it is not wonderful or unnatural there should exist more or less dissatisfaction among them.⁸³

The letter’s reference to the franchise problem exemplified what was plaguing Tennessee. The tide of anti-Brownlow vitriol was growing rapidly. Brownlow himself received

⁸² Horn, *The Invisible Empire*, p. 96, 102

⁸³ Letter to the Hon. W.G. Brownlow and the two Houses of the 35th Tenn. General Assembly of Tennessee, Special Session, August 4, 1868, p. 42

correspondence on the matter from his friend, the Honorable John M. Lea. Brownlow ordered that it be read aloud for the General Assembly, despite its call for Tennessee lawmakers to see reason and repeal House No. 138. Penned on July 29, 1868, Lea wrote,

An American citizen has no idea of liberty unless it is coupled with the right to vote... Lawless bands and associations perpetuate unwarrantable outrages, and private crimes are daily committed. These evils are the indications of a disordered state of society, and all the wrong is chargeable neither to one nor the other of the two political parties ... Let all good men unite to calm these angry passions. The petitioners ask a reinvestiture of the elective franchise, and, in my judgment, the Radical party will place itself entirely in the wrong unless it favorably responds to the advances which have been, and will hereafter be made.⁸⁴

Brownlow had no intention of backing down to threats, however, and the question of repealing the bill was put off for another time. For Unionists and especially freedmen, harassment, intimidation and violence became a part of daily life as chaos reigned all over Tennessee. An in-depth investigation by a joint committee of the Senate and House of the Tennessee Legislature showed reports from across the state that African Americans were being harassed not only out of sheer bigotry, but specifically because of their association with Brownlow and the Radical Republicans. Forrest even stated while testifying before Congress on Klan activities in 1871 that the organization's rise was in part due to a need to "protect ex-Confederates from extermination by Brownlow's 'loyal' militia."⁸⁵ A harrowing series of reports read before the Legislature on September 2, 1868 gave a glimpse of the terrors that were being unleashed by the Ku Klux Klan. The Freedmen's Bureau's agencies around the state had nothing but fresh reports of whippings, beatings and murders that were seriously jeopardizing the security of the entire state. Major General W.P. Carlin, the head of the Freedmen's Bureau at that time, gave an ominous report about Tennessee's safety, writing,

⁸⁴ Letter for Consideration to W.G. Brownlow, House Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, Extraordinary Session, August 3, 1868, p. 44-45

⁸⁵ Fleming, introduction to The Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth and Disbandment, New York: AMS Press, 1905.

It is with deep regret that I am compelled to begin this report with the statement, that, since my connecting with the Bureau, no such discouraging state of affairs has prevailed in Tennessee during any one month as for the month of June last (1868), I say discouraging because it is totally beyond the powers of myself and subordinates to remedy evils that cry aloud for redress. Nearly every day furnishes additional evidence of the determination of the Ku Klux Klan and their friends to bring about a state of affairs that will preclude the possibility of personal liberty for the colored people and the active, outspoken Union men. I doubt if any measure short of martial law will preserve peace and insure (sic) safety till after the next election.⁸⁶

Why Carlin had felt so discouraged became apparent with the flood of reports that were read aloud in the Legislature that day. It was hardly a regional problem too; all of Tennessee was rapidly approaching a state of total anarchy. Agent J.K. Nelson in Murfreesboro reported that one of the colored citizens there, Bill Carlton, had been taken by Klan members and whipped 150 times. He also noted the fear that was gripping the citizens under his watch, writing, "more than half the Klan outrages are not reported to me; the parties are afraid. Many freedmen are afraid to sleep in their own houses. Many have already been driven from the country."⁸⁷ In Columbia, south of Nashville, the full impact of Brownlow's polarizing policies was illustrated through a report by Bureau agent A.H. Eastman regarding an elderly African American man named Josh Ferrell and his family, who had voted the Radical ticket in 1867 like so many of the rest of the black community. Eastman reported:

On the night of the 12th instant, (they) called him from his bed, and while he was unfastening the door, they jumped in upon him and beat his head with a pistol, cutting a gash half an inch wide, four inches long, and to the skull. They then asked him for firearms, which he said he had not. They then took him to a field and whipped him so badly that it nearly killed him. They also tore up everything in the house, and then went to his son's house, took him from the bed, smashed a large looking-glass over the head of his sick wife, who was in bed. They then whipped the man with stirrup straps and

⁸⁶ Correspondence, Major General W.P. Carlin to Major General Oliver O. Howard, Senate Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, Extraordinary Session, Sept. 2, 1868, p. 133

⁸⁷ Correspondence, JK Nelson of the Freedmen's Bureau, Senate Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, Extraordinary Session, Sept. 2, 1868, p. 134

buckles, which cut long and deep gashes into the flesh, and all because, they said, he was a 'big-feeling ni—er', voted for Brownlow and belonged to the Union League.⁸⁸

Bureau agent William Green in Winchester, located near the Georgia border was similarly despondent over the power the Klan had to terrorize African Americans other supporters of Brownlow's Radical faction.

The KuKlux have committed so many gross outrages that it is impossible to enumerate them all. The villains seem determined to overawe the county and frighten the colored people into any demand they make. The rebel citizens in these counties certainly do not intend to try to put a stop to them. On the contrary, they are all well-pleased with their operations, and hope, by this means, to terrify the colored people into voting as they may desire.⁸⁹

The individual testimonies of personal harassment at the hands of the Klan were heartrending. Black citizen after black citizen bore witness to the vindictive techniques used by the masked Klansmen. Spencer Griffin, "a man of 54 or 55" in Sumner County, in the northern central part of Tennessee, was whipped 150 lashes and was "told that ni—rs all thought they were free, but they would show them that they had to do what they was (sic) told." Stephen Medon, age 62, was threatened at gunpoint on July 10, 1868 to vote Conservative after Klan members learned that he and his family had voted the Radical ticket in the previous election. Daniel Seales, in Marshall County in south central Tennessee, stated, "a party of the Ku Klux Klan broke into my house and searched for me, swearing that I was a Brownlow man, and that they would have me before I left." He was forced to flee from his home; there were many reports of blacks from around Tennessee seeking refuge in Nashville, the capital, where they felt safer. Even religious meetings of African Americans were unsafe; another report came in that a prayer group near Cornersville in south central Tennessee had been broken up by Klansmen and the leader had

⁸⁸ Correspondence, A.H. Eastman of the Freedmen's Bureau, Senate Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, Extraordinary Session, September 2, 1868, p. 133-134

⁸⁹ Correspondence, William Green of the Freedmen's Bureau, Senate Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, Extraordinary Session, September 2, 1868, p. 135

been severely whipped. Three other black citizens, Henry M. Daniels, Leader Wrights and Nathan Harris, testified under oath that the Klan had threatened to kill colored men in their county of Lincoln who had voted for Brownlow.

The reports of terror came from Tennesseans of every type, whether white or black, in positions of authority or ordinary citizens. T.J. Gasking, age 32, a sworn constable in Obion County in northwest Tennessee testified, "The Ku Klux Klan are going through the county whipping some, killing others, and taking all the arms from the colored people and also their certificates to vote, and ordering Union men to quit the country. I had to leave my home to save my life. They further say they are determined to vote, law or no law." Brownlow's position of authority as governor and the disfranchisement laws were being totally ignored in the wake of the Klan's path of destruction. It was immaterial that legislation existed that gave blacks suffrage and stripped former Confederates like themselves of it. Until the government put down the rebellious Klan, the rules of law would be of no consequence. Over and over, Brownlow and the Radicalism that had so greatly aroused the emotions of the men who had formed the Klan were the subjects of many of the warnings to African Americans about how they cast their votes in these brutal testimonies to the Legislature. Another black man, G.F. Bowles was "visited by a gang of men in disguise who claimed to be Ku Klux. They searched my valise, which contained miscellaneous epistles of which they possessed themselves. They then departed, leaving orders to myself and other inmates of the boarding house to not vote for Brownlow again, or any other Radical aspirant for office."⁹⁰

The Legislature took swift and harsh action against the Klan and enacted a piece of legislation aimed right at the heart of Klan activity. Known as the Ku Klux act but actually titled

⁹⁰ Senate Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, Extraordinary Session of Congress, September 2, 1868, p. 147, 155

as one “to preserve the public peace”, it stated that any person caught associating with a secret organization that was masked and prowled cities by day or night with the intention of disturbing the peace would be imprisoned at least five years and fined at least \$500, in addition to being marked “infamous” by the government.⁹¹ Two weeks after the reports of outrageous Klan violence in the Legislature Brownlow also issued a proclamation calling on all loyal people to assist in the battle against the Klan. On January 20, 1869, he issued another proclamation that called upon all citizens to enter the ranks of the state guards and “aid in suppressing lawlessness,” a successful endeavor that resulted in the placing of Brigadier General Joseph A. Cooper in charge of all state forces. He recruited a militia largely consisting of East Tennessee Unionists and declared martial law in nine particularly violence-plagued counties, which helped significantly in curbing the bloodshed being brought about by the Ku Klux Klan.⁹² However, many of Brownlow’s endeavors to halt Klan activities were tragically unsuccessful. Perhaps worst of all was his hiring of and promise of a large reward for Captain Seymour Barmore from Ohio. He sought to infiltrate the Klan, expose its secrets and destroy it from the inside. Barmore was exposed for being a double agent, shot in the head and had his corpse thrown in Duck River near the birthplace of the Klan in Pulaski.⁹³ Another Brownlow detective in Nashville who tried to gain admission to the Klan was, according to a 1905 report by the *Washington Post*, forced into a barrel, rolled into the Cumberland River and drowned.⁹⁴ That was to be Brownlow’s last major act, however, as governor of Tennessee. He resigned his position on February 20, 1869 to take an open seat in the United States Senate, a spot he was elected to by the state Legislature, and was replaced by DeWitt Clinton Senter, who was practically a Confederate in comparison to

⁹¹ Patton, Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, p. 196

⁹² Eric Foner, A Short History of Reconstruction, New York: Harper and Row, 1990.

⁹³ Horn, The Invisible Empire, p. 96, 102

⁹⁴ Walter L. Fleming, The Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth and Disbandment, New York: AMS Press, 1905.

Brownlow. He began to make overtures to the Conservatives in Tennessee as soon as he took office in order to bring about peace in the state. As Brownlow disappeared from Tennessee, so too did the Klan; as one historian put it, “with its arch-enemy departed, the Ku Klux Klan gradually disappeared from the state. At the same time, the Invisible Empire ended its existence,” with a proclamation from the Imperial Wizard stating the organization had accomplished its goals of providing protection and security to many people, but had also been blamed for violence acts committed under its umbrella and should therefore disband immediately.⁹⁵ The proclamation was hollow; Klan violence would continue on in the rest of the South. The Klan would be of less importance for the remainder of Reconstruction in Tennessee, but its formation and growth there laid the foundation for its rebirth in Stone Mountain, Georgia nearly 50 years later.

The numbers of African Americans who were victimized by the Klan, however, were incalculable. Not only did the Conservative forces get what they wanted in Senter’s ascent to the governorship, but untold numbers of blacks had been beaten, whipped and killed by the Klan during this volatile period in Tennessee’s history. For every one of the stories recounted in this chapter, countless more like it occurred as masked Confederates got their revenge on Brownlow’s policies and the African Americans they had lifted up. Used by Brownlow for political gain, they bore the full brunt of the Klan’s anger. The failings of Brownlow’s Reconstruction policies never affected his political career, but they certainly had a drastic impact on the African Americans under the supposed protection of the state of Tennessee.

⁹⁵ Patton, Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, p. 198, 200

Chapter 4: The Klan and the Realities of Reconstruction

“You can make people do anything if they’re afraid.”

United States Congressman Jim McDermott

It did not stand to reason that the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln would bring about immediate equality for African American citizens in the South. As shall be demonstrated, racist attitudes still persisted throughout the region, and resistance to Reconstruction was commonplace among the former states of the Confederacy. Southerners resented northern carpetbaggers who attempted to profit from the economic ruin that the Civil War had brought to their region, and Radical Republicans, the main allies of Governor Brownlow in Tennessee, notoriously used African Americans as political pawns to gain control of the United States Congress. Yet, despite all these problems facing states in the South, the Ku Klux Klan was born in Tennessee, the last state to secede from the Union and the first state to re-join. This chapter discusses the tactics and problems of other Reconstruction governors in the South, as a means of demonstrating to what extent Brownlow's recklessness and disregard for the entrenched opinions of his state's citizens allowed the Klan to rise in his state and then spread throughout the rest of the South. This will help in answering the question of how culpable he was in the Klan's rise, and this chapter will explore whether or not the Klan, or a group resembling it, would have inevitably been born in Tennessee or somewhere else in the South, regardless of Brownlow.

Possession of wealth or lack thereof, land ownership or class did not keep whites from joining or supporting the Klan in droves. As John B. Gordon testified before a U.S. Congressional Committee in 1871, even the most well-to-do of men were involved in this racial warfare. Asked to join a 'secret organization' in Georgia, but denying it was the Ku Klux Klan, he stated,

I was approached by some of the very best citizens of the State—some of the most peaceful, law-abiding men, men of large property, who had large interests in the State. The object of this organization was explained to me at the time by these parties; and I want to say that I approved of it most heartily...a brotherhood of the property-holders,

the peaceable, law-abiding citizens of the State, for self-protection. The instinct of self-protection prompted that organization; the sense of insecurity and danger, particularly in those neighborhoods where the Negro population predominated... There was this general organization of the black race on the one hand, and an entire disorganization of the white race on the other hand.⁹⁶

In actuality, Gordon was reported to be the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan for Georgia at that time.⁹⁷ Again, in his testimony, he discusses the fears of an organized black race, while whites had become scattered and aimless. This goes to heart of the motives behind the Klan's origination, a fear that the Radical governments of Reconstruction were conspiring to put down white civilization in the South for good. As one Klan historian put it,

The Klan was organized for a definite purpose—the protection of Southern white people during the years when they had no other protection and the prevention of the political over-mastery of the white citizens by the blacks. In achieving its purposes it adopted sometimes heroic, illegal methods, but there was no question in their minds that the end justified the means. Realizing the inherent dangers of such a powerful instrument of regulation, they ceased its use as soon as it had served their purpose, their original objectives fairly well attained.

Those objectives were designed to frighten or kill African Americans and challenge their rights to vote. The Klan denounced Brownlow's support of black civil rights and opposed the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments of the U.S. Constitution. These amendments abolished slavery, established the citizenship of African Americans and confirmed suffrage rights for black males. While the Klan was to many a mysterious organization known as the "Invisible Empire," its effects on the well-being of African Americans and Republican sympathizers were quite visible.

As noted earlier, the Klan's first choice as their leader, or "Grand Wizard", was Nathan Bedford Forrest, a retired lieutenant general of the Confederate army. He was a former slave

⁹⁶ Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, vol. 8. From The Empire State of the South, Macon: Mercer University Press, 2008.

⁹⁷ Chester L. Quarles, The Ku Klux Klan and Related American Racist and Antisemitic Organizations: A History and Analysis, Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1999, p. 45

trader and a known brawler, and he also was reported by many historians to have ordered the execution of nearly two hundred unarmed African American Union prisoners of war in April of 1864.⁹⁸ Under his direction, the Klan began to absorb other white terrorist groups who similarly were opposed to African American rights in the South. The “Democratic Clubs” and “Conservative Clubs” were examples of organizations that were assumed under the banner of the Klan in the name of “home rule”, by whites, for whites. A notorious racist, Forrest also drew from his military background and encouraged order among the ranks of the Klan in order to achieve their purposes for white civilization. The Klan was designed at a Nashville meeting in April of 1867 to have a full-fledged bureaucracy oversee its main aims of defending the Constitution, protecting the oppressed southern whites, and returning civilization in the South to its former racial order of black inferiority. States were referred to as realms, and within each realm would be a ruler called a grand dragon, with eight assistants called hydras. Each dominion, or congressional district, would have a grand titan with six furies, and each province, or county, would have a grand giant and four goblins. At the same time, there were still renegades who did not operate under the banner of the Klan and performed acts of guerilla violence.⁹⁹ Not only was there an organized campaign of harassment of African Americans, but unorganized mobs as well. The Ku Klux Klan’s frightening effect on African Americans throughout the rest of the South was undeniable. Newspapers questioned its existence in Tennessee and Mississippi or blamed its violent, intimidating actions on members of the group from other states. It was a terrorist threat that no one wanted to oppose openly.

Mississippi was similarly plagued by the racism of higher government officials in the years following the Civil War’s conclusion. It was not simply black suffrage that had the

⁹⁸ Quarles, *The Ku Klux Klan*, p. 8, 50-51

⁹⁹ Newton, *The Invisible Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Florida*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001, p. 7, 9

majority of the state's white citizenry outraged; there was an entire debate on whether blacks should be allowed to testify against white citizens in the courts. Mississippians completely ignored a written plea from President Andrew Johnson to Governor William L. Sharkey months after taking office 1865, suggesting that "Negroes of education and property be given the right to vote (so) as to forestall the Radicals in the North." Johnson was not motivated by a desire for racial equality, but rather saw the move as a politically wise one that would leave the Radical Republicans without a cause to champion. It did not matter; the tide was strong against the idea in Mississippi; "it was argued that 'this is a white man's government,' and that in the sight of God and the light of reason a Negro suffrage was impossible." Nevertheless,

A former Confederate general, Benjamin Humphreys, was elected Governor of the state in 1865 on the strength of his opposition to blacks being allowed to testify in court. For black citizens, racial intolerance went still further. Mississippians were forced to comply with black suffrage despite having a former Confederate in office; the election of 1867 that blacks were allowed to participate in was condemned by many as a farce.¹⁰⁰ The Mississippi Legislature refused to submit to the 13th Amendment of the Constitution, which abolished slavery and enforced freedom in its second section, stating that they had already abolished the practice and would not agree to the proposals of the second section that gave Congress the right to enforce freedom for all citizens. This end run around the federal government's mandate reflected the tide of anti-black sentiment that permeated the state and the rest of the South. One of its main newspapers, the *Vicksburg Herald*, asked pointedly in an editorial on November 9, 1867, "Should Mississippi ratify the Thirteenth Amendment? We answer, no, ten thousand times, no."¹⁰¹ The Klan supported whites in Mississippi who feared persecution. The 1870 School

¹⁰⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880*, New York: The Free Press, 1935, p. 433, 435

¹⁰¹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 433, 440

Appropriations Act, which provided for Negro education by raising taxes on Mississippians, led to an outburst from the so-called "Invisible Empire." There was general hostility against the act. It was quite easy to moralize against such a sentiment as unpatriotic and unwise. Dissatisfaction with the establishment of Negro Schools and the heavy and arbitrary taxation levied by the county boards, under the authority of the school law of 1870 was the soil in which the Ku Klux Klan grew.¹⁰²

Humphreys opposed the Reconstruction acts and was forcibly removed from office in place of Military Governor and former Union General Adelbert Ames, who made a bid for black support and appointed African Americans to public office. His support for their voting rights led to their increased political importance in the election season of 1869, right before Ames' temporary term ended. Increased Klan activity resulted, with riots reported in at least three counties. The Klan's influence over the state's political issues manifested itself when the State Constitution's provision disfranchising members of the Secession Convention and other active Confederates was defeated. Initially, Ames was effective in combating Klan activities, but after he left for a U.S. Senate term and was replaced by a Scalawag, James Alcorn, the organization began to flourish by murdering and threatening numerous African Americans. Alcorn feared offending Mississippi Conservatives so much that he effectively denied the Klan's existence and believed the violence to be 'insignificant.' The two Republican squared off for the governorship in 1873, and Ames was victorious with the strong support of African Americans and Radicals because of Ames' loud call for federal action to be taken against the Klan's terroristic activities.¹⁰³ Ames' strong opposition to the Klan and support for black rights nevertheless

¹⁰² Quarles, *The Ku Klux Klan*, p. 50

¹⁰³ Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971, p. 300

earned him the ire of many in the Mississippi Legislature; he was forced out of office under threat of impeachment in 1876.¹⁰⁴

The spread of the Klan was pervasive; Florida also was a site of black oppression during Reconstruction. Florida was not re-admitted to the Union until June 25, 1868, just 17 days after ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution, which established all persons born within the borders of the United States as naturalized citizens entitled to due process under the law. Resistance to change in the status quo was as prevalent there as any other state, and the Klan spread there and began to wreak havoc on state security. After the selection of Harrison Reed, a native of New England, as the state's Republican governor following its re-admittance to the Union, violence broke out almost immediately. Reed had told the Florida Senate just one month after the state's re-admission to the Union that 'hostile ex-Confederates' had control over the entire state's telegraph lines as well, and the Jacksonville newspaper, the *Daily Florida Union*, a Republican publication, reported two weeks later that Democrats were secretly planning to neutralize the right of African Americans to vote through any means necessary, including violence and other scare tactics. Demonstrating the breakdown in law and order was the report that five freedmen were murdered by white regulators just days after federal troops were withdrawn from the state on July 4, 1868. Dozens of other murders were committed around the state by night riders and other Klan assassins, including the murder of noted black Republican Timothy Francis. Francis fled for Columbia County after he had been threatened but was still stalked and killed two weeks later. The Klan's full-fledged campaign of terrorism had the entire state's African American population in a state of fear for their safety.

Freedmen who had rightful ownership to land were subject to brutal treatment from Klansmen as well in Florida. A particularly horrendous case of violence against a landowner was

¹⁰⁴ Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, p. 622

the flogging inflicted on one Samuel Tutson who refused to vacate his territory. "Klansmen raided the farm, flogging Samuel, sexually assaulting his wife, crippling the couple's infant son and demolishing their house...All (Klansmen) were acquitted at trial...adding insult to injury, the Tutsons were subsequently convicted of perjury for "swearing falsely' against their attackers." These kinds of atrocities were commonplace all around the state. Governor Reed recognized the danger and recruited men for the Florida state militia, on which African Americans were eager to serve. Reed ordered thousands of muskets for the militia, but they were intercepted by Klan raiders while being delivered via train from Jacksonville to Tallahassee, despite being protected by federal troops. While the security detail obviously stood by, most of the guns were destroyed, some were stolen for Klan use, and no arrests were made of those who participated in the raid.¹⁰⁵ The sheer power of the Klan in the state was demonstrated by this robbery that occurred with no bloodshed; they had easy control of the state's railroad system and had the entire state's black population under threat.

Even after Reed requested the protection of federal troops at voting booths in 1870 (after the Fifteenth Amendment was passed), Election Day, November 8, 1870, was a day of terrible bloodshed all around the state. Republican vote totals predictably suffered; in Gainesville, a U.S. Marshal was powerless to stop a Klansman from waving his handgun at black voters who dared to approach the ballot box. The Radicals lost their strong majority in the houses of the Florida Legislature that would have otherwise ensured their ability to pass the measures so loathed by the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁰⁶ Instead, they had been bullied out of office, and the Governor had been powerless to stop their efforts to thwart the state militia.

¹⁰⁵ Newton, The Ku Klux Klan in Florida, p. 14

¹⁰⁶ Newton, The Ku Klux Klan in Florida, p. 21

A third approach to the Klan problem was that of Alabama Governor William Hugh Smith, a “Scalawag” who was appointed head of the state in July of 1868 by the U.S. Congress. In Smith’s case, he too ran a Republican government, but his stand against the activities of the Klan was weak compared with Reed and Brownlow. Smith, a former-slave owner, received harsh criticism in 1869 from Alabama carpetbaggers. The Klan loathed this group for their infringement on their territory, and they were just as subject to harassment and violence as freedmen. Alabama, like other southern states, was disturbed by activities of the Invisible Empire. Thirty-five murders were blamed on Klan members as a method of terrorism to discourage voting in the 1870 elections.¹⁰⁷ Yet, as Smith reported to the federal government, he did not believe federal troops were needed in Alabama to restore the peace.¹⁰⁸ Carpetbaggers strongly opposed Smith’s policy on the issue and then used it to successfully oust him the 1870 gubernatorial election.

Like other southern states, the Klan reacted strongly to Radical groups like Union Leagues. Meetings of the group were splashed across newspapers; the organization operated in the open and, given Smith’s weak response to it, there was little sense that there would be strong resistance to their activities by the state government. Indeed, Smith’s refusal to call upon federal troops to quell acts of terrorism was tantamount to giving the Klan free rein to operate as it pleased. As it turned out, the congressional committee of 1871 that looked into Klan activities devoted more attention to Alabama than any other sector of the “Invisible Empire” because of the numerous atrocities committed there. A severe anti-Klan law had been passed in December of 1868, calling every man in disguise in the state an outlaw and giving any person the right to shoot such a man down, but it was generally ineffective. In some counties of Alabama, there was

¹⁰⁷ Dubois, Black Reconstruction, p. 441

¹⁰⁸ Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins, “Five Men Called Scalawags”, from From Civil War to Civil Rights, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987, p. 72

strong resistance by locals; in others, very little. The constant theme was that the group enjoyed brazen power over the hearts and minds of African Americans, Radicals and any other political opponents were checked more by local Unionist vigilantes than state authorities. Perhaps most symbolic of the reverberating impact of Alabama's decision not to counter the Klan strongly was a tale related by Klan historian Stanley Horn. Twelve illegally hooded Klansmen rode into Athens in full view of U.S. troops, who had been called on by the town's sheriff because he feared there would be trouble on Election Day in 1870. They realized the troops were there to keep the peace and left, but none of them were fired upon or even arrested, despite their blatant disregard for a severe state law.

Juxtaposed with Smith were the actions of North Carolina Governor William Holden, who took the Klan to task for their campaign of harassment and was met with great scorn. Ironically, the level of his opposition to the Klan was only matched by the attention-gathering violence of their activities; it was a result of the reports of bloodshed in North Carolina that President Ulysses S. Grant launched the 1871 congressional investigations into Klan activities.¹⁰⁹ However, Holden was in some ways a friend to the whites of North Carolina, resisting the wishes of prominent Radical Republican Thaddeus Stevens to keep the South under military rule until 1876 with territorial governments and Legislatures. The state's first Provincial Governor after Reconstruction, he took over control of Republican leadership in the state and became a staunch supporter of black suffrage by December 1866. He was elected Governor in 1868, and in his inaugural address he defended the carpetbaggers in the state and encouraged the state Legislature to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, which it did. The state's Constitutional Convention gathered in January of 1868 and proceeded to antagonize the state's Confederate sympathizers with legislation upholding African American rights, such as universal suffrage, the prohibition of

¹⁰⁹ Stanley F. Horn, *The Invisible Empire*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1939, p. 125, 136, 190

slavery and the right of all people to education. Although just 33 of the 133 men at the convention in Raleigh were blacks or carpetbaggers, it was ravaged by many Carolina newspapers and citizens for being unrepresentative of the state's interests. One man, Josiah Turner, whom Du Bois credits with overthrowing Reconstruction in North Carolina, said, "In the legislative halls, where once giants sat, are adventurers, manikins and gibbering Africans."¹¹⁰ In addition, the Legislature under Holden voted down the idea of separate schools for African Americans. Holden was accused of being head of the Union League, which was the organization of white and colored voters, of believing in social equality and therefore of being corrupt. The Klan increased the magnitude of their violent acts and the Congressional Investigating Committees reported 260 crimes and assaults, including seven murders. The Union Leagues were a set of intimidating organizations set up by Radical Republicans to try and cement votes for their party and also harass former Confederates; they were resisted harshly by the men who would form the Klan.¹¹¹

Holden's response to these tactics was as harsh as Brownlow's in Tennessee, and it won him both the support of the blacks in the state Legislature as well as the ire of many of its white members. In his attempt to try and put down Klan attacks, Holden was faced with the reality that much of the state militia would be composed of Klan sympathizers, and using black militia members would not be politically wise as the majority of the state was still hostile to racial advancement. Holden was forced to organize a regular force of troops and use state money to do so in his zeal to stop the Klan. Of Klansmen he said, "They met in secret, in disguise, and arms, in dress of a certain kind intended to conceal their persons and their horses, and to terrify those whom they menaced or assaulted ... This organization, under different names but cemented by a

¹¹⁰ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 528, 530-531

¹¹¹ James Welch Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, 1860-1869*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934, p. 177-178

common purpose, is believed to have embraced not less than 40,000 voters in North Carolina.”

In July of 1870, he went on to say of this ‘dangerous secret insurrection,’

I have invoked public opinion to aid me in suppressing this treason! I have issued proclamation after proclamation to the people of the State to break up these unlawful combinations! I have brought to bear every civil power to restore peace and order, but all in vain! The Constitution and the laws of the United States and of this State are set at naught; the civil courts are no longer a protection to life, liberty and property; assassination and outrage go unpunished, and the civil magistrates are intimidated and are afraid to perform their functions. To the majority of the people of these sections the approach of night is like the entrance into the valley of the shadow of death; the men dare not sleep beneath their roofs at night, but abandoning their wives and little ones, wander in the woods until day.¹¹²

By 1868, however, ex-planters in North Carolina began to organize themselves under the Democratic Party in response to Holden, and Conservatives fought the Constitution on the grounds that it made blacks social equals with whites. Democrats regained control of both houses in the next election and voted to impeach Holden on the trumped-up charges of paying troops to put down an insurrection in the state. Impeachment was strongly opposed the Legislature’s black contingent. However, out of 41 Senators, 36 were Conservatives, and out of 96 members of the House, 75 were Conservatives. Holden’s associations with carpetbaggers and his perceived belief in total racial equality doomed his governorship. He was convicted of six articles of impeachment and removed from office in 1871, and North Carolina was generally controlled by Democrats until the era of Reconstruction officially ended after the famous Compromise of 1877. In that year, Republican Rutherford B. Hayes’ election to the U.S. Presidency over Democrat Samuel J. Tilden was affirmed only after several conditions were met, one of which was the removal of federal troops from the South for good.

In Alabama, with a former Confederate governor like William H. Smith in office, opposition to the Klan was weak. In Florida, resistance was desired by northerner Harrison Reed

¹¹² Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, p. 531-535

but nearly impossible. In Mississippi, the Klan enjoyed widespread support among a white populace that was not eager to see blacks receive civil rights. Ames' opposition to the Klan was effective, but Alcorn's fear of riling up Conservatives in Mississippi allowed the organization to continue its activities unchecked. And in North Carolina, it was met with harsh resistance by Governor William Holden, and he was subsequently impeached. Was it possible to oppose the Klan in this era? Was it politically wise? Was it morally necessary? Would the Klan, or an organization with similar power, have arisen in a state other than Tennessee? Given the widespread racism and region-wide dissatisfaction with Reconstruction governments, it would be remiss to ignore this possibility. From the words of Grand Wizard Forrest himself when subpoenaed to testify about Klan activities by Congress, "the South has become a veritable hell through misrule,"¹¹³ thus enforcing his belief that the group had been literally forced into existence because of the perceived corruption that dominated Reconstruction-era state governments under the Radical Republicans.

The question is what sort of role Brownlow played in the Klan's rise and evolution, and its harassment of blacks in Tennessee and around the South, given the realities of Reconstruction. Hostility to carpetbaggers, scalawags and freedmen was rampant around the South, not just in the states discussed in this chapter, but all around the rest of the former Confederacy as well. That many of the states around the South contained organizations aside from the Klan that were hostile to black rights already testifies to that. However, it was the Klan that became the umbrella organization of racial unrest during Reconstruction and assumed all of these other organizations under its banner. Its birthplace was in Tennessee, and as racial unrest and white fear arose in other states, it spread and wreaked havoc on the security and order of the remainder of the South. Holden's heavy-handed approach got him impeached, while Reed was

¹¹³ Quarles, The Ku Klux Klan, p. 50

too impotent to stop the Klan in Florida. Smith did not apply enough pressure in Alabama and was out of office after only one term in 1870, and Humphreys, who served from 1865 to 1868 in Mississippi, represented the wishes of the white populace in Mississippi by promoting Jim Crow legislation. He only left office after being forced out by federal troops in favor of Ames, a Radical Republican, and Ames too ran into difficulties controlling the tide of white southern anger against Radicals like himself.

Brownlow was unlike these other governors in many ways, however. He was the only one among these five who served at the time to openly declare war on the rights of former Confederates. The tyranny of Radical Reconstruction, as perceived by the southern whites who gave birth to the organization, has to be considered a contributing factor behind not just the Klan's origination but its exponential growth and violent influence. However, Brownlow, as has been discussed in detail, was a lightning rod for southern white fears of the total downfall of their civilization as they had known it before the Civil War. As a more colorful and divisive figure than the other governors of the South during the period, his actions were more at risk to cause violent reactions from the white populace. That former rebels in his state saw fit to create a terrorist organization under the guise of self-defense during his administration speaks for itself in many respects, and the horrors inflicted upon the rest of the South are too numerous to completely detail.

Epilogue

Senate Speaker DeWitt Clinton Senter's ascension to the governorship of Tennessee in Brownlow's stead marked a return to Conservatism in Tennessee. Senter quickly scaled back the extreme policies of his predecessor, most notably by his announcement to the General Assembly that the time had come for the Franchise Bill to be repealed and to give Tennessee citizens back their right to vote, citing his belief that "necessity for this unhappy condition, even if it was, time has revealed to no longer exist."¹¹⁴ Even those in the General Assembly during Brownlow's administration were conscious that the extreme terms of the bill were not permanent, but rather transitory during a time of crisis. Despite being a Republican, Senter had tired of Radicalism in the state and effectively ignored the bill. He allowed thousands of former Confederates to register and scored a smashing victory over challenger William B. Stokes, a veteran of the Union army.¹¹⁵ Disfranchisement had come to an end with Brownlow's departure. Brownlow's career in the U.S. Senate was quiet compared to his tumultuous terms as governor of Tennessee. The victim of failing health, he almost was unable to take the oath of office on March 5, 1869 because of how ill he was, yet he survived all six years of his term before dying back home in Tennessee in 1877. Although regarded by many others in Congress as a sort of living legend, he was not a force on the national scene, but he remained as devoted to the Union as ever throughout the entirety of this tenure.¹¹⁶ Brownlow's legacy lay in his terms as the governor of Tennessee.

The state of mind of southern whites at the beginning of Reconstruction was summed up succinctly by historian Joel Williamson in his work on race relations in the South after the Emancipation Proclamation. Calling Radical Reconstruction the "nadir of the Southern white,"

¹¹⁴ Governor DeWitt C. Senter's message to the General Assembly, House Journal, 35th Tenn. General Assembly, February 1869

¹¹⁵ Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, New York: Harper and Row, 1990.

¹¹⁶ Merlon E. Coulter, *William G. Brownlow: Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1937, p. 387-395

life for them after Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865 became "very much a physical matter; it was a struggle for survival. The disengagement, alienation, and disintegration that marked black life after Reconstruction also marked white life during Reconstruction."¹¹⁷ That struggle for survival went far beyond the political realm, as the Ku Klux Klan so violently manifested. Deep-seated racism stemming from over a century of the enslavement of blacks was far too much for the Emancipation Proclamation to overcome. While monumental, Abraham Lincoln's legendary document did not have enough muster to change the hearts and minds of the southern whites who wound up forming the Klan. Blacks may have become free, but that would not make them equals in their eyes. The rise of Radical Republicanism stirred up further animosity, and the response against it across the South was deeply reactionary. The Klan was a gang, surely, but not a gang of the lowest and poorest members of white society. It unified whites of nearly every social group under the same banner of racial supremacy; not an organization, according to the North Carolina newspaper *The Rutherford Star*, of "poor trash, as the leading Democrats would have us believe, but men of property ... respectable citizens."¹¹⁸

As discussed earlier, responses to Klan activity by Reconstruction governors varied across the South, with varying degrees of success and failure. In Arkansas, Governor Powell Clayton placed ten counties under martial law and dispatched state militia units composed of blacks and scalawags; Governor Edmund J. Davis organized a tough police force with many black members to suppress Klan actions in his state of Texas and made thousands of arrests. However, Klan violence generally dominated the face of Reconstruction and openly scorned the rule of law until true federal intervention took place under the Ulysses S. Grant administration in

¹¹⁷ Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 80

¹¹⁸ Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*, p. 187

the form of the Ku Klux Klan Act of April 1871. If states were unable to effectively prosecute conspiracies to deny citizens the right to vote, hold office, serve on juries or other rights through violence or intimidation, the federal government could step in and even suspend the writ of habeas corpus in that endeavor. It led to a drastic decline in Klan violence by the following year.¹¹⁹ That kind of strong-armed legislation was what was necessary to start breaking the Klan down, but it also reflected the reality of the impotence of Radical Republican governments during Reconstruction. Faced with angry white citizens frustrated with the dissolution of their way of life, there was simply an inability to properly face down the open rebellion that the Ku Klux Klan personified until Grant's government made a bold move: create a new jurisdiction for itself. In that sense, Radical Reconstruction may have been doomed to failure from the start. It precipitated decades of Jim Crow laws and abuse of African American civil rights in the South that would not be seriously addressed until the 1960s. The "Solid South", as it came to be known, became a stronghold of the Democratic Party during this period because of its historical sway toward southern whites beginning in Reconstruction. Over the next 40 years, only one Republican governor served Tennessee after Senter; over the next century, there were only three.

While taking into account broader social and racial tensions that swept the South in the wake of Reconstruction, it is nevertheless my conclusion that the role of Tennessee and Brownlow in the Klan's genesis and spread was notable. The extending consequences of the rash legislation that swiftly enfranchised African Americans were contributing factors in the rising of the terrorist organization, particularly in the wake of the stringent disfranchisement bill against so many whites in Tennessee that Brownlow propagated. The Klan began disjointedly and without a common purpose in Tennessee, but Brownlow gave the organization a common enemy; the sheer volume of people who were specifically targeted for supporting him in the

¹¹⁹ Foner, *A Brief History of Reconstruction*, p. 188, 195-197

election of 1867 speaks volumes in that regard. Brownlow battled hard against the Klansmen but ultimately in vain; the spread of that and other similar organizations throughout the South was a stain on his legacy.

Brownlow's failings and the Reconstruction experiences of Tennessee are worthy of study in their own right, but they are also important to discuss in the larger context of Reconstruction of the entire former Confederacy. All around the South, northern carpetbaggers and Radically Unionist governments alienated the majorities of their populations who still harbored Confederate sympathies. Rather than employing a more moderate approach to governing, the welfare of the state was placed below earning greater political power in priority. Brownlow was a prime example of this. A stinging editorial from the *St. Louis Republic* that was printed in the *Nashville Daily Union and Dispatch* stated the frustrations emanating from the entire United States over the political corruption that had so badly marred what was supposed to be a peaceful re-union of a country that had been torn apart. "Have they succeeded?" it asked.

Has the work ended in peace, harmony, public confidence and prosperity? It seems that reconstructed governments are such weak things and so distasteful to the majority that they must be surrounded by bayonets to live. ... And this is restoring the Union? So little of skill, wisdom and justice have the Radicals displayed in their work of Reconstruction that in ten great states they have driven off from their support the great body of whites, the negroes only remaining ... So much for Radical Reconstruction.¹²⁰

Indeed, Brownlow personified the failings of Radical Reconstruction; he also demonstrated the danger of unchecked extremism and the placing of party politics over the citizens of the state. A colorful figure with a gifted pen, strong convictions and utter fearlessness in the wake of adversity, Brownlow put his talents to the wrong use once in power. African Americans were victims of racism and violence across the South because of the Klan. Brownlow never personally

¹²⁰ *Nashville Daily Union and Dispatch*, August 4, 1868

did physical injury to any human being, but the recklessness of his administration did far more harm than good for Tennessee and the rest of the South.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

House Bill No. 138, "A Bill on the Selective Franchise," June 2, 1865

The William G. Brownlow papers, courtesy of the Tennessee State Archives.

The Knoxville Whig archives, 1865-1867.

The Knoxville Register.

The Nashville Banner.

The Nashville Daily Union and Dispatch.

Tennessee Senate Journal, 1865-1869.

Tennessee House Journal, 1865-1869.

Secondary Sources

Ash, Steven V. Middle Tennessee Society Transformed, 1860-1870: War and Peace in the Upper South. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999.

Ash, Steven V. Secessionists and Other Scoundrels: Selections from Parson Brownlow's Book. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999.

Baggett, James Alex. The Scalawags: Southern Dissenters in the Civil War and Reconstruction. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004.

Brownlow, William G. Sketches of the Rise, Progress and Decline of Secession. Philadelphia:

George W. Childs, 1862.

Coulter, Merton E. William G. Brownlow: Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands.

Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1937.

Crofts, Daniel W. Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Confederate Crisis.

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Du Bois, W.E.B. Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880. New York: The Free Press,

1935.

Fisher, Noel C. War at every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee,

1860-1869. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Foner, Eric. A Short History of Reconstruction. New York: Harper & Row, 1990.

Harrold, Stanley. The Civil War and Reconstruction: A Documentary Reader. Malden:

Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Horn, Stanley. The Invisible Empire. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1939.

Newton, Michael. The Invisible Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Florida. Gainesville: University

Press of Florida, 2001.

Patton, James Welch. Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, 1860-1869. Chapel Hill: The

University of North Carolina Press, 1934.

Quarles, Chester L. The Ku Klux Klan and Related American Racialist and Antisemitic Organizations: A History and Analysis. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 1999.

Sweet, William Warren. Methodism in American History. New York: Abingdon Press, 1953.

Trelease, Allen. White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971.

Williamson, Joel. The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation. London: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Winters, Donald L. Tennessee Farming, Tennessee Farmers. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994.