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Richmond Iron: Tredegar's Role in Southern Industry During the Civil War and Reconstruction

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RICHMOND IRON: TREDEGAR'S ROLE IN SOUTHERN INDUSTRY DURING
THE CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

HISTORY

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
August 2011

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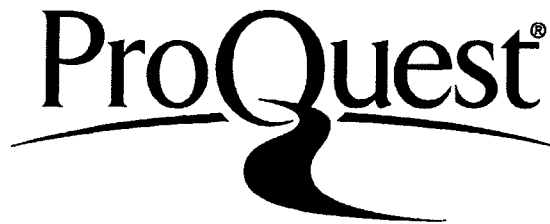
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ABSTRACT

RICHMOND IRON: TREDEGAR'S ROLE IN SOUTHERN INDUSTRY DURING THE CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

Lisa Hilleary
Old Dominion University, 2011
Director: Dr. Timothy J. Orr

The American South contained few iron industries in the decades before the Civil War. Not until the Civil War did southern states produce significant quantities of vital industrial products, such as iron. Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond, Virginia, was a rare exception. Under the ownership of Joseph R. Anderson, the company established a national reputation for quality products. Prior to the war, Tredegar did business with northerners and with the Federal government. During the war, Tredegar became one of the main weapons suppliers to the Confederate military. Since this iron company physically and economically survived the war, Anderson regained many of his antebellum contracts. A few new iron industries appeared throughout the South during Reconstruction, but they lacked the capital resources necessary for immediate success – capital that Anderson had less trouble acquiring. Although Tredegar ultimately failed to make the transition to steel, the company represented a route to industrialization not experienced in other southern states, making Tredegar's experience, and thus Richmond's experience, unique from other southern companies and cities.

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**To the maritime tragedy in April 1912 which inspired
and perpetuated my study and appreciation of history.**

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Southern industry in the late 1830s did not exist in the same world as industry in the North. For many southerners, industry held no intrinsic incentive, at least not enough to tempt them away from agriculture. However, the increasing need to transport the raw materials in the South contributed to the developing transportation revolution. Railroads became more prevalent, and by the third decade of the nineteenth century, industry began to flourish in Virginia. Small iron foundries cropped up throughout the commonwealth, bringing an industrial component into its economy.

Several types of industry appeared. Cotton and tobacco processing mills began producing small amounts of finished products from the raw materials of the region. Textile mills provided cloth made from the processed cotton. These mills were not so commercial as to offer competition to their northern counterparts, but they provided a new means of revenue. The iron industry also appeared to meet the needs of expanding railroads. Once Virginia established a market for iron products, iron foundries and iron rolling mills emerged to take advantage of profits resulting from the presence of railroad companies. Two of these companies, the Virginia Foundry Company and the Tredegar Iron Company, merged to form a greater iron industry, taking the name Tredegar Iron Works, located in Richmond, Virginia.

Under the leadership of its commercial agent turned owner, Joseph Reid Anderson, the company became well established in Virginia and known to the rest of the

South. It was one of the largest iron industries in the South before the commencement of the Civil War. Its size and its reputation for quality ensured its prominence during that conflict. Tredegar survived the war and served as a barometer of success for an industrializing southern city in the postwar period. The purpose of this study is to illustrate how and why Tredegar continued to produce and briefly prosper after the war. Tredegar helped to define Richmond, which was caught between the traditions of the South and the progressive industry of the North.

Tredegar was unique to Richmond because it incorporated slave labor into the iron industry and through the business acumen and salesmanship of Joseph Anderson, the company survived and grew in the South during Reconstruction. Through Anderson's ability to adapt to changing politics, Tredegar garnered and maintained support for its continued production and presence in the city. Because of Tredegar's reputation as an iron producer before the war, Anderson quickly regained his business associations with northerners and with the Federal government, which gave the company an advantage over infant southern industries. Anderson's use of slave labor before and during the war provided him with support from Richmonders, and his efforts to rebuild the city won him acclaim across the country. This study will examine how the economy, the politics, and the industrial modernization present in Richmond between the 1830s and the 1870s shaped Tredegar, explaining why the company became the exception within the existence of limited and small southern industry.

Anderson was the key to Tredegar's success. He compromised his political affiliations and principles to fit the needs of his company. The labor, location, and output of Tredegar all contributed to its thriving in the antebellum and wartime eras, but it was

Anderson who made the company unique. Eric Foner described Tredegar as being “the exception” to the idea that southern industry did not succeed during Reconstruction. Anderson himself represented this exception – as one of the youngest members of his family, he was forced to make his own fortune, and he did so with great enthusiasm and skill. His desire for a booming, successful business and a vast, individual fortune drove Anderson to run Tredegar in ways other southern industrialists did not favor, such as using politics for purely industrial ends and treating all workers equally on the factory floor. Ultimately, while his politics remained fluid before and during the Civil War, his refusal to move forward with technological progress led to a gradual decline for Tredegar. His role at Tredegar demonstrated that the role of southern industry during Reconstruction needs more attention and analysis.¹

Tredegar’s story, however, charted a unique experience, countering the argument of the complete failure of southern industry during Reconstruction. Michael Chesson’s *Richmond After the War* concluded that industry all but failed during Reconstruction, emphasizing Richmond’s foibles in particular. The economic depression of the 1870s, according to Eric Foner’s *Reconstruction*, negatively affected the entire South, including industry, stifling any slim progress made since the end of the war. According to Foner, southern industry did not succeed during Reconstruction. Banks shut down, businesses decreased output, and farmers suffered. Southern industry also felt its effects. There had

¹ Charles Dew, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 1-12; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 391.

been a movement afoot to modernize the South, but the Panic of 1873 shut down that process.²

The emphasis on southern industry during Reconstruction has only appeared within the last four decades. During the early 20th century, historians of Reconstruction focused on political and social history within the period. In 1907, William Dunning published a volume entitled *Reconstruction Political and Economic, 1865 – 1877*, in which he stated that, “the North claims our principle attention” when addressing “the social, economic, and political forces” of Reconstruction. Dunning made little mention of the role of industry during this period, particularly in the South, where “the many factories which had been developed, on however primitive a scale, to supply the needs of the Confederate armies, were reduced to wreckage or ashes.” Rather, Dunning emphasized the “disorganization of the labor system” for his discussion on the southern Reconstruction economy.³

² Michael Chesson, *Richmond After the War* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1981), xv; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 535. For further reading on southern industry, see Harold Wilson’s *Confederate Industry* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002). According to Wilson, several southern cities boasted cotton processing mills, but few could count an iron producer. Montgomery Iron Works of Mobile, Alabama and the East Tennessee Manufacturing Company had iron industries before the Civil War. Leeds Foundry existed before the war, but produced cotton processing tools and products. Once the war commenced, Leeds began producing arms for the Confederacy. The Atlanta Rolling Mill, created only a few years before the war, also contributed to the armament of the Confederacy through the production of iron for both weapons and plates for ships. During the war, the Leeds Foundry and the Atlanta Rolling Mill helped arm the Confederacy, but Tredegar outranked it in both size and production. Other iron foundries and rolling mills appeared during the war, such as Shelby Iron Works in Alabama and several smaller iron works in the Spartanburg area of South Carolina. Harold Wilson’s *Confederate Industry* examined cotton, iron, and tobacco industries. He discussed Tredegar when addressing the iron industry in the South, stating that the company experienced success from its wartime contributions. His view of Tredegar followed with Warren Kimball’s discussion in *American City, Southern Place* that Tredegar helped to revive the city of Richmond after the war. The evidence in both suggests that while southern industry generally experienced difficulties, Tredegar rebounded quickly and efficiently. Southern industry generally has been overlooked in studies of Reconstruction. Only in the 1960s did historians even begin to note the importance and the presence of southern industry during Reconstruction.

³ William Dunning, *Reconstruction Political and Economic, 1865-1877*, vol. 22, *The American Nation: A History* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1907), xv-xvi, 12.

To Dunning, the period was one of oppressive Radical Republicans and the threat of “negro rule.” Historians including W.E.B. DuBois and Howard Beale rose up to counter this interpretation, illustrating the significant role blacks played during Reconstruction. Revisionists of the 1940s and 1950s altered the “Dunning school” interpretation of Reconstruction, focusing on “social and political progress for blacks” after the Civil War. Again, industry, and more notably southern industry, remained hidden beneath the layers of political and social controversy.⁴

In 1951, C. Vann Woodward published his volume *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, discussing the importance of “regional history.” A limited discussion of industry appeared in this book, but the focus remained mainly on the North and the North’s role in building southern industry. Woodward stated that southern industry was driven, along with northern intervention, by a “moral change of heart,” in which southerners’ “will [and] ambition...had much to do with the speeding up of Southern industrialization.” He briefly touched on a few of the industries developing in the South, and mentioned the iron industry, which he stated was “largely a hopeful potentiality” before 1879, when northern and English businesses began investing in the South. Tennessee, Virginia, and Alabama developed the most significant iron industries during this period, but not until 1884, so Woodward claimed, did “Southern iron make its first successful invasion of any extent into the Northeastern market.” No mention of specific

⁴ Foner, *Reconstruction*, xx-xxi; Seth M. Scheiner, ed., *Reconstruction: A Tragic Era* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1968), 13-7. According to Eric Foner, Howard Beale originally followed the Dunning school, but began supporting the interpretation for which W.E.B. DuBois is credited. For further reading, see DuBois’s *Black Reconstruction in America*.

industries appeared in this analysis because the role of industry remained significantly undetected – a result of the political and social emphasis.⁵

Some changes to the focal points of Reconstruction occurred during the 1960s, starting with historian John Hope Franklin. Although only one chapter in *Reconstruction After the Civil War* discussed the role of industry, Franklin mentioned that “the ironworks around Richmond began to surpass their prewar importance.” The majority of the economic discussion of the South emphasized agriculture, but the acknowledgement that the iron industry around Richmond already existed and was improving, suggests that some historians began to attribute more weight to its existence. Others, such as Harvey Wish’s edited book, kept their focus on the social experience of blacks and role of political change in Reconstruction. By this point, most historians agreed that the Dunning interpretation had run its course, and no longer assumed “carpetbaggers and Southern white Republicans were wicked,” nor that “Negroes were incompetent.” These changes laid the foundation for further revisions, including the incorporation of southern industry in Reconstruction studies.⁶

It was in this decade that Charles Dew first published his book, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy*. Although it had no introduction and no argument, Dew mentioned that he wanted to expand Kathleen Bruce’s *Virginia Iron Industry in the Slave Era* to include a more thorough analysis of Tredegar, since the company records had just been donated to the Library of Virginia in 1958. Dew studied Tredegar, presenting a thorough history of

⁵ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, vol. 9, *A History of the South* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 113, 126-7.

⁶ John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 177; Harvey Wish, ed., *Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1877: Firsthand Accounts of the American Southland after the Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1965), xxxix; Herman Belz, “The New Orthodoxy in Reconstruction Historiography,” *Reviews in American History* 1, no. 1 (March 1973): 106-7..

an industry which “had a direct and significant impact on the history of the South and the nation.” He commented that the previous lack of evidence accounting for southern industry left a hole in the discussion of Civil War and Reconstruction. He also explained that no historian had previously examined Tredegar because historians continued to view the effect of southern industry as minimal to the story of Reconstruction, and because the company’s records only became available to the public in 1958. With this book, Dew helped to unravel some of the issues surrounding the role of Confederate industry. But, even with the publication of this book, the Reconstruction literature remained focused on the black experience and did little to incorporate the post-Dunning revisionism into the newfound attention to Richmond’s iron industry.⁷

Around the same period some historians began publishing an increased number of histories of Richmond. Most of the Richmond histories from the 1960s and before focused on the city, and did not emphasize any industrial aspects. In this vein, Michael Chesson wrote *Richmond After the War*, which addressed the role of industry in a specific southern city, in “the absence of a modern history of Richmond during the post-Civil War era.” Chesson referenced Dew’s book, commenting on the role of Tredegar within the city, and continued expanding on the role of other industries in Richmond. The 1960s thus put forth some questions about southern industry which historians began to address in the 1970s and 1980s.⁸

Chesson demonstrated the importance of industry in Richmond, stating that it was mainly industry which determined Richmond’s measured success during Reconstruction. He discussed Tredegar specifically, using Dew’s book as a reference, stating that

⁷ Dew, *Ironmaker*, xi-xii.

⁸ Chesson, *Richmond*, xvi.

“Richmond’s ironworks was the only one that increased the value of its product from 1860 to 1870,” showing a significant change in the interpretation of southern industry. While industry in the South on the whole was not addressed, Chesson and Dew made the point that Tredegar was a unique example in that it facilitated the social, political, and economic reconstruction of Richmond. But for Chesson, Tredegar’s example did not fit the general trend. Through his research, he determined that Richmond did not reach its full potential as a city, remaining “a miniature metropolis.” He attributed this to the complexity of politics in the city, Richmond’s “reluctance to part with the past,” and the decline of the iron industry in the 1880s. The textile and printing industries grew, but the iron industry had declined, harming Richmond’s economy.⁹

New historians of Reconstruction continued to deal with Tredegar as Dew and Chesson had done, by referring to it as an anomaly. Eric Foner approached Reconstruction thematically, weaving industry into his discussion of politics and race. In his view, few northern companies and investors wanted to risk investing in infant southern enterprises. Through the evolution of change during Reconstruction, Foner argued that southern society had to shift to accommodate the new relationships between whites. Politics affected the socioeconomic parts of southern society, making it difficult for both northerners and southerners to accept changes in their respective economies. The likelihood of failure ran high during this period for southern industries. The economy in the South after the Civil War did not offer a market necessary for new industries. The costs outweighed the benefits, and entrance barriers to industry were extremely high and competitive. But he softened the extremity of the situation when it came to Tredegar, stating that northerners did invest, but only “to assist reviving prewar

⁹ Chesson, *Richmond*, 138-9, 143, 164-5.

establishments like Richmond's Tredegar Iron Works." Tredegar, he stated, had "attracted enough northern investment to resume production," but Anderson's company was an exception.¹⁰

Foner's discussion of southern industry in general was limited, and when it appeared, he dealt with cotton processing mills, not iron. By not investigating individual industries in greater detail, Foner overlooked the contributions of Tredegar, namely that the company illustrated the epitome of how the urban South should have developed during Reconstruction.¹¹ The company represented the outcome the South did not achieve after the war. Tredegar became the epitome of what the North hoped to create in the South, which explains Foner's exemption of the company from his blatant statement that industry did not succeed during the Reconstruction period.¹²

Tredegar ought to have played a larger role in Foner's book, for it was a clear example of Foner's discussion of the evolution of racial attitudes and the growing connection between race and class. Anderson's management of his work force demonstrated Foner's concept that southern whites wanted to retain control of labor. The increasing desire for economic independence among Richmond's blacks threatened not only the flow of production at Tredegar, but also affected the city's politics, particularly during the Readjuster period. Had Foner studied Tredegar in more detail, he might have seen that the industry's significance could not be dismissed so easily.¹³

Departing from Foner's cursory approach, historians of the late 1980s and 1990s devoted more attention to the role of southern industry in Reconstruction. Using Dew's

¹⁰ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 213, 390-2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 379-92.

¹² *Ibid.*, 379-92.

¹³ *Ibid.*, xvii-xxv, 535, 591-593; Perman, *Political Unity*, 151-6.

book, Warren Kimball wrote a history of Richmond before the war, devoting a chapter the role that Tredegar filled before and during the Civil War. Tredegar, according to Kimball, affected the labor, politics, and economic conditions of antebellum Richmond. He stated that Tredegar “was the city’s only major business with a substantial market in the American South,” countering Woodward’s statement that no significant antebellum southern industry existed.¹⁴

Harold Wilson’s *Confederate Industry* devoted his entire book to investigating southern industry during and after the Civil War, and stated that “Tredegar Iron Works in Virginia [was a] large and successful establishment.” The emphasis on southern industry as a part of Reconstruction illustrates both an increased recognition of the role of industry in the rebuilding of the South and the greater accessibility to records and evidence on southern industries. According to Wilson, southern industry had been growing in the antebellum period, and needed to continue to grow during Reconstruction. He discussed that the South had to increase its level of industry because “the poverty and deprivation of the region could be cured only by economic development,” since the war had been lost due largely to the limited industry in the region. Wilson’s focus on the role of industry in the South demonstrated its growing importance to the histories of Reconstruction in the late 20th century and early part of the 21st century.¹⁵

Tredegar did not yield tremendous economic success, but its presence gave Richmond a unique advantage, particularly after the war, when industry began to dominate the national economy. With little industry, the South accounted for around ten percent of the country’s economy. Although Tredegar did not contribute significantly

¹⁴ Kimball, *American City*, 159-60.

¹⁵ Wilson, *Confederate*, xvi-xvii, 272-4.

during the Reconstruction period, it put Richmond on the road to prosperity. No argument can be made that Richmond surpassed the production and success of northern cities, but through Tredegar, Richmond initiated a model for a successful iron industry in the South.

To better unravel the importance of southern industry, this study will demonstrate how Tredegar came to dominate the region before, during, and after the Civil War. No research has been done on Tredegar during Reconstruction. Even Charles Dew's book stopped in the late 1860s. Kimball and Wilson mentioned Tredegar, but only up to the point of the immediate postwar period. Studying Tredegar during Reconstruction provides a more definitive look at the business practice of Tredegar – going beyond its antebellum and wartime success to witness its eventual decline by the late 1870s.

Since southern industry appears in Reconstruction works from the past few decades, most historians accept that it, along with politics and society, affected the ways in which Reconstruction affected the nation. However, it remains vastly untouched, with issues relating to southern agriculture holding center stage of books about Reconstruction. Industry did, in fact, affect southern cities. To understand the ways it did, historians must examine individual industries created or maintained after the war. Tredegar is a fine example. It also held the advantage of having a forward-looking man at its helm. Anderson devoted everything to the development of his industry, compromising principles and politics to achieve greatness for Tredegar. When the country began to change after the war, so too did Anderson change. As the country reconstructed its political and economic views, industry in the South became more apparent and more influential. For Tredegar, the sudden change in Anderson's character

– from a man of vision and progress to a man of conservatism and resistance to change – led to the company’s decline in the 1880s. While Tredegar provides an example of how the South could have developed had it focused on industry, it also illustrates the uniqueness of how Anderson approached industry.

CHAPTER II

RICHMOND'S "IRON KING" AND HIS COMPANY

Tredegar Iron Works, situated on the James River in Richmond, blossomed into the leading southern iron industry during the middle of the 19th century. The company developed within a region that employed slave labor, making the factory experience at Tredegar unique from northern industries. The incentive of industrial slave labor, combined with future owner Joseph Reid Anderson's business tenacity, created the environment in which Tredegar thrived. Richmond Whigs supported this industry as part of their platform calling for internal improvements. Naturally, Richmond's Democrats, loyal to slave labor and agriculture, countered the Whigs' industrialism. Anderson's political affiliations as a Whig influenced the way he managed Tredegar, emphasizing the building of a local industry to support the economy. When the Whigs began to dissipate in the 1850s, Anderson shifted his allegiance to the Democrats, using the slave labor at Tredegar as the means for gaining their support. Anderson's political adaptation helped Tredegar and its labor force to endure the precariously shifting political environment through party realignment and war.

In the 1830s, Virginia experienced a railroad boom, initiating a need for iron products. Throughout the decade, between ten and twenty iron foundries opened in the state. The need for railroad materials ensured that a market for iron products would remain in the city of Richmond. Richmond's location on the James River gave its iron companies an advantage in transportation and steam power. In 1836, furnace operator Francis Deane, Jr. acquired the financial investments necessary to start the Tredegar Iron

Company. The company took its name from an iron works in Wales, the home of one of the company's engineers.¹

Around the same time, the Virginia Foundry Company formed, and it too produced iron products, but its charter provided less capital than Tredegar. In 1837, the two companies agreed to combine their foundries under a single manager. Tredegar, being the larger entity, absorbed the Virginia Foundry Company, and with that, the merger began producing rail materials. However, the panic of that year severely reduced the railroad market to which Tredegar catered. By 1841, the company turned to Joseph Anderson as its commercial agent to get the business affairs in order.²

Anderson came from a large Episcopalian Scotch-Irish family in western Virginia. As one of the youngest of the family, his father explained early on that Joseph would have to make his own way because he would not receive an inheritance. With this knowledge, Anderson decided he wanted to join the Army, and finally, after much struggle, received an acceptance to West Point. He spent a little over a year in the army in the Corps of Engineers, determining from his short experience that the military life was not for him. He sought a civil engineering job, not the military engineering occupation to which he had been assigned. After resigning and returning to his native Virginia, he married, and then decided to take advantage of the unstable economic climate by taking the helm of the struggling Tredegar.³

Anderson had become interested in industry while attending the Academy in New York, noting that the "economic development of the state" gave it an advantage that

¹ Charles Dew, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 1-4.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 1-4.

Virginia lacked. Influenced by his time in the North, Anderson sought to build up Virginia's economy, and found that opportunity at Tredegar, even though his familiarity with the iron industry was minimal.⁴ He had been offered the position as Assistant State Engineer for the Valley Turnpike project in Virginia, coming into contact with the Tredegar owners at a commercial convention in Norfolk. Seeing his potential and his charisma as a businessman and a salesman, the owners offered him a job as commercial agent for Tredegar. Anderson knew next to nothing about iron production, but his ambition for wealth and success served the company well during those early years. Anderson became familiar with the layout of Tredegar, the foundry building being the largest building on the site. He took the position, and by 1842, began the process of setting up contracts with the Federal government, primarily taking contracts for the Navy and the Army. His efforts suffered in 1843, when several of the cannon ordered by the Navy Department failed to pass a test firing. The cannons were made of faulty materials, and blew up when tested. Thus, early on, Tredegar suffered from a poor reputation.⁵

The failed products highlighted another problem within Tredegar: Anderson's conflict with the board of directors for the company. In his opinion, gaining approval for decisions from the Board set back Tredegar's progress. Thus, in late 1843, Anderson began leasing Tredegar, removing all power from the Board of Directors. He reacquired contracts with the Federal government, but now he produced iron with an improved process using iron from Cloverdale and Grace – a company owned by his brother John – and coal acquired from pits outside Richmond. Once he demonstrated the quality of

⁴ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 4-10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1-12.

these altered iron products, Anderson produced hundreds of ordnance materials for the Federal government.⁶

The increase in production could not have come at a better time. The 1840s witnessed a boom in the business cycle. Still, the acquisition of Federal contracts served as the true barometer of success, in Anderson's opinion. Following the *Princeton* debacle, whereupon an experimental cannon blew up when lit, killing those around it, the Ordnance Bureau petitioned fellow Virginian and President of the United States John Tyler to find new sources of heavy artillery. Tyler, a booster for Richmond, recommended Tredegar as a supplier of military-grade iron. Thus, in 1844, Tredegar received a contract to build the steamship USS *Polk*. Tyler's reasons were influenced by the faulty operation of cannon produced by a northern iron industry, for a northern foundry had made the *Princeton* gun. This new vote of confidence from the Federal government, along with the growing business contracts with men in the North and the South, gave Tredegar an unprecedented reputation as the premier southern-based iron industry. The Federal government went to Tredegar for "the best cannon," according to the *Richmond Enquirer*. The *New York Herald* reprinted an article from the *Enquirer*, which stated that Anderson epitomized "what Virginia enterprise and talent can achieve when called out."⁷

By the late 1850s, after Tredegar had received the contract for the *Polk* in 1844, Secretary of War John Floyd required all cannon to be constructed under the Rodman method, which produced stronger and larger guns by allowing iron castings to cool in a

⁶ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 10-21.

⁷ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 10-16; "The Disunion Party of the South: The Resources and Preparations of the South," *Richmond Enquirer*, 4 December 1856; "Southern Manufacturing Enterprise," *New York Herald*, 13 July 1856.

hollow core to relieve stress on the metal. Anderson refused to use the new method, convinced that his method of iron production of casting in a solid tube had been working well since Tredegar's 1843 incident. Starting late in the Tyler administration, the Secretaries of War declared that all cannon sold to the Federal government must be produced using the stronger Rodman process. Anderson refused to make the transition. This refusal later affected the relationship between Tredegar and the Federal government in the 1850s.⁸

While southerners generally abhorred tariffs and factory labor, Tredegar appealed to the Whig party's platform for internal improvements, demanding higher tariffs to limit foreign iron competitors. True to the national Whig Party platform, Anderson ardently supported higher tariffs, and in 1848, he even went to Washington to offer his support for a high tariff plan. The Walker Tariff posed a threat to Anderson, as it attempted to reduce iron duties, pushing him to support "higher iron duties." Conversely, Democrats in Richmond expressed concern over tariffs and the improvements of the Whig Party. The *Richmond Enquirer*, a Democratic paper, urged citizens to prepare to fight "ultra Whigs" who threatened the "progress [of the] nation."⁹

Richmonders tolerated industry at least as early as the 1830s, when the city council, then dominated by Whigs, declared that "the prosperity of the city was deeply involved" in its enterprises.¹⁰ However, Richmonders expressed caution due to concerns that the city might "fall prey to the social disorder of northern cities."¹¹ Anderson

⁸ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 44-48.

⁹ Richard Hofstadter, "The Tariff Issue on the Eve of the Civil War," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 44, no. 1 (October 1938): 50-55; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 38-44; "An Anomaly!" *Richmond Enquirer*, 19 May 1848.

¹⁰ W. Asbury Christian, *Richmond Her Past and Present* (Reprint from 1912 edition, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1973), 128-9

¹¹ Kimball, *American City*, xvi-xix.

avoided Democratic criticism because he continued to use slaves at Tredegar; a decision that ensured his industry would remain distinct from northern industries. Anderson began using slave labor shortly after leasing the company, determining that to compete with northern factories, he must cut labor costs. The difficulty of making Tredegar amenable to southerners, and particularly, to the citizens of Richmond, relied on Anderson's ability to defend factory labor to a diffident public. Through the use of slaves at Tredegar, he had forged an industry that Richmonders could accept. Virginia contributed less to the southern agricultural economy, since the state was not conducive to raw cotton production (although numerous cotton processing mills existed in Virginia). But by the 1840s, the rise of railroads in the state and the access to coal mines pushed the entire state in a different economic direction from the rest of the South, acting as one of the city's largest employers.¹²

Still, the use of slave labor caused Anderson tremendous difficulty. In 1847, a strike occurred at Tredegar led by white workers who protested the use of slave labor. Whig newspapers in the South defended Anderson's use of labor, slave and free, stating that while the people understood the free workers' anger and frustration, they lacked the right to dictate to their employer the type of labor that he could employ. One Whig newspaper, supporting the use of immigrant workers, went further by stating that Anderson's effort to remain firm against the strikers would "strengthen the feelings...to immigrate to the slave States."¹³ Of course, *The Liberator*, an antislavery newspaper from Boston, viewed the strike differently, using the incident as further evidence that free and slave labor could not be combined, arguing that, "free men instinctively shun

¹² Dew, *Ironmaker*, 38-59; Daniel W. Crofts, "Late Antebellum Virginia Reconsidered," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 107, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 255-56.

¹³ "Free and Slave Labor," *The National Era*, 24 June 1847; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 16-21.

connection with...‘chattel’ laborers...because it is degrading.” Anderson dealt firmly with the strikers, refusing to meet their demands and forcing the most recalcitrant ones to leave. The results of this strike solidified him as a captain of industry. He now had a sturdy cushion of slave labor should he need to replace any of his white workers.¹⁴ During the 1840s and 1850s, Anderson continued using slaves to supplement white labor. Slaves mostly performed unskilled jobs at Tredegar, only gaining skilled positions immediately before the war. This increasing use of skilled slave labor proved vital, as it allowed Tredegar to continue production even when its white workers volunteered for the Confederate Army.¹⁵

During the 1850s, Anderson began to appeal to southern state governors, calling on them to purchase arms from his company. He tried to alter the opinion of the Secretary of War, but Secretary Floyd remained adamant, informing Anderson that if he did not produce using the Rodman method he would lose all contracts for cannon with the Federal government. This loss of Federal revenue triggered Anderson’s active pursuit of southern clients. He began to encourage pro-Southern attitudes, and became increasingly hostile to northern businesses because they had transitioned to the Rodman process and had received several of the government contracts that Tredegar had sought.¹⁶

Anderson’s participation as a member on the city council aided his efforts to bolster Tredegar, illustrating his popularity among certain sectors of the city’s population. He encouraged a bill advocating the use of Virginia industries in the production of

¹⁴ “Slave and Free Labor in Virginia,” *The Liberator*, 13 August 1847.

¹⁵ Robert S. Starobin, “The Economics of Industrial Slavery in the Old South,” *The Business History Review* 44, no.2 (Summer 1970):131-33; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 34. Though he does not discuss it significantly, tariffs also influenced the lack of industry present in the South during the antebellum period. Most southerners disliked tariffs, as they did more harm to their agricultural economy than good. For southern industrialists though, high tariffs were an essential part of competition.

¹⁶ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 49-52; Untitled Article, *Richmond Enquirer*, 5 September 1860.

railroads and canals. In so doing, he maintained support for his presence on the council, even though he did not hold a leadership position. He represented one of the five Richmond voting wards, and often cultivated business relationships with members representing the other wards. As he increased his political influence within Richmond, the national Party with which he was affiliated began to falter in the 1850s.

The Whig Party in Richmond lacked the necessary cohesion to survive the Party collapse of the 1850s. During the 1830s and 1840s, the Whigs divided regionally based upon economic issues, and became more divisive in the 1850s with the conflict over slavery. By the mid 1850s, Richmond Whigs had grown so factional that Anderson no longer viewed the party as “able to protect southern interests,” meaning slave labor. The rise of the Republican Party pressured Anderson to accept that Virginia’s Whig Party could no longer hold out against the threat of antislavery.¹⁷

As Whigs dissipated in prominence in Richmond, even with the presence of Tredegar, Anderson recognized his allegiance had to shift. His reliance on slave labor at Tredegar assisted him in the transition, making him palatable to his former political opponents. Whig newspapers accused him of betraying the party to accommodate his “private interests,” according to the *Richmond Whig*, but as an industrialist dependent on slave labor, Anderson had strong reasons to become a Democrat. The *Richmond Whig* criticized his political shift, stating that Anderson would receive “several fat contracts” for moving to the Democratic Party. Evidently, Whig stalwarts viewed Anderson’s switch as a betrayal, and they concocted stories that impugned his business ethics to make sense of it. By the mid 1850s, Anderson and other Richmond Democrats became

¹⁷ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 38-59; Untitled Article, *Richmond Whig*, 26 May 1857.

the majority in Richmond's council, leaving the city's few remaining Whigs with no political power.¹⁸

Anderson considered the Whig Party too weak to combat the rising Republican Party, so he therefore continued to push for internal improvements with Richmond Democrats. Richmond Democrats also fought hard to defend slavery, and slaves provided a large part of Tredegar's unskilled labor. After the collapse of the Whigs, Anderson made an easy transition to the capital's dominant party. He did not need to change Tredegar significantly, merely inspire loyalty to industry among fellow Democrats. The *Enquirer* printed an article describing Anderson as "a gentleman of great energy and business like habits," illustrating the civil respect Anderson earned before he joined the Democratic Party.¹⁹

Richmond politics proved that slavery and industry could coexist successfully. The acceptance of Tredegar became apparent in the *Richmond Enquirer*, where acceptance of regulated banks preceded the toleration of industry. Further, during a "Democratic Festival" in 1852, the *Enquirer* reported that "a crowd gathered...around Mr. Grant's [tobacco] factory," showing the gradual acceptance of industry by Richmond Democrats. The reported statement from a New York Democrat stated that "slave owners are as good and merciful as other men," illustrating that perhaps some northern Democrats were more open-minded when considering slave labor in factories.²⁰

¹⁸ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 40-2; Michael Perman, *Pursuit of Unity: A Political History of the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 46-51; Untitled Article, *Richmond Whig*, 26 May 1857.

¹⁹ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 38-59; "Anderson's Steam Engines," *Richmond Enquirer*, 29 April 1851.

²⁰ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 38-59; "Whig Policy," *Richmond Enquirer*, 17 October 1848; Untitled Article, *Richmond Enquirer*, 18 June 1850; "The Democratic Festival," *Richmond Enquirer*, 3 December 1852.

Thus it was by 1857, just as the Whig Party faded from existence in Virginia, the Democratic Party emerged as a booster of southern industry. Tredegar's use of slave labor helped reinforce Democratic loyalty to Anderson and his company. The iron industry in Richmond offered a successful and unique example of employing slave labor in the factory system. Tredegar did not threaten the existence of slavery, making it easier to accept into the fold of the Democrats' platform of defending slavery.

The Panic of 1857 challenged Tredegar with a multi-year depression. At the onset of the Civil War, several smaller southern railroads defaulted on their payments to Tredegar, forcing the company to reduce production and take loans from Richmond's banks. Desperate for business, Anderson had to put up the company as collateral. The limited Federal revenue also contributed to the financial straits in which Anderson found his company.²¹

Sales vacillated for Tredegar after Anderson's conversion to Democracy, but continued to rise generally. The sale of weapons to the Army and the Navy helped Tredegar to weather the economic crisis, even though the relationship with Floyd was unstable. Anderson's refusal to transition prevented Tredegar from setting up contracts through Floyd for arms, but Anderson still set up some contracts with the Army and the Navy for other iron products, such as hardware and sheet iron, although the limited sales appeared in the lower numbers in the table below.²²

²¹ Dew, *Ironmaker* 80-2, 121-32.

²² Dew, *Ironmaker*, 48-9; Anne Kelly Knowles, "Labor, Race, and Technology in the Confederate Iron Industry," *Technology and Culture* 42, no. 1 (January 2001): 4-6. The author in this source goes further, stating that Tredegar was one of only four iron industries which sold cannon and shell to the Federal government before the Civil War. For further study of iron manufacturers before the Civil War, J. Peter Lesley's *The Iron Manufacturer's Guide to the Furnaces, Forges, and Rolling Mills of the United States*.

Table 1. Tredegar Foundry Sales, January 1856 through December 1859.

	1856	1857	1858	1859
January	\$20, 323	\$2, 862	\$2, 476	\$7, 735
February	\$12, 310	\$5, 263	\$4, 311	\$4, 183
March	\$18, 476	\$8, 041	\$12, 668	\$12, 328
April	\$5, 000	\$4, 140	\$19, 767	\$24, 045
May	\$40, 000	\$15, 851	\$3, 118	\$12, 902
June	\$14, 067	\$19, 068	\$11, 781	\$18, 428
July	\$31, 450	\$4, 765	\$858	\$35, 649
August	\$24, 000	\$28, 008	\$1, 802	\$17, 330
September	\$3, 423	\$9, 557	\$2, 011	\$25, 815
October	\$5, 137	\$7, 157	\$12, 756	\$18, 420
November	\$27, 681	\$34, 838	\$5, 438	\$16, 111
December	\$9, 212	\$70, 542	\$12, 732	\$11, 548

Source: Data retrieved from Tredegar Sales Book for the Foundry, 1854-1860. Note: The portion from 1860 is in Table 3.

By 1860, Tredegar's sale of weapons increased substantially, particularly to individual southern states. Anderson's campaign to encourage southern states to buy weapons from Tredegar saved his company. Every state in the South purchased from Tredegar, buying rifles, cannons, shell, and shot, among other items. Of course, the southern states were now preparing for war, as the secession crisis deepened with Lincoln's election.²³

Although the above table illustrates that Tredegar sales fluctuated over the four year

²³ William Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant*, Vol. II (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 330-41.

period (as with most companies), the average amount gradually increased into 1860, as more individual states began purchasing arms from the firm.²⁴

By late December 1860, sales to railroads dropped significantly, as the demand for war materials took precedence. On December 27, 1860, Tredegar and the State of Georgia (represented by General Paul Semmes) agreed to the issuance of shot, cannon, and shells, which were required to meet the standards issued by the Army Ordnance Department. In March 1861, a similar order was issued in a contract between Tredegar and the State of Mississippi.²⁵

During the summer of 1860, the Charleston Navy Yard in South Carolina placed a small order for iron plates and weapons. In December 1860, South Carolina and Georgia began ordering weapons from Tredegar, fulfilling Anderson's goal of acquiring more southern customers. Virginia and the City of Richmond also began purchasing earlier that year as well. The war led Anderson to believe that Tredegar's "economic future [lay] with an independent South."²⁶

Orders from other southern states allowed Tredegar to remain intact throughout the war. Tredegar became the major supplier of arms for the Confederate war effort. The most difficult problem Tredegar faced involved the lack of raw materials, preventing production levels from reaching their full potential. Contracts set up with the Confederate government allowed Tredegar to continue, but not at full capacity, which is

²⁴ Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1854-1860, Series V Box 183. Tredegar Iron Works Records, 1801-1957. Business records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

²⁵ Tredegar Contract Book, 1859-1868, Series V, Box 176. Tredegar Iron Works Records, 1801-1957. Accession 23881, 24808. Business records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

²⁶ Tredegar Foundry Sales Books, 1854-60, 1860-67; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 47.

illustrated by the sales in Table 1.²⁷ Due to the limited raw materials available, during the war, Tredegar operated at only one third of its capacity.

Whatever their opinions before the war, after Virginia seceded, Richmonders held Tredegar in high regard. On April 16, 1861, Richmonders hoisted a Confederate flag atop the “main building of the works,” and the Smith Armory Band played “La Marseillaise.” Tredegar had been the first stop of a secession parade, and Anderson delivered a speech, applauding the use of a Tredegar columbiad at Fort Sumter. Governor Letcher attended as well, as reported by the *Richmond Enquirer*. This event illustrated the importance of Tredegar to the new-found Confederacy. Already, Tredegar had “one thousand kegs of powder and twenty thousand pounds of shot and shell” delivered to South Carolina at the request of Governor Andrew Pickens. South Carolina acquired these supplies, in addition to cannon and artillery guns.²⁸ South Carolina’s use for all these weapons and artillery from Tredegar is difficult to determine, but since the state had been ordering since December, Governor Pickens possessed over \$3,000 in Tredegar-made artillery, gun carriages, and other weapons. Thus, southern purchases in 1860 – before the war broke out – kept Tredegar afloat.

On August 3, 1861, Tredegar signed a contract with the Confederate States of America (represented by the Confederate Secretary of War) for shells, guns, rifles, and cannons.²⁹ In 1862, the Confederate States government agreed that Tredegar would be allowed any scrap metal from the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad – after the Confederate

²⁷ Dew, *Ironmaker* 80-2, 121-32, 138-53.

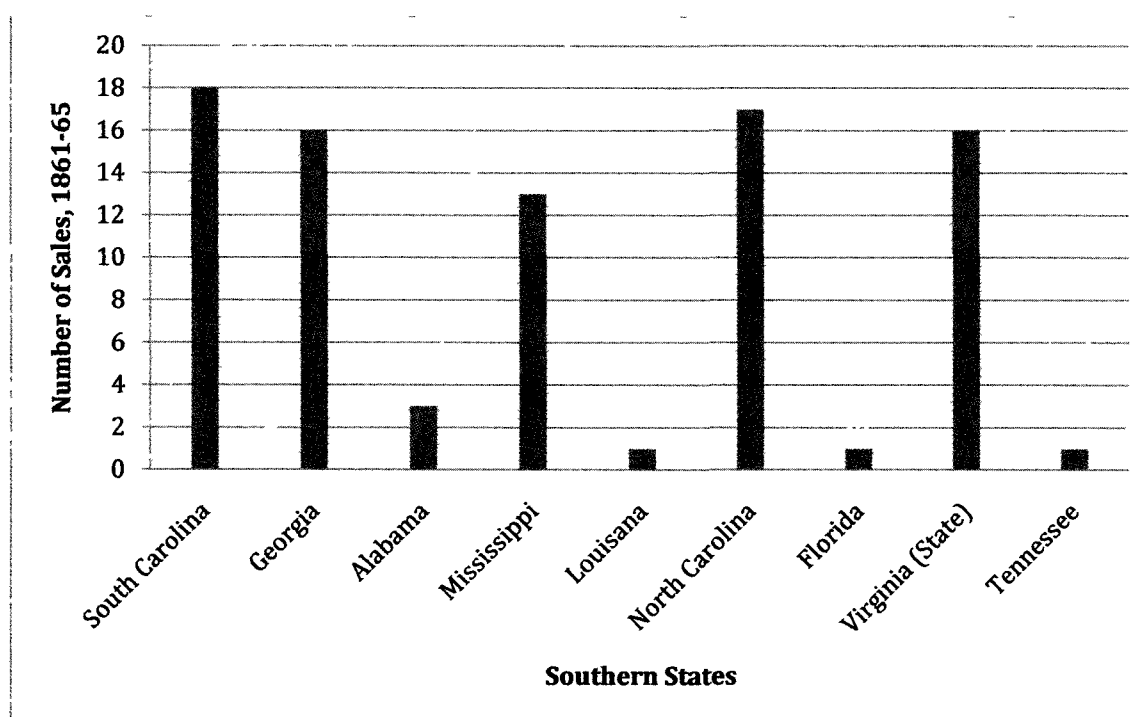
²⁸ “Effects of the News at Richmond,” *Richmond Enquirer*, 16 April 1861; “Shipment of Powder and Shell to Charleston,” *The New York Herald*, 21 January 1861; Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1860-67, Series V Box 184:1. Tredegar Iron Works Records, 1801-1957. Business Records Collection. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

²⁹ Tredegar Contract Book, 1859-68; Patricia Schechter, “Free and Slave Labor in the Old South: The Tredegar Ironworkers Strike of 1847,” *Labor History* 35, no. 2 (1994): 165-9.

army destroyed it to keep it out of Union hands – allowing Tredegar more access to raw iron. By late 1862, Anderson set up contracts with the Confederate Navy Department for iron, pig metal, and engines. Similar contracts continued for the duration of the war.³⁰

The figure below depicts the number of sales Tredegar conducted with each state over the course of the Civil War.

Figure 1. Number of Tredegar Sales to southern States, 1861-65.



Source: Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1860-67. Note: Only numbers for the “State of Virginia are listed, although there were other purchases listed separately under the “Commonwealth of Virginia.”

As this chart illustrates, most Confederate states purchased from Tredegar at least fifteen times over the course of the war. Most purchases averaged in the same range of a few

³⁰ Tredegar Contract Book, 1859-68; Lester Cappon, “A Note on Confederate Ordnance Records,” *The Journal of the American Military Institute* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1940): 94-102.

thousand dollars, but the Confederate government purchased far more and at a higher frequency from Tredegar.³¹

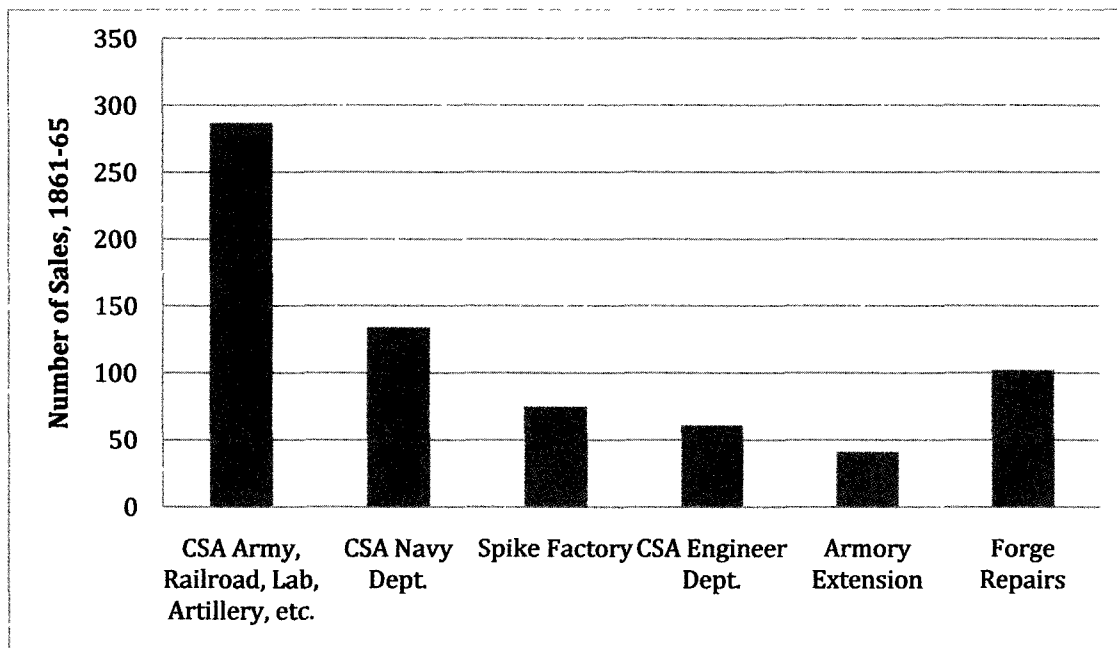
Most individual sales averaged at approximately \$1,000, mainly in cannon, shot and shell, and guns and gun carriages. On average, each individual order contained around 50 cannon, hundreds of shot and shells, and 100 gun carriages. Some of the orders were more extravagant, such as the March order from South Carolina, and the two separate purchases by Georgia in March and April of 1861, together totaling over \$10,000. Virginia and North Carolina followed Georgia and South Carolina, with few extraordinarily large buys, but those two states consistently purchased from Tredegar throughout the war. Louisiana and Tennessee did not purchase often because each had local iron industries from which they bought weapons and artillery. Alabama, with a narrow coast line, had little need to purchase iron products from Tredegar (smaller coastal defenses), and only bought three times throughout the war.³²

The Confederate government lacked strong central authority early in the war, which Jefferson Davis realized after becoming the first Confederate president, explaining the individual state purchases in addition to Confederate purchases. Figure 2 shows the amount of purchases made by Confederate government entities.

³¹ Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1860-67. The sales book lists both “the Commonwealth of Virginia” and “the State of Virginia” as buyers over the periods both during and after the Civil War. Different items were sold to each, and it does not list any reason for the use of both terms, as Virginia is not a state.

³² Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1860-67.

Figure 2. Number of Foundry Sales to Confederate Organizations, 1861-65.



Source: Data from Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1860-67. Note: The column of CSA encompasses many individual branches of the government, too numerous to name, including, but not limited to the army, the military store, the railroad bureau, the artillery, the laboratory, and ordnance.

The Confederate Navy purchased materials for constructing ships, and the sales book clerk noted the building of a “Submarine Boat.” The high amount of purchases from the Confederate government depicted here resulted from combining all Confederate entities and branches into the category, as the book listed numerous smaller departments. Excluded are the Navy Department, the Armory Extension and the Engineer Department, which merited significant purchases separate from the other branches of the government.³³

Purchases from the Confederate entities reached a similar range, usually doubling the amount of an average state purchase (about \$2,000). The sales book most often listed

³³ Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1860-67.

the “Confederate States of America,” and occasionally specified a specific branch, such as the military store, the railroad bureau, or the laboratory, which explains the high level of purchases in Figure 2. The Spike Factory and Forge Repairs purchased far less, averaging \$600, but sometimes reaching \$1,000 in their orders for iron. The smaller amount can be attributed to the fact that these two departments did not purchase weapons or artillery.³⁴

An article in the *Richmond Enquirer* in December 1862 illustrated the concerted effort of factory owners, including Anderson, to acquire and keep labor for production – a problem that plagued Tredegar until the end of the war. A record of the precise number of workers who left to join the army, or who were drafted into it, was not kept by the company, but the increased use of slaves at Tredegar attests to the limited number of white workers available.³⁵

Table 2 below exhibits the value of Tredegar’s wartime sales, with the exception of October through December 1864.

³⁴ Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1860-67.

³⁵ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 303-15; Untitled Article, *Richmond Enquirer*, 29 December 1862. This article was composed by several different manufacturers in the area to recruit labor for their industries, as the Confederate government kept a tight control of industry, but had little monetary or labor capital to invest.

Table 2. Tredegar Foundry Sales, January 1860 through September 1864.

	1860	1861	1862	1863	1864
January	\$5, 842	\$21, 329	\$79, 716	\$108, 938	\$260, 870
February	\$17, 549	\$33, 018	\$57, 304	\$120, 437	\$317, 504
March	\$17, 312	\$45, 102	\$51, 332	\$176, 972	\$371, 221
April	\$25, 754	\$67, 094	\$97, 422	\$139, 276	\$310, 959
May	\$26, 387	\$71, 542	\$89, 500	\$92, 546	\$363, 340
June	\$59, 233	\$68, 759	\$62, 939	\$42, 973	\$485, 646
July	\$7, 509	\$72, 574	\$52, 570	\$139, 587	\$512, 273
August	\$40, 202	\$86, 079	\$90, 363	\$144, 035	\$335, 443
September	\$41, 984	\$95, 152	\$76, 019	\$170, 888	\$350, 000
October	\$18, 836	\$73, 207	\$89, 652	\$213, 343	—
November	\$27, 943	\$90, 766	\$123, 484	\$195, 882	—
December	\$61, 807	\$79, 251	\$156, 344	\$264, 120	—

Source: Tredegar Sales Book, Foundry October 1860 – September 1867. Note: The Records from October 1864 through September 1867 became Sales from the Rolling Mill, not the Foundry. Additionally, January through September 1860 were retrieved from the previous Sales Book, 1854-1860.

Noticeable spikes appeared between October and November of 1862, as inflation took its toll on the southern economy. Sales hit an all time high in July 1864, reaching \$512,000, but this reflected the Confederacy's 700 percent inflation rate.³⁶

³⁶ Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1860-67; "Confederate Inflation Rates," Inflation Data, accessed 22 March 2011, [http://inflationdata.com/Inflation/Inflation_Rate/Confederate Inflation.asp](http://inflationdata.com/Inflation/Inflation_Rate/Confederate%20Inflation.asp). As stated, inflation heavily affected the numbers by late 1863 and into 1864. While the company continued to produce and sell, they did not do so to such a high capacity as the numbers in the table reflect.

Tredegar continued to operate below its capacity throughout the war because it used all of the available iron ore deposits, and did not have access to any other raw iron. This prevented the company from producing large quantities of any item. Additionally, while Anderson had updated equipment at Tredegar, he had still not updated to the Rodman process for producing cannon. While this decision cut costs, it prevented Tredegar from constructing stronger types of cannon.³⁷

Regardless, the presence of Anderson at Tredegar was crucial to remain producing war materials. At the onset of the war, Anderson was designated a brigadier general, but after less than a year, he resigned his commission after being wounded Fraser's Farm. The reasons for Anderson's direct involvement with the Confederate Army remain unclear, but he immediately returned to Tredegar to resume his duties. Some of the managers left in charge failed to live up to Anderson's production standards, which he discovered as army officers began complaining of the poor quality of Tredegar products. The Confederate War Department needed Anderson to return to Tredegar to ensure the cannon and other arms would be reliable, as the managers left in charge failed to successfully run Tredegar in his absence.³⁸

The lack of skilled labor also became worse when the Confederate draft went into effect. Anderson increased the number of slaves in skilled positions, but he also had to turn to immigrant labor, which he disliked. Still, it took too long to retrain new

³⁷ Harold Wilson, *Confederate Industry: Manufacturers and Quartermasters in the Civil War* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 192-6, 286-90; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 49, 108-9..

³⁸ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 120-2, 180-2.

employees, especially those new to the English language. This, combined with the dearth of raw iron, contributed to the weakening of Tredegar's war effort.³⁹

Before the war ended, some southerners suggested that the war was lost, and rallying a final campaign would be useless. This sense of foreboding suggested that some southerners began preparing for a Union victory before the war ended. This sentiment was particularly visible to industrialists such as Anderson, who had begun to see a decline in production and profits prior to the surrender of Confederate armies. Likewise, Samuel Collins, a southern financial advisor, sent word to his employer in February 1865 the details of acquiring currency from several state banks. Along with this letter, Collins included some "confidential" correspondence, reiterating that what followed was only his "opinion," which "should be taken with allowance."⁴⁰

Collins's opinion discussed how the war and the Confederacy fared. The point he sought to illustrate stated that he would not recommend investing in any southern state currency or bonds, as he "believe[d] our cause is hopeless and irretrievably gone." If events continued on the same course, he wrote that he "can't see how Lee can hold Richmond and provision his army." He continued his letter, adding that some men of his acquaintance believed the South "will whip them [the Union army] yet," but he stated that those men have not "explain[ed] to [his] satisfaction how all this must or can be done."⁴¹ This further illustrated the low production at Tredegar during the war, which would set the tone for his determined push to start the rolling mill and foundry at Tredegar immediately after the war.

³⁹ Anne Kelly Knowles, "Labor, Race, and Technology in the Confederate Iron Industry," *Technology and Culture* 42, no. 1 (January 2001): 1-3.

⁴⁰ Samuel Collins Letter, 7 February 1865, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

This acceptance of the North's victory permeated portions of the South in 1865, with Sherman having reached the Atlantic in December 1864, and with Grant hovering closely outside of the Confederate capital. As Collins's letter described, not all southerners considered the probability of a Union victory, but some had already begun to grow accustomed to a southern defeat. After the destruction of Richmond by fire and with the occupation by the Union army, the city began the process of rebuilding in 1865.⁴²

Despite the political and economic changes and the conflicts within the labor force, Tredegar survived the economic panics and the war through Anderson's business acumen and salesmanship, and through his connections to the government and northern and southern businesses. He managed to keep a supply of raw materials and credit during rough financial periods. When the supportive Whig party declined, Anderson switched to the Democratic Party to ensure the survival and protection of Tredegar. With these precedents and the reputation and contracts enacted before the war, the company pulled through, also managing to escape significant damage or destruction by Confederate or Union forces. Under these circumstances, Tredegar survived the war.

Anderson appealed to the citizens of Richmond because he was one of their own. According to the *Richmond Dispatch*, Tredegar represented a "worthy specimen of what can be done...through the skill and enterprise of our own citizens." He helped Tredegar out of the financial distress incurred during the 1837 panic, and continued to do whatever was necessary to ensure Tredegar's survival during the Panic of 1857. He used every resource and raw material available to keep production going, which contributed the increasing strength of Tredegar. These events helped prepare Anderson for the difficult

⁴² Chesson, *Richmond*, 61-4.

production period during the Civil War. In turn, his company's prewar and wartime experience ensured Tredegar's success in the postwar period, the subject of the next chapter.⁴³

⁴³ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 10-37; "Southern Enterprise," *Richmond Dispatch*, 13 July 1853.

CHAPTER III

RECONSTRUCTING TREDEGAR AFTER THE WAR

By the time the Civil War ended in 1865, the Southern economy had been decimated. Much of the war had been fought in the South, and once Union troops began occupying the region, railroads and other industries were destroyed to disrupt the Confederate war effort. Richmond experienced severe inflation, only further contributing to the effects of economic collapse in the Old Dominion. Even with the presence of the iron company, Richmond encountered tremendous hardship during the road to recovery.

Tredegar, while suffering the negative effects of the war, succeeded in recovering production levels and increasing the size and prosperity of the company. Anderson posted guards outside of Tredegar, deterring those intent on burning Richmond from setting fire to Tredegar. The company was one of the few buildings to remain standing at the end of the war, managing to escape the wrath of Union forces occupying the city and the wrath of Confederate forces who burned the city upon evacuation. Anderson faced the difficulty of regaining the company's reputation and capital, both heavily damaged by the war. Once Tredegar was able to produce at full capacity, it regained its hard-earned investments from immediately prior to the war, reacquiring government contracts. Labor strife persisted at Tredegar, as free and slave labor tensions disappeared only to be replaced by racial tensions, but Anderson managed to diffuse these issues as they surfaced. The combination of these factors brought Tredegar back to its prewar status as a significant iron producer for both the South and the country into the early 1870s.

Of the 5,000 industries listed in Virginia in the 1870 census report, approximately ninety of them produced some type of iron product. Additionally, twenty-eight industries were listed as “machinery,” contributing to the railroad and boiler parts needed in the railroad industry. Although Virginia accounts for few of the number of industries in the United States as of 1870, it still accounted for more than any former Confederate state. The survival of Tredegar acted as a testament to the gradual rise in industry appearing in the South during the Reconstruction period.¹

Table 3. Number of Industries by State according to the 1870 Census.

	Number of Industries		Number of Industries
Richmond	17	Missouri	11, 871
Virginia	5, 933	Montana	201
		Nebraska	670
Alabama	2, 188	Nevada	330
Arkansas	1, 079	New Hampshire	3, 342
California	3, 984	New Jersey	6, 636
Connecticut	5, 128	New York	36, 206
Delaware	800	North Carolina	3, 642
DC	952	Ohio	22, 773
Georgia	3, 836	Oregon	969
Illinois	12, 507	Pennsylvania	37, 206
Indiana	11, 847	Rhode Island	1, 830
Iowa	6, 566	South Carolina	1, 584
Kansas	1, 477	Tennessee	5, 317
Kentucky	5, 300	Texas	2, 399
Louisiana	2, 557	Utah	533
Maine	5, 550	Vermont	3, 270
Maryland	5, 812	West Virginia	2, 444
Massachusetts	13, 212	Washington	269
Michigan	2, 455	Wisconsin	7, 013
Minnesota	2, 270		
Mississippi	1, 731	United States	250, 883

Source: The 1870 U.S. Census Report on Statistics of Wealth and Industry in the United States.

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Ninth Census: 1870* (Washington: GPO, 1870).

While Richmond reportedly had seventeen industries within its city limits, the industries there invested and accounted for much more capital than other iron industries in southern cities, and among these seventeen industries, Tredegar accounted for more than 50 percent of the capital.²

Richmond survived the war, but its experience was unique. Tension between the Confederate government's presence and the local government's attempt to control the city resulted in problems of crime, food shortages, and blurred lines of power and control. The people of Richmond became bitter when the Confederate government took precedence over the city. This bitterness became pronounced during the Richmond Bread Riots in 1863, when men and women from Richmond and the surrounding counties marched to demand lower food prices – an event that escalated into a mob scene with violence and looting.³

As Richmond had been the capital of the Confederacy, many southerners flocked to it from different regions, commenting that they had come to fight “Virginia’s battles” – a phrase that embittered Richmonders toward the refugees. The urban population forced a blending of different regional cultures – rangers from Texas, Arkansas and Missouri frontiersmen, Georgia and Louisiana troops, and South Carolinian elites – from all over the South. While these people added to the labor force of Tredegar and its diversity, it changed the shape of Richmond, and affected the mentality of Richmonders after the war because the experience lent them exposure to the presence of people from different

² *The Ninth Census: 1870.*

³ Chesson, *Richmond*, 25-44.

regions of the country, and would help during the city's occupation by the military after the war. The familiarity did not suggest acceptance though.⁴

However, there was no general, overarching effect on the citizens of Richmond. Each economic class suffered different maladies; the rich from a lowered supply of goods, the poor from a lack of money to buy goods. Progressively, throughout the war, Confederate support waned in Richmond. Another factor separating Richmond from other southern cities after the war was desertion by the Army of Northern Virginia. As the Union troops approached the city, the Confederate troops fled, burning much of it in their wake, just as Charleston and Atlanta had been decimated by the war.⁵

Richmond looked physically different after the war. The *Richmond Whig* estimated that about one thousand buildings had been burned, spreading from the explosion of the Confederate arsenal and the changing winds. Anderson requested and received the Confederate government's reassurance that Tredegar would not be burned.⁶ Just to be sure, Anderson stationed workers outside of Tredegar, arming them with guns and giving them orders to shoot any looters or miscreants approaching the company. Once the fear of looting had subsided, Anderson still faced the imposing Union army, which occupied the city on April 4, 1865. Other southern cities had been occupied for a majority of the war, so any wartime industry which had developed there had been destroyed. Union troops entering Richmond sought to put out the fires, rather than start them. General Weitzel, one of the Union's commanders, stated that he wanted to return the city to peace and order. Union troops even helped to rebuild the city after the

⁴ Chesson, *Richmond*, 48-9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 50-4.

⁶ Untitled Article, *Richmond Whig*, 4 April 1865; Nelson Lankford, *Richmond Burning: The Last Days of the Confederate Capital* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 135-9.

devastating fires. With its contributions to the Federal government before the war, some Union officers understood the benefit of keeping Tredegar, rather than destroying it.⁷

Thus, Union troops occupied Tredegar after the capture of Richmond, forcing Anderson to forfeit his company. For four months, Anderson worked diligently to regain control of Tredegar. Lincoln's December 1863 Proclamation of Amnesty introduced the "ten percent plan," under which former Confederates would be pardoned who agreed to a loyalty oath to the United States and to the abolition of slavery. If ten percent of a southern state's population did this, the state could be readmitted into the Union, with those who had declared their oath appointed to the state's government. Some high ranking civil and military Confederates were excluded from participating, Anderson among them. However, a small group of high ranking Richmond civil officials (including Anderson) met with Lincoln before the end of the war, to hash out a plan to end the fighting in Virginia. On April 4, 1865, Anderson and some other prominent men from Richmond had interviews with Lincoln and some of his advisors, and tried to set up a legislature for after the war. Lincoln's plan would have made Anderson's readmission easier, allowing him to regain control of Tredegar with less difficulty.⁸

After Lincoln's assassination, President Andrew Johnson's readmission policies were stricter, at least in theory – a part of his attempt to punish southern planters. Anderson applied for a special presidential pardon from Johnson because he had been a West Point graduate, served in the Confederate army, and "owned taxable property worth over \$20,000," all provisions which prevented him from getting a pardon. Few

⁷ Nelson Lankford, *Richmond Burning: The Last Days of the Confederate Capital* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 102, 133-4; Chesson, *Richmond*, 61; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 291.

⁸ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 35-8; Armstead L. Robinson, "The Politics of Reconstruction," *The Wilson Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 110-1; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 292-3.

southerners excluded under these statutes were willing to declare allegiance to the Union. Anderson, however, did not share in that reluctance, and he saw an opportunity to get Tredegar back to prewar production levels. He hired a lawyer to help argue his case, and he gained support from prominent Unionists including Governor Edwards Pierpont, Sr., who was appointed by the Federal government to the position after the war. The governor, along with General Henry W. Halleck, argued that Anderson must regain ownership of Tredegar because he would enable the Reconstruction government to “meet the needs...[of] employment and reconstruction.” The request was denied by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, who did not want Anderson to reacquire his company too easily. Stanton put Tredegar under the control of Federal marshals, but Anderson did not relent. He prepared a new petition later that year, now acquiring the support of railroad presidents, who proclaimed their desire to see Tredegar once again run by Anderson.⁹

This time, Johnson denied Anderson’s bid, as he did not trust men with property over \$20,000. Again, Anderson pushed to get his way. With a letter from the governor, to whom Anderson had declared his loyalty, he met privately with the President to state his case. By this point, Johnson unexpectedly relaxed his strict pardon policy. After the summer in 1865, Johnson abandoned his strict pardon policy, granting amnesty to most southerners who applied. Eric Foner suggested in *Reconstruction* that it could have been a result of Johnson’s prejudices, which had increased from “unexpected militancy” among blacks, or perhaps to gain the support of southerners before his second bid for the White House. By September, as Foner wrote, “Johnson had sufficiently satiated his desire to humble the southern aristocrats.” Regardless, by October 1865, Anderson had acquired his long sought after pardon, but when he reclaimed his business, he then had to

⁹ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 296-300; Robinson, “The Politics,” 113-8.

deal with the repayment of Tredegar's wartime debts, and reestablishing its prewar contacts, particularly those in the North.¹⁰

Tredegar started producing iron goods almost immediately after Anderson acquired his pardon. The company continued along, attempting to exist and prosper in the struggling city, while continually looking for new markets of raw materials. The railroad industry gathered momentum throughout the country, giving Tredegar a lucrative market in which to sell iron products, reverting back to its prewar customers. Some southern railroads began to lay tracks, but often they were supported by northern companies. One of the major problems for the South after the war involved the lack of credit and capital. Through his contacts in the North, Anderson established credit with some northern businesses to get Tredegar back on its feet. The prospects Anderson actively sought in the North did not return prewar dividends, so to supplement business, he began appealing to southern businesses, namely southern railroad companies. The South, however, had little capital to invest in any business, and usually received most of their capital from northerners. With the capital that he did acquire, Anderson gradually increased Tredegar's production, and the company's prominence in Richmond.¹¹

Since Tredegar survived the Civil War when most other southern industries did not, Anderson held a significant advantage over those in the South who not only needed to gain pardons from the Federal government, but they also had to rebuild their demolished industries. Tredegar remained intact, and Anderson's efforts came to fruition by 1867. Sales from January 1865 through December 1867 illustrated that the company did not founder, even though they had yet to reach their prewar numbers. The sales

¹⁰ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 294-302; Foner *Reconstruction*, 187-91.

¹¹ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 303-313.

amounts in dollars decreased tremendously between 1865 and 1866, due both to the decline in demand of war materials and the return to federal currency.¹²

In the table below, the sales listed in the Tredegar Foundry's sales book demonstrate that Tredegar continued to produce iron wares during the postwar period. There was a four month gap, between April and July of 1865, when Tredegar existed under Federal control, but otherwise, the numbers compared with antebellum sales, and taking into account both inflation over time and growth of the industry.

Table 4. Tredegar Foundry Sales by Month, 1865-67.

	1865	1866	1867
January	\$445, 623	\$28, 755	\$6, 732
February	\$594,000	\$17, 722	\$9, 505
March	\$1, 114, 671	\$14, 092	\$20, 542
April	—	\$18, 961	\$15, 831
May	—	\$20, 337	\$16, 511
June	—	\$18, 026	\$13, 712
July	—	\$11, 150	\$27, 136
August	\$3, 577	\$10, 808	\$59, 560
September	\$15, 725	\$11, 883	\$53, 755
October	\$4, 258	\$15, 086	\$29, 953
November	\$18, 267	\$9, 047	\$32, 624
December	\$17, 408	\$21, 396	\$68, 751

Source: Data retrieved from Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1865-72. April through July of 1865 did not have entries, and the clerk listed no notations referring to those months. Most likely, there were few to no sales during the period immediately after the surrender at Appomattox, which would explain this gap in record.

¹² Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1865-72. Tredegar Iron Works Records, 1801-1957. Business Records Collection. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Some products were produced during the four month gap under the supervision of the government, continuing into August and September. By August 1865, Tredegar began selling products again. In October, Anderson regained control of the company, accounting for the jump in sales between October and November 1865. In the sales book, “the United States” made hardware purchases from Tredegar for a two month total of \$6, 256. Likewise, the State of Virginia purchased similar items, along with railroad materials. The figures by 1867 returned to the prewar equivalents.¹³

The bulk of buyers during these years were railroads from all parts of the country. Southern railroads purchased the most, as Tredegar was the most convenient supplier of iron products for railroads. Northern railroad companies had greater access to raw materials, labor, and cheaper supplies. This did not prevent Anderson from working his way up the East coast though. The customers listed in the sales book illustrated the expansion Anderson sought for Tredegar. During this period, he sold to such firms as the New York Coal Company and the Union Manufacturing Company. Local institutions also contributed to the clientele. The Richmond Gas Works, the Virginia Penitentiary, and the James River and Kanawha Canal Company took advantage of the iron from Tredegar to rebuild and improve their companies, spending thousands on building supplies. Local railroads, such as the Virginia and Tennessee, the Southside, the Richmond and Petersburg, and the Southern Railroad Association also purchased from Tredegar.¹⁴

The company sold to non railroad companies as well. Richmond Gas Works became one of Tredegar’s most loyal customers both during and after the war. In the

¹³ Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1865-72.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

postwar period, the Gas Works purchased at least once a month, usually buying hardware, pipes, and sheet metal. The Virginia Penitentiary also made several purchases, usually for the upkeep of the building. Among some of the others were the Southern Fertilizing Company, the Woolen Mill Factory, the Virginia Porcelain Company, and the Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company. By 1870, the Virginia Steamship Company began purchasing materials for the construction of ships. Tredegar sold large orders these years to the nearby Tuckahoe mine. Some of the heaviest purchases though came from companies and extensions of Tredegar.¹⁵

The Spike Factory and the Forge Factory bought heavily from Tredegar before, during, and after the war. In the immediate postwar period, the Rail Mill Repairs and Construction Mill, the Bar and Chair Mill, the Eight-Inch Mill, and the Ten-Inch Mill appeared in the sales book repeated starting in 1866. By 1869, a good portion of the products sold went to these entities. The table below shows the sales from 1869 through 1872, when sales began to pick up tremendously and more companies purchased from Tredegar.

¹⁵ Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1865-72.

Table 5. Sales from Tredegar Foundry by Month, 1869-72.

	1869	1870	1871	1872
January	\$3, 981	\$20, 407	\$18, 953	\$69, 917
February	\$13, 069	\$31, 130	\$13, 003	\$96, 650
March	\$40, 885	\$14, 477	\$34, 925	\$76, 400
April	\$27, 817	\$40, 207	\$46, 780	\$81, 594
May	\$5, 318	\$11, 495	\$92, 691	\$87, 258
June	\$9, 239	\$61, 229	\$79, 311	\$94, 590
July	\$5, 844	\$40, 247	\$79, 510	\$52, 986
August	\$34, 760	\$69, 154	\$33, 544	\$75, 076
September	\$11, 465	\$79, 221	\$44, 329	\$110, 628
October	\$10, 194	\$32, 220	\$146, 437	\$70, 825
November	\$4, 683	\$69, 638	\$70, 697	\$87, 050
December	\$40, 856	\$89, 165	\$133, 601	\$143, 316

Source: Data retrieved from the Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1865-72.

Although the sales vacillated each month, never constantly increasing, the totals for the year show the growth of Tredegar as the 1860s came to a close. Some of the months appeared extraordinarily low in comparison to the months before and after. But purchases still appeared; often though, sales to companies consisted of lower priced items, usually hardware. Tredegar went through some rough periods in trying to attract investors immediately after the war, since many northern businesses were reluctant to invest in the South. Anderson had to prove Tredegar was worth the investment, and so had to begin producing at a low level of output to encourage investment. By 1869, Tredegar began heavy construction to the Foundry and the surrounding mills and

factories. Between 1869 and 1872, thousands of dollars in sales were listed as “Tredegar Construction,” with the name appearing over 50 times. Many of the materials were sheet iron and hardware, although the sale of wheels became more significant by 1870.¹⁶

At the end of each month’s sales report, the clerk counted the number of wheels sold in that month, illustrating the importance of the product, especially with the constantly increasing railroad industry in the area. The table below depicts the amount of wheels sold each month, representing the gradual increase in both production and sales.

Table 6. Number of Wheels Sold at Tredegar from the Foundry, 1870-72.

	1870	1871	1872
January	—	301	1203
February	467	317	1606
March	135	415	1147
April	563	600	1256
May	143	1027	628
June	658	728	1054
July	342	945	948
August	769	708	626
September	882	503	1633
October	396	1972	946
November	904	1634	955
December	904	1467	1072
Total for Year	6163	10617	13074

Source: Data retrieved from Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1865-72. The data for January was not listed, and therefore does not contribute to the total for 1870, although it more than likely will still put the total below that of 1871 and 1872.

¹⁶ Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1865-72; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 310-5.

There was not a distinct pattern of increase among the number of wheels sold per month, but overall, the yearly total of wheels sold showed that Tredegar sales for that particular railroad item increased, up to the year before the 1873 financial crisis.¹⁷

As the rebuilding of the South continued, Anderson's focus broadened from regaining control of production and reaching prewar levels of production to expanding the iron works through land acquisition. Much of the private correspondence from Anderson around 1867 emphasized his drive to expand Tredegar. Additionally, Anderson mentioned his continuance of farming on a plot of land he owned in the nearby region, suggesting he did not merely depend on industry during the postwar period, but also kept this investment in land. He hired some laborers to run and work his land. Much of the South returned to agriculture after the war, and Anderson proved no different. Any participation in farming came second to Anderson's focus on expanding his company.¹⁸

The success of Tredegar partially relied upon the ability of its owner to maintain a market for its products. Tredegar's advantage resided in Anderson's prewar business connections which he reinstated after the war. The Dover Company, a coal producer in New York, ranked among of the most sought-after firms in Anderson's 1867 correspondence. The sales book from the same year corroborated the prominence of Dover through the amount of purchases from Tredegar. Between 1865 and 1872, Dover Company purchased more than 70 orders from Tredegar, averaging almost an order per month, buying iron for machinery to mine coal. Anderson's awareness of the Dover

¹⁷ Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1865-72.

¹⁸ Letters 17 July 1867; 26 July 1867; 3 August 1867, General Letterbook, Series VII, Subseries I, Box 894, Tredegar Iron Works Records. Business Collection Records. Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Company's consistency appeared in several letters during the period between 1865 and 1872, especially with the need to purchase coal, in which he mentioned "the progress at Dover" was something to admire and continue to follow, as they were an important customer.¹⁹

Shrewdly, Anderson used his tight association with the Dover Company to broker new clients. In 1867, he forthrightly inquired as to Dover Company's relationship with the James River and Kanawha Canal Company of Richmond. Thomas Ellis, a business associate to Anderson and a representative of the James River firm, wrote Anderson some details regarding recent negotiations for a loan of \$25,000 from the Dover Company. During the meeting, the Dover representatives made it clear they did not approve of the investment in the James River Company, because it lacked the prestige. The Dover representatives approved the investment because they respected Anderson, but in dispensing this loan, they mentioned that they could "make a dozen far more desirable investments, some of which [they] mentioned by name." While the relationship between Dover and Tredegar did not change Tredegar's southern investments, it did prove that Tredegar had re-established open and honest business with northern industries. It also demonstrated the significant grip northern businesses had within the South through the issuance of capital.²⁰

Even U.S. army officers exhibited little reluctance to invest in Tredegar. One army colonel requested shares, and on March 30, 1868, Anderson replied that he "was willing to let [him] have shares enough...to pay [him] the balance [he owed] in land." Anderson further emphasized the need to expand Tredegar in a letter where he stated he

¹⁹ Tredegar Foundry Sales Book, 1865-72; Letter to associate from Anderson 17 August 1867, General Letterbook, 1867-69, Tredegar Iron Works Records..

²⁰ Letter from Thomas Ellis 18 May 1870, General Letterbook, 1867-69.

had “not offered the stock to anyone in Virginia,” illustrating both Tredegar’s prominence among non-Virginians and the company’s dependence on northern capital. The capital Anderson needed came from northern businesses. Despite the initial reluctance of a few northern businesses, Tredegar managed to stimulate its own growth and gain interregional attention, largely due to Anderson’s savvy business sense, which allowed to bend his personal morals and political convictions to achieve his goals for Tredegar.²¹

Tredegar contributed to the rebuilding of Virginia, but some critics, particularly outside the South, had their doubts about its independent role in reconstructing the South. Those doubts originated from the perceived limited potential of the southern economy after the war. Investing in southern enterprises appeared risky, as the managers of the Dover Company as discussed earlier. Tredegar represented a conundrum – for it was a valid business opportunity, but it risked investing money in an area lacking economic stability. An 1866 letter from Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus V. Fox illustrated this dilemma.²²

Fox requested information about Tredegar, knowing that “they have the best iron to make guns,” but expressed uncertainty if the workers had “the skill to commence that work.” Fox discussed his desire to leave his current position for a better opportunity elsewhere, and sought to determine if Tredegar would offer him that chance. Tredegar evidently was known to many associated with the iron industry, but a significant number of people did not know the viability of such an enterprise in the postwar era. Fox questioned “whether it is a good investment to build up.” It seems that Fox did not want

²¹ Letter to army colonel 30 March 1868, General Letterbook, 1867-69.

²² Letter from Fox 16 April 1866, Anderson Family Papers, 1851-79, Series VIII, Box 1187, Folder 4, Tredegar Iron Works Records, 1801-1957. Business Collection Records. Library of Virginia.

the Navy to test the stability of Tredegar, for his letter mentioned that, “the Navy requires very few guns at present, but the Army [is] steadily at work.” But Fox eventually changed his mind. He asked Admiral John Dahlgren for his opinion of Tredegar, and thus, Fox wrote a letter to Anderson that same day:

“...since writing you this morning, I have seen Admiral Dahlgren who tells me that the Tredegar Works, and the iron mines with them are in his opinion the most valuable of any similar ones in the country...”²³

While Admiral Dahlgren did not represent the general consensus of opinions on Tredegar, particularly with Edwin Stanton’s disdain for Anderson, he offered a counter opinion to those businessmen and federal officials wary of investing in an unstable southern economy. Tredegar already had an established reputation with the United States Navy Department from before the war, and that business relationship may have influenced Dahlgren’s perspective, despite the horrific fate his son, Ulrich, suffered at the hands of Richmonders. Those familiar with the iron industry (Dahlgren invented a type of naval gun) more readily understood the importance of Tredegar to the common defense. While Tredegar produced little in the way of ordnance, the Navy Department and the War Department set up contracts for other iron products, including hardware and iron plating.²⁴

Although Tredegar’s sales represented one of the best indicators of its postwar success, so too did the success of its customers. Anderson wrote to the Virginia Central Rail Road Company on July 30, 1867, sending his regrets in not being able to attend the celebration being held for the “completion of the Virginia Central Rail Road to its western terminal.” He begged forgiveness for his absence, stating that he “shall be with

²³ Letter from Fox 16 April 1866, General Letterbook, 1864-66.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

[them] in spirit,” and sent additional sentiments to the company. His recognition of this “important event” demonstrated the unity of Tredegar and the railroad in rebuilding Virginia’s shattered economy. Anderson commented that the event “cannot be more gratifying to any citizen other than myself, who have been its friend, whether in private life or in the performance of the city.”²⁵

This version of Tredegar’s reputation differed from the perceptions held by the company’s laborers. During the war, Anderson had begun to rely heavily upon slave labor to supplement the decreasing number of white workers. By the end of the war, slaves filled at least half the skilled and unskilled positions at the iron works. Anderson saw the advantage of slave labor – namely that it was cheaper, and he could use slaves for jobs that whites refused to do, mostly common laborers, teamsters, and mill hands. Tredegar competed for slave labor though, particularly as the war came to a close, and the military needed slaves to perform physical labor, including digging fortifications and setting up city defenses. However, it was the white labor that he could not hold, as many went into the service or fled the city. Anderson lost about half of his labor force – by 1864, he had less than 500 workers, and had started the war with 1,000. By the end of the war, over half of those workers were black. Many of these black workers were also drafted for short periods of time to work for the Confederate army, and Anderson’s protests against this fell on deaf ears. The black workers were returned after a period of a few months, keeping the company operational. This reliance on slave labor helped prepare Anderson for the labor struggles in the postwar period.²⁶

²⁵ Letter to Virginia Central Rail Road Company 30 July 1867, General Letterbook, 1867-69.

²⁶ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 250-64.

Anderson readily incorporated African American labor after the war, since he had a precedent for employing white and black workers side by side, even though his workers tended to segregate socially. Anderson did not immediately address the racial tension caused by emancipation. He treated his skilled workers decently, both black and white, so as to ensure stable production, offering competitive wages and not pressing charges against strikers.²⁷

The white workers at Tredegar held different opinions from that of their employer. Racial tensions among the workers became exacerbated after the war.²⁸ Before the war, slaves generally held unskilled positions at Tredegar. During the war, out of necessity, they learned skilled jobs, as fewer white workers became available to perform them. Working at Tredegar restricted their social lives, but they still managed to form close and lasting ties within their community. The lure of jobs at one of Richmond's industries, iron and tobacco being the most prominent, offered opportunities for freed blacks, and by the end of the war, the number within the city had doubled, going from 250 to over 500 in 1865.²⁹

The use of former slaves as part of Tredegar's labor force contributed to the success and ability of the company to get back on its feet in the postwar period; however, it created insoluble discipline problems on the factory floor. Northern white workers came to Tredegar, seeking the opportunity for employment at an all-white factory, but were disappointed. The presence of black workers prevented many northern workers from seeking employment at Tredegar, as they refused to work alongside "colored men."

²⁷ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 313-5.

²⁸ Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 35-39.

²⁹ Peter Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 5-12.

The transition from war to reconstruction, while occurring faster than in other areas, did not go over smoothly in the immediate postwar period.³⁰

The strike of 1866 represented the racial tensions experienced at Tredegar. Workers recruited from Philadelphia refused to start their contracted work because of the black presence. Anderson perhaps sympathized with these white workers, for he viewed black people as social inferiors, but because of his constant desire to turn a profit, he treated workers based on skill level, not race. Work was integrated on the factory floor, with blacks and whites intermixing each day. Eventually the white strike ended, with Anderson refusing to hire the northern men, enraging his superintendent Henry McCarty, who told Anderson he disliked the decision because McCarty favored the northern workers. Anderson did not accede to any of the demands, and offered McCarty a choice of leaving with a month's pay or a dismissal, ensuring that his managers would remember their place.³¹

Black workers at Tredegar struck as well. *The Liberator* reported another strike at Tredegar, where African American workers demanded higher wages, and were attacked by white workers for their temerity at making those demands. Both races felt persecuted, but in reality, black and white workers received comparable wages at Tredegar, the differences being between skilled and unskilled jobs. In both strikes, Anderson did not accede to any of the demands. He threatened to replace the recalcitrant workers, but did not bring charges against them.³² Anderson had no tolerance for those who disagreed with his labor policies, as these two incidents showed.

³⁰ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 303-15.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 313-5.

³² "White and Black Laborers at Richmond," from the *Richmond Republic*, 2 September 1865, but quoted from a reprint in *The Liberator*, 15 September 1865; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 303-15.

Strikes became more prevalent at Tredegar in the 1870s, with the labor struggle becoming a triangular conflict between management, black labor, and white labor all contending for power. Complicating this, black industrial workers celebrated the anniversary of the occupation of the Union troops, alienating the southern white workers, but making inroads to the northern white workers. Despite these conflicts, black workers remained at Tredegar. The company provided them with steady jobs and a minimum of \$2.50 per day for skilled workers – a strong incentive in a war ravaged economy.³³

By 1866, other southern cities began to recognize the resilience of Tredegar. They turned to Tredegar to help in their own rebuilding process. Atlanta, seeking to install a waterworks to the city, sought the cost from Tredegar for production, transport and labor costs to produce all the materials.³⁴ The city of Richmond also recruited Tredegar to aid in its rebuilding. A few years later, Tredegar's reputation continued to "flourish," as described in the periodical *Every Saturday*. The author mentioned the large number of orders and the amount in each, stating that "they need to be kept in operation day and night to supply the orders which [were] pouring in from all sections of the country." The publication claimed that Tredegar was the foremost producer of coal freight cars in the country, stating that the company had just received an order for 1,500 cars for six railroad companies.³⁵

A report in the *Boston Daily Journal* suggested that Tredegar had "a worldwide reputation," contributing to its success. The author remarked on the "devastating success" of Richmond, which was accounted for through the presence of "Yankee energy, German industry, and Scotch thrift." The enemy, the article suggested, was not

³³ Rachleff, *Black Labor*, 37-41; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 313-5.

³⁴ "Georgia," *Augusta Chronicle*, 11 October 1866.

³⁵ "Southern Enterprise," *Every Saturday: A Journal of Choice Reading*, 18 November 1871.

the industrialists or the former Confederate soldiers – rather it was former “dealers in humanity” who posed the threat to the future of the country and the reconstruction of the South, as former slave traders did not possess a marketable skill. A reporter for a Boston newspaper traveled to Richmond to write a piece on its postwar state, giving a brief history of the city. As he moved into the present, he explained that Richmond “was not as it was ante bellum [sic].” He discussed the success of industry in the city, and then spoke of a darker history: the slave trade. He commented that all “gallant and brave men” of the Confederate army were willing to repent, and it was slave traders who were the obstacles to reconstruction. The words offered respect for Tredegar and other industries of Richmond, exhibiting a relatively good opinion of Tredegar held by some reporters in the North.³⁶

The recurrence of Tredegar advertisements demonstrated its prominence and its financial status. Advertisements for the company appeared in northern and southern newspapers, such as the *Railway Times*, the *New York Herald*, the *Boston Daily Journal*, and the *Baltimore Sun*. The placements of the advertisements attest to Tredegar’s financial stability. They reappeared in these papers on the average of twice a month during the 1860s and 1870s, showing that the company could well afford to advertise heavily and often. On average, to run eight lines for one month in 1866, cost between four and twelve dollars. The rates increased if more lines were used, and if the advertisement extended beyond one month. One of the more generic advertisements for the company, appearing in several newspapers, advertised Tredegar’s continuing production of railroad materials and iron products for ships. Engines from Tredegar

³⁶ “Waifs from Virginia,” *Boston Daily Journal*, 18 May 1867.

became an important commodity for the company, and were therefore prominent in the advertisements.³⁷

Other newspapers, such as the *Baltimore Sun*, posted shorter advertisements for materials recently acquired from Tredegar which were for sale in local communities, or from the company itself. E. Pratt and Brother advertised that they were “constantly receiving a supply of ‘Tredegar Iron Works’ superior brand.” These advertisements represented Tredegar as a company not just supplying companies and firms directly for projects, but the industry also acted as the supplier to smaller businesses which sold iron products, but did not produce them. In the *San Francisco Bulletin*, Platt and Newton, of William T. Coleman and Company, advertised the availability of alcohol, candles, oil, sugar, nails, and other various items, listing the origin of each. The nails listed came from Tredegar Iron Works – illustrating the expansion of Anderson’s company into the West.³⁸

Even as Tredegar aided in Richmond’s reconstruction, the city remained strongly traditional in its socioeconomic capacity. Tredegar continued to do well throughout Reconstruction, but Richmond did not become a bustling metropolis. Anderson worked with northerners, but he did not represent the majority of the population. He had an integrated factory floor, but this did not equate to white Richmonders readily accepting blacks as equal counterparts. In addition to the economic constraints on postwar

³⁷ Advertisement 2, *Railway Times*, 12 September 1868; Advertisement, *Flake’s Bulletin*, 3 January 1866; Advertisement, *Baltimore Sun*, 10 April 1867; Advertisement, *New York Herald*, 27 April 1866.

³⁸ Advertisement, *San Francisco Bulletin*, 25 January 1868; Advertisement, *Baltimore Sun*, 22 January 1867, 25 January 1867, 6 April 1867, 9 April 1867, 10 April 1867.

Richmond, the city continued to face its personal dilemma of becoming a major American city and yet avoiding the appearance of one.³⁹

Becoming acclimated to the North and its presence required the recognition by both Richmond's industry and its people of northern businesses and federal officials. In a report of General Grant's visit to Richmond in 1866, the *New York Herald* reported that Grant had a "gratifying" visit to the city, where large groups of people "flocked to see him in large numbers." While there, several men of importance paid Grant courtesy calls, Anderson among them.⁴⁰ Grant stayed in a luxurious room at the Spotswood Hotel, Richmond's most prestigious hotel. The visit became a public relations act through which Richmonders could showcase their progress since the Confederate defeat, putting on a display the happenings of postwar industry. The "becoming feelings and sentiments" contributed to this display, as if to suggest these citizens of Richmond accepted defeat graciously. Given the lengthy struggles of Jim Crow still ahead, the sentiments rang hollow, but Tredegar shined forth as a symbol of progress of which Richmonders could be proud.⁴¹

Even though Tredegar survived the war, and began producing soon after its end, the industry did not become one of the country's major producers of iron products. It regained a solid reputation with the Federal government and northern businesses, and eventually, a solid base of capital and raw materials, resulting from northern investments. The fact that Tredegar survived the war when so many other southern iron industries declined illustrated the potential of both Anderson and Tredegar.

³⁹ Chesson, *Richmond*, 87-115; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 213, 391.

⁴⁰ "General Grant's Late Richmond Visit," *New York Herald*, 27 April 1866.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Tredegar survived the war and continued into the postwar period, largely through the accomplishments of Anderson. He ensured that Tredegar was not physically damaged by the war. His ability to reestablish prewar contracts and creditors after the war helped the company to recuperate at a quicker pace than industries in other southern cities. In addition to adapting the company to the shaky environment, Anderson adapted the labor force to the postwar world, employing black workers in about half of the skilled positions after the war. With experienced labor and a capable company, Anderson and Tredegar made the most out of Reconstruction. His business savvy and ability to adapt to the changing political and economic climates both before and after the war made Tredegar, and hence Richmond, distinct from the rest of the South. Anderson and his company however were on the verge of a major shift in the industry.

CHAPTER IV

RACE, RECONSTRUCTION, AND ECONOMIC PANIC

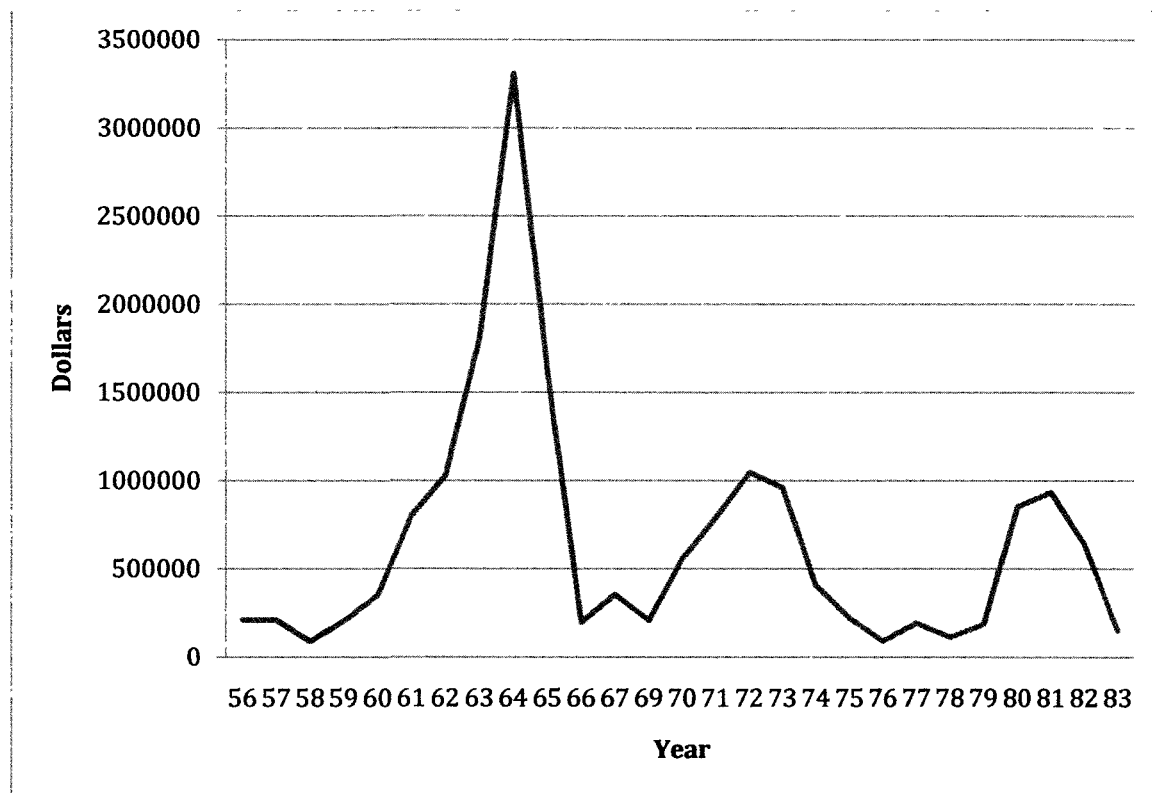
As the 1870s progressed, and Reconstruction began to wane, Tredegar continued to produce, but the Panic of 1873 hit the company hard. Anderson's company suffered tremendously through 1877, and on a national level, the iron industry never fully rebounded. At the outset of the 1880s, steel gradually became the preference of railroads and the government. Anderson recognized this shift, and attempted to alter Tredegar to meet this market. The transition was too little, too late. Anderson lacked the necessary capital to shift his large company from iron to steel, which required large and expensive machinery. The Tredegar owner had plenty of raw materials and capital investment for iron, but not the amount necessary to transition from a labor-intensive product to a more capital-intensive one. The economic situation of the 1870s prevented Tredegar from achieving enough success to maintain its status into the next century. After the initial postwar success of the late 1860s, Tredegar began to decline in importance because its owner no longer felt compelled to make the political and economic changes necessary for the company's success.

Anderson used national politics to regain control of the company and maintain support in Richmond by appealing directly to the Federal government for contracts. Investments allowed Tredegar to endure economic panics, more so than other budding industries. Even with these investments and the resulting sales, Anderson remained grounded in the Democratic Party, steering away from Republicans and Readjusters, even though both supported business to some extent. His resistance in the 1870s to shifting his

political allegiances demonstrates the changes in Anderson's outlook for his company. He remained dedicated to Tredegar's success, but was less willing to compromise his political stance and his method of production.

The figures throughout this paper support the relative stability and gradual growth of Tredegar. The chart below measures the success of Tredegar based on profit. It does not include the effects of socioeconomic issues, nor does it illustrate the rising labor problems through the 1860s. However, examining the sales of Tredegar during these years proves the production capability and the consistent demand for the company's goods.

Figure 3. Total Annual Sales at Tredegar, 1856-83.



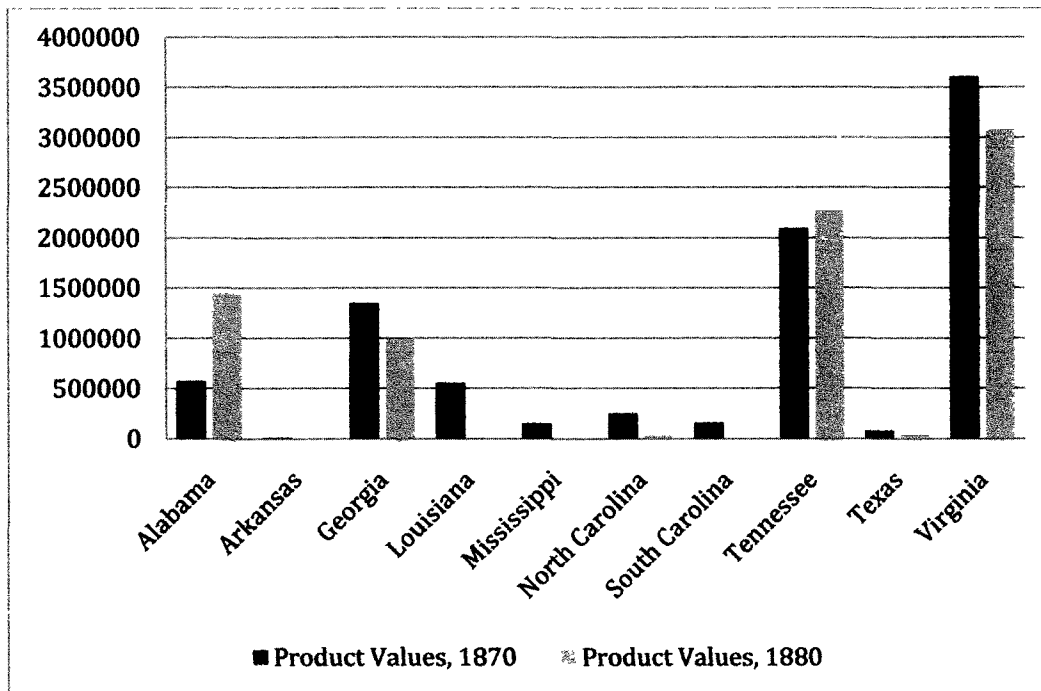
Source: Tredegar Sales Books, 1856-59, 1860-65, 1866-67, 1869-72. The year 1868 was not included in these books, and therefore does not appear on the chart, so as not to have an abnormally low sales point.

The sales books did not provide enough information for 1868, thus they are missing in the chart, but the growing numbers suggest that the postwar period was one of development. The noticeable dip in 1858 resulted from the Panic of 1857, when sales dropped off significantly, but Tredegar did not go under. The reason for the spike in 1864 had less to do with sales, and was more the result of inflation in the Confederacy. The effects of the Panic of 1873 can be seen from 1873 through 1879. Finally in the 1880s, business at Tredegar started to rebound, but once again started to fall in 1883, as steel's dominance trumped iron.¹

The success of Tredegar spurred other iron industries, for now Virginians realized that modernization must accompany reconstruction. The figure below compares how Virginia fared among the other southern states. Out of the country's largest iron producers in 1880, Virginia ranked 15th, with 55,000 tons of iron. In comparison, Pennsylvania ranked first, producing over three million tons.

¹ Tredegar Foundry Sales Books, 1856-59, 1860-65, 1866-67, 1869-72, 1873-76, 1876-79, 1879-83. Tredegar Iron Works Collection.

Figure 4. Value of Iron Products in Dollars, 1870-1880.



Source: Data was retrieved from the 1870 and 1880 Census reports, using the figures from all iron related products.

This data illustrates the differences in the value of iron products in the former Confederate states. Some of the states did not have any reported iron products in 1880, suggesting their manufacturing shifted to other products, such as textiles. This further illustrates that while industrialization expanded during Reconstruction on a national level, it also occurred unevenly. The immediate postwar success of Tredegar further demonstrates that even with the destruction of southern industry during the Civil War, one iron industry remained and became prosperous again fairly quickly.²

In the 1870s, Tredegar had to meet an entirely different set of standards from those of the prewar period. Rather than dominating southern industry, the company's

² *The Ninth Census: 1870*; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Tenth Census: 1880*, vol. 2 *Report on Manufactures* (Washington: GPO, 1880).

regionally-based reputation had to compete on a national scale. More iron and steel industries appeared, and while Tredegar was the largest iron industry in the South, it no longer held the distinction of being one of the most efficient in the country.³ Also, Tredegar's success became irreversibly connected to the fate of Richmond, and that city took a decade to recover from the effects of the Panic of 1873.⁴

As a result of the Panic of 1873, output declined, and Tredegar customers failed to pay their bills. In 1876, Tredegar was forced to shut down production temporarily, resulting from the "continued depression of the iron trade." This stunted Tredegar's output and profit levels in the second half of the decade, particularly as Anderson could not afford to make the transition from iron to steel. Tredegar had a strong foundation and an intelligent owner, but it remained at the mercy of the national iron industry. The company failed to enjoy a reputation the likes of which it possessed before the panic. Even with the investments Anderson had acquired after the war, the economic depression affected Tredegar severely, resulting in a lower output and a tenuous place in the national industry, even with Anderson's place in the city government.⁵

The failure to deepen the James River near Richmond or expand the Kanawha Canal lessened the importance of Richmond in an age more and more dependent upon steamships. Constant flooding in the canal prevented it from running efficiently, and thus, did not achieve the success Richmonders had desired. In 1877, Anderson, still involved in the running of the city, proposed that instead of a canal, the city build a railroad following the same path of the intended canal into Ohio – an idea from earlier in

³ *The Ninth Census: 1870; The Tenth Census: 1880.*

⁴ Chesson, *Richmond*, 145-50.

⁵ Chesson, *Richmond*, 154-64; "Suspension of Tredegar Iron Works," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 18 January 1876.

the decade among those not in favor of the canal project. He met significant objections from city leaders and stock holders in the canal company. Some Virginia citizens also objected to the railroad, preferring to have a canal, fearing the adverse effects that railroads might have on their farms. Even though Tredegar had proven that railroads – not canals – were the wave of the future, Richmonders' technological conservatism prevented them from reaping the benefits of Anderson's iron industry.⁶

Still, iron manufacturing was more important in Virginia than it had ever been. Several thousand were employed in iron companies throughout the state, Tredegar remaining Richmond's largest employer. As of 1870, Tredegar alone employed approximately one thousand workers. The majority of workers at Tredegar were mostly native-born Americans which suggests that the company was not as dependent on immigrant labor since more native born workers, both black and white, were acquiring skilled positions in the factory. In the same census, Richmond reported approximately 18,000 workers in its labor force, with manufacturing consisting of just under a third of that labor force.⁷

With the increasing industry in the urban South, labor unions became more prevalent. According to C. Vann Woodward, unions were not all the same throughout the South. Some unions had strict racial distinctions (such as railroad companies), while others incorporated both races (such as carpenters). The Knights of Labor gradually became a dominant labor union throughout the South. One of its first southern branches was created in Richmond, though it remained a small force there in the 1880s. Tredegar consisted of both types of unions, and black and white unions even reached across the

⁶ Chesson, *Richmond*, 145-50.

⁷ *The Ninth Census: 1870, Compendium to the Ninth Census*; Chesson, *Richmond*, 198.

racial divide, uniting against employers. Even though unions existed at Tredegar, the Knights never became a dominant force there because labor unions generally did not experience tremendous success in achieving their goals with Anderson in charge.⁸

Tredegar did not feel the full effects of unions and strikes, as the lack of association among white and black workers did not exist outside the workplace. Efforts to integrate races in Richmond resulted in the development of a separate black community within Richmond during the 1870s.⁹ At Tredegar, at least three sections of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers existed, and one was for black workers only. During the 1880s, the black lodge of the Association “extended mutual support to their white union brothers.” Black unions as a result fought even more to acquire equality through their support of white unions at Tredegar. Since unionism and strikes did not affect the production of Tredegar significantly, labor struggles did not present an impediment to Tredegar’s sales.¹⁰

City politics during this decade also affected Anderson, and consequently Tredegar. By 1870, conservatism had once again become prominent in Richmond politics, but was tempered by Readjuster and Republican forces in the city. Anderson remained a staunch Democrat during these political controversies. In October 1873, in anticipation of the November elections, a New York newspaper discussed the state of Virginia, lending importance to these elections in particular because Virginians wanted to avoid the “unfortunate condition” of states farther South where Republicans occupied the

⁸ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, vol. 9, *History of the South* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 228-31.

⁹ Chesson, *Richmond*, 145-50; Rachleff, *Black Labor*, 86-108.

¹⁰ Chesson, *Richmond*, 159-61; Rachleff, *Black Labor*, 70-5, 101-7; For further information on this topic, Daniel Letwin’s article “Interracial Unionism, Gender, and ‘Social Equality’ in the Alabama Coal Fields, 1878-1908” discusses the topic much more than in this paper. While the experience was similar, it cannot be justified that the unionism in Alabama precisely resembled that of Richmond.

government. Democrats regained some of their power during the middle of the 1870s, and dominated Richmond politics by the mid 1880s.¹¹

Richmond's political environment grew increasingly complex during the 1870s. The city council remained segregated during the 1870s through the creation of the sixth ward in Richmond. Richmond was divided into five voting wards, but to minimize the influence of the black voters, the Conservative city council created the sixth ward to contain the entire black community of Richmond, thereby leaving the other five wards to white domination. This gave the council considerable leverage over the black population in the city. As a result of the devastating effects of the 1873 Panic, people lost faith in the Conservative government, so determined to repay the state debt and earn a stellar reputation for Virginia. These Conservatives, known as Funders, sought to relieve Virginia's debt through taxes. However, this procedure led to widespread discontent among voters in Richmond, leading to the development of the Readjusters, who advocated less fiscal conservatism and the repayment of debt through legislation, not taxes. William Mahone, leader of the Readjusters and failed railroad owner, stated that the social cost was far too high in the Funders attempt to repay Virginia's debt.¹²

Anderson, along with many southerners, remained conservative throughout this decade. While the Readjuster platform mentioned business, Anderson remained a staunch Democrat, strongly disagreeing with the political integration of the Readjusters. This sentiment added to the already present antipathy Anderson felt towards Readjusters for being anti-northern capital and business. The Tredegar owner very much supported northern capital because little existed in the South. Anderson depended on the capital

¹¹ "Virginia: The Republican and Conservative Battle for Pre-Eminence on November 4," *New York Herald*, 13 October 1873.

¹² Chesson, *Richmond*, 150-1, 157, 160-3; Perman, *Political Unity*, 145-56.

investments of the North, and also the business contracts with northern businesses during Reconstruction. Previously, the Tredegar owner sacrificed all for the betterment of his iron business, but his proclivity to shift his political allegiance waned. He proved his willingness to approach the Federal government for contracts, but no longer were those contracts the most important source of revenue for Tredegar, clear from his contracts with northern businesses. The company's sales showed more business with local enterprises and private companies, seeking to avoid a large role in the public sector. The increasing demand among local businesses in order to rebuild Virginia combined with the political support the owners offered provided the means through which Tredegar existed with Democratic support.¹³

By 1879, the Readjusters acquired federal positions of power, and by 1881, they occupied Virginia's governorship through their candidate, William Cameron. The Readjusters already cultivated an alliance with Republicans in the 1870s to combat the strength of the Democratic Party, and so acquired the support of Republicans and Republican voters. The Readjuster platform therefore sought to appease both the poorer classes, and the black voters, and advocated a smaller tax on farmers. Although they raised taxes for railroads and corporations in the hopes of negating the northern influence, they also sought protective tariffs for manufacturing in Richmond – an attempt to appeal to Richmond's industrialists.¹⁴

Readjusters supported black voters though, a position the prejudiced and conservative Anderson, among other southerners, could not accept. Even though the Democratic Party did not expressly support business, they did call for limited African

¹³ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 303-20; Tredegar Foundry Sales Books, 1873-1876, 1876-1879, 1879-1883.

¹⁴ Perman, *Political Unity*, 151-6.

American participation in society and politics. Anderson had no qualms in using black workers to make a profit, but certainly did not view them as equals in politics or society. The efforts to change the world around him caused Anderson to dig in his heels. Before the war, he easily put business before politics, but in the aftermath, he grew increasingly stubborn, and unwilling to adapt to changes in politics which he refused to accept, as no other Party option existed which would coalesce with his views.¹⁵

During the streak of Readjustment power, blacks gained a few local offices. Two blacks sat on the School Board in Richmond by 1883, in addition to the displacement by blacks of a quarter of the city's white teacher positions. Democrats in Richmond watched the reforms of the Readjusters in horror, waiting for the opportunity to reassert their control of the local government. By the mid 1880s, the Danville race riot left Virginians shaken, and offered Richmond Democrats the ammunition to put the Readjuster government to death. Democrats used the "Negro domination," the incorporation of blacks, which the Readjusters supported, against them, using the violent Danville riot, which resulted in the deaths of whites and blacks, as a scare tactic.¹⁶

Richmond Democrats achieved the desired result. The Readjusters lost their base of support, many fleeing back to the Democrats, others to the Republicans, for fear of a black dominated government. Although the first Jim Crow law was not instituted in Virginia until 1900, segregation remained much a part of the city's dynamic. The level of integration among workers at Tredegar therefore represented an anomaly, especially with Anderson on the city council. The Tredegar owner had definitive views on the inferiority of blacks and their role in politics, and supported segregation outside the

¹⁵ Rachleff, *Black Labor*, 101-8; Perman *Political Unity*, 151-6.

¹⁶ Chesson, *Richmond*, 184-5; Woodward, *History*, 88-106.

workplace, but within his factory, the business and need for competitiveness meant using whichever labor would increase sales and thus profits. In Anderson's mind, segregation had no place on the floor at Tredegar, even though it could infest city life.¹⁷

Richmond Democrats rewarded Anderson for his steadfast loyalty. Although they sought to lessen the effects of the previous Reconstruction governments, they tended to favor railroads and manufacturers operated by local Party heads. Although far more pro-business, Republicans included blacks, northern whites, and southern whites who did not support the Confederacy. To Anderson, these sectors of political society represented the antithesis of his political affiliations. The failure of Republicans to follow through on promises to expand industry to appease an industrialist such as Anderson further solidified Anderson's support of Richmond's Democratic Party. Democrats considered the Republican Party so "unsouthern" that Anderson believed his business would lose support of locals if he aligned with them.¹⁸

What truly kept Anderson from joining the Republican Party were the radicals. Anderson had the support of many northern Conservative Republicans (for example, William Aspinwall), who sought an easy truce with the South, with an emphasis on rebuilding the economy (as noted in the dealings with Dover in New York). Little evidence suggests that Anderson in any way supported the Readjusters. While they supported the institution of protective tariffs for industry, they also advocated industrial workers' rights and the cessation of northern capital in the South. Anderson and his son, Archer, who took over Tredegar, lobbied hard to remove the Readjusters from politics. In 1885, a New York newspaper reported that Anderson's son was on a committee to

¹⁷ Chesson, *Richmond*, 184-6; Perman, *Political Unity*, 151-6.

¹⁸ Chesson, *Richmond*, 154-61; Perman, *Political Unity*, 126-31, 142-56.

offer the newly-elected Grover Cleveland some advice in returning previously held Readjuster seats to the Democrats in Congress. Anderson continued to use politics as a means of business support.¹⁹

In the 1870s and 1880s, Anderson represented something of an enigma, for he represented the industrial drive of the New South, but not its modernizing mentality. Most importantly, he could not make the transition to steel.²⁰ Wrought iron and steel were produced simultaneously, and they vied for the same market during the late 19th century. Iron was more labor intensive – requiring a puddler and an assistant to refine it, and try as they might, puddlers could not shorten the time consuming process. Steel required more capital – meaning a Bessemer converter – but it allowed for faster production and resulted in a product as strong, if not stronger, than iron. Fewer laborers were needed to oversee this process. Thus, the labor costs of iron exceeded that of steel. Steel required fewer inputs (coal, for instance) than iron, so for many companies the change to steel was inevitable. However, steel required a tremendous amount of investment capital to begin. One newspaper believed that a company needed approximately \$300,000 to transition completely to Bessemer converters to produce steel.²¹

Anderson could not make this transition. To convert to steel, he would have had to remove much of his labor force and his reliance on coal. He had contracts set up with surrounding coal mines, such as Tuckahoe and his brother's mine, Cloverdale. While his

¹⁹ Chesson, *Richmond*, 154-61; Perman, *Political Unity*, 126-31; "The President Elect," *The New York Herald*, 6 February 1885; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 308-11.

²⁰ Chesson, *Richmond*, 171-91.

²¹ David Jardini, "From Iron to Steel: The Recasting of the Jones and Laughlins Workforce Between 1885 and 1896," *Technology and Culture* 36, no. 2 (April 1995): 275-6, 283-5; "Steel Rails," *New York Herald-Tribune*, 27 March 1872.

contracts provided access to raw materials (coal, iron ore), he did not gain enough capital to transition his large company to steel manufacture. Had Tredegar been smaller, he might have made the change, but transforming so large a company required more monetary reserves than he had available. The desire to convert to steel existed, as evident when the *New York Herald* reported that Tredegar had been in the running to gain contracts to cast steel guns for the Federal government. Had Anderson succeeded and gained a cash advance, he would have had the capital necessary to produce steel.²²

Anderson's failure to transition the company to steel products resulted in Tredegar's decline, but Anderson realized his error more than a decade after the Panic of 1873 had savaged his industry. On a trip to Wheeling, a reporter for the *Wheeling Register* interviewed Anderson and his sons, asking after the industry in Richmond. Anderson replied that it was "very dull indeed," elaborating that he and his sons were "visiting the manufacturing centers of the country...to study the progress of the times." He expressed optimism about the market for iron though, stating that "good times are always ahead of bad times," and it would be "a mere matter of time" before the industry revived. Anderson had long shown a willingness to adapt, but in the 1870s, this trait abandoned him. His conservative approach to new technology, demonstrated by his lukewarm support of steel, caused his industry to drop in importance.²³

Still, Tredegar fit in with the increasing industrialization of the South. Economically, the company served as a mouthpiece for the "New South." Ideologically though, Tredegar did offer up a successful business model. Both the company and city of Richmond used similar strategies to regroup and recover after the war. Each reached

²² "Great Guns: Report of the Feasibility of their Construction," *New York Herald*, 31 March 1886.

²³ "Interesting Interview with the Iron King of Richmond," *Wheeling Register*, 9 April 1885.

back to previous traditional heritages, and used them to impose stable and strong environments, beckoning reconstruction and credit. Richmond reached back to its Revolutionary reputation to validate its role in the future. Once the veil of Reconstruction had been lifted, Richmond realized it still had much to rebuild and create to catch up to the rest of the country. The capitol became what Chesson referred to as “the old city of the New South.”²⁴ This concept supports the evidence that Richmond remained unsure of its place in the post-Reconstruction world. For all it had done to advance iron manufacture in the antebellum period, its delay in modernizing left it far behind the rest of the South. Tredegar, it seems, suffered from the same outlook as the city.

The production from Tredegar contributed to the role Richmond played as a part of the New South, although the city maintained a traditional mindset until around the 1890s, when a new concept arose – that of the Lost Cause. Also increasing in prevalence were Jim Crow laws. The former affected the general mindset, but the latter shaped labor and politics. The first Jim Crow edict did not appear until the turn of the century, but the influence of segregation had been present in Richmond since the 1870s. Even though the Republican Party attempted to establish itself in the South and in Richmond, its members faced the combined front of Readjusters and Democrats. After the Readjusters went under, Richmond’s Republicans followed, and the city remained conservative into the 1890s.²⁵

The leadership of Tredegar changed in 1892 with the passing of Anderson that year, shifting ownership to his son Archer. Politics in Richmond remained Democratic,

²⁴ Chesson, *Richmond*, 172.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 200-2.

especially as segregation became a stricter part of the law. Segregation also affected the relationship between white and black unions which had developed during the 1880s. Tredegar continued to produce, but without steel production, the company gradually declined in importance. Anderson remained a conservative for the rest of his life, exhibiting the resistance to Republican politics common in most southerners during Reconstruction.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Tredegar did not experience the same success as the industries in the North. Anderson never reached the ranks of men like Carnegie or Rockefeller. He did not embrace technological progress enough, even though he often compromised his political views. Anderson's ability to adapt was limited in much the same way Richmond's progress was stunted. The city of Richmond remained what Chesson referred to as a "miniature metropolis," never achieving the potential witnessed in other cities.¹ Richmond was unique though. For years before the war, it contained an iron factory that utilized slave labor – a rarity in the country because southerners routinely believed that slavery and industry did not mesh well. Antebellum factories developed through the use of cheap – but free – labor, so the incorporation of slave labor at Tredegar was a singular occurrence.

From his appearance at Tredegar in 1842 through the Civil War, Anderson's business model was unique to the South. Few other southerners had the motivation to enter the iron industry over tobacco, cotton, or sugar. Richmond's environment and the railroad boom in Virginia during the 1830s contributed to Tredegar's success, but it was the industry's eventual owner who would lead the company to enjoy success for several decades. Through political alliances, Anderson kept a steady supply of business relations and raw materials. His ability to put his business first resulted in his quick shifts in political affiliations, but he achieved an iron industry with consistent political support.

¹ Chesson, *Richmond*, 141-3. For a fairly recent biography to further compare Carnegie, see David Nasaw's *Andrew Carnegie* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006).

He was able to recognize when he needed to shift from the Whigs to the Democrats, and this ensured Tredegar's success.²

Tredegar demonstrated success when examined within the context of the South. The company went through economic crises, shifting political allegiances, war, labor problems, and reconstruction. Tredegar demonstrated the expanding, yet uneven, industrialism experienced by the country. The financial panics throughout the nineteenth century all hit Tredegar hard, but Anderson's skill at retaining capital and maintaining production in times of crisis allowed the company to survive. The 1837 Panic hit during a major railroad boom in Virginia, right when Tredegar had formed and began producing to meet that market. After several attempts to save the foundering company, Tredegar's Board turned to Anderson, who managed to pull the company back from financial ruin. Tredegar hit another economic snag in 1857, when many of its customers defaulted on payments, forcing Anderson to beg the banks for loans just to let the company survive. The politics affecting Tredegar followed a similar pattern of ups and downs. Initially, Anderson was a member of the Whig Party, which supported industry, tariffs, and internal improvements. When the Party began to crumble, Anderson left to join the Democratic Party in hopes of creating a solid foundation by convincing Democrats to support Tredegar since he utilized slave labor.³

During the first half of the 1860s, the company had to switch its focus to wartime production as orders from Confederate states and the Confederate government poured in. This was a tremendous opportunity for expansion, but access to raw materials decreased by 1861, and prevented Tredegar from operating at its prewar capacity. Nevertheless,

² Dew, *Ironmaker*, 1-21.

³ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 49-52; Untitled Article, *Richmond Enquirer*, 5 September 1860.

Tredegar ended the war mostly unscathed, able to begin production a few months after Union occupation. Since Anderson had posted men to protect his company, Tredegar survived the destructive Confederate retreat. Anderson's skill as a businessman and a politician came into play at the war's end, when, true to his chameleon-like political practices, he immediately declared loyalty to the Union.⁴

The immediate postwar phase saw a quick recovery by Tredegar. Limited production began in 1865, and Anderson had regained full ownership by 1867. His quick abandonment of the Confederacy gave Anderson the ability to regain full control of the company, further emphasizing his dedication to the business. With the support of Virginia's Governor Pierpont, President Johnson granted Anderson's pardon, and within a few years, he had regained full ownership of Tredegar (he only had regained partial ownership in 1865). He remained in politics, as a member of the city council, determining how best to influence the city government in a way which would benefit his company. The Tredegar owner was able to reestablish his business's prewar contracts, allowing sales to steadily rise as the next decade approached.⁵

As Reconstruction continued into the 1870s, Anderson used the opportunity to promote Tredegar using its prewar reputation for products and to regain the contracts of the Federal government. Many northern businesses were wary about investing in the South, but several still recognized the vitality of the company, including Admiral Dahlgren, who had every reason to express hatred toward the city which had treated his son's corpse so callously during the war. Even though he had been producing the weapons for the Confederate effort, Anderson managed to regain the business

⁴ Dew, *Ironmaker* 80-2, 121-32, 138-53; William Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant*, Vol. II (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 330-41.

⁵ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 294-302; Foner *Reconstruction*, 187-91.

associations he once had, due mostly in part to his character and ambition. Once Anderson gained enough investment, he was able to expand Tredegar in an attempt to increase production, most of which went to railroads and rebuilding the South. Tredegar's financial state improved as profits increased, though not rapidly. The devastating condition of Richmond and the southern economy after the war kept the success of Tredegar in check.⁶

So too did the increased worker tensions in the aftermath of the war. Workers at Tredegar varied in race, with no specific race dominating over another. Blacks and whites held skilled positions. Blacks gained skilled jobs during the war, when southern white workers were sparse, creating insoluble racial tensions when white workers returned. Northern and immigrant laborers also caused problems, as many of them refused to work in an environment with the slightest hint of integration. Most notable were the Philadelphia workers, hired for Tredegar, who refused to take their positions because they did not want to work alongside black employees. Other strikes at the company involved demands for better treatment and higher wages, particularly as the era of labor unionism became more prominent in industries after the war.⁷

The Panic of 1873 was the heaviest burden on Tredegar, particularly since it came when Tredegar and the rest of the South was trying to recover from the war. Production and profits declined; but again, Tredegar weathered the storm. Through Anderson's acquisition of investments during the previous two decades, Tredegar survived, but he never fully restored Tredegar to its prewar glory. Anderson was forced to shut down production briefly, and lay off over half of his labor force. The depression ruined

⁶ Letter from Fox 16 April 1866; Dew, *Ironmaker*, 303-313.

⁷ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 250-64.

Anderson's chances for continuing the importance of Tredegar into the 1880s. The 1870s left Anderson embittered toward Republicans and strengthened his ties to the Democratic Party.⁸

During this period, the Readjusters altered the political landscape of Richmond, increasing the placement of blacks in Richmond. The black community gained more participation in politics, although the effects of their run in politics did not last. Democrats regained the political majority in the city, ensuring that Anderson would remain a member of the party, since his interests coalesced with their platform. Even though both Readjusters and Republicans supported business, Anderson no longer compromised his political views to gain their support. Rather, he cultivated alliances through business, gaining Democratic support from the owners of the companies with whom he dealt and through his influence on Richmond's city council, which he had been serving since before the war.⁹

When iron shifted to steel, Tredegar could not shift its production, causing Richmond to lose the status of the South's main industrial center. Tredegar, too, began to lose its prominence once steel became the order of the day. With the effects of the panic, Tredegar lost any hope of gaining the necessary capital to make the transition. Anderson made Tredegar distinct from the rest of the South before, during, and immediately after the war, but it was not enough to survive the economic, labor, and modernizing changes of the late 1870s and 1880s.¹⁰

⁸ Chesson, *Richmond*, 154-64; "Suspension of Tredegar Iron Works," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 18 January 1876.

⁹ Perman, *Political Unity*, 151-6; Tredegar Foundry Sales Books, 1873-1876, 1876-1879, 1879-1883.

¹⁰ David Jardini, "From Iron to Steel: The Recasting of the Jones and Laughlins Workforce Between 1885 and 1896," *Technology and Culture* 36, no. 2 (April 1995): 275-6, 283-5.

Anderson continued to lead the company in producing materials for railroads and steamships through the 1880s and 1890s. He did not live to see the turn of the century though. Anderson died in 1892, with his role falling to his son, Archer. His family continued ensuring Tredegar's progress into the 1950s. Tredegar's reputation for quality provided an image of what could have been in the South, and established a legacy for southern industry to follow in the next century.¹¹

Building off of Eric Foner's assessment that Tredegar was the exception to the failure of industrialization in South, this study illustrates why it was the exception. Anderson's business savvy and his ability to adapt to changing economic and political climates explains how Tredegar became such an important industry in the South. Little incentive existed for southerners to drop agriculture and invest in industry, particularly as agriculture never lost its allure. Entering into an industry was expensive and required not only capital but access to raw materials. Few southerners shared Anderson's motivation to achieve industrial success. The limited access to raw materials also deterred many southerners from perceiving an iron industry as a wise investment. With Anderson's access to raw materials and his ability to gain contracts with northern businesses and the Federal government gave him an edge lacking in the rest of the region.¹²

One of the themes of Foner's *Reconstruction* emphasized the transformation of southern society during Reconstruction. Anderson maintained avid support for his company through his political affiliations, allowing it to continue, and prosper. It also demonstrated how unique Tredegar was among the rest of the South. During Reconstruction, southern society underwent changes in how citizens dealt with one

¹¹ Dew, *Ironmaker*, 318-20.

¹² Foner, *Reconstruction*, 390-2.

another, but Anderson had become accustomed to working with northern white businessmen, helping him prepare for the environment after the war. Anderson had already begun to transform his views of society, recognizing that doing so would give him the advantage in making the changes of Reconstruction work for him. This ability to transform his politics so efficiently and his willingness to integrate labor, despite his racist mentality explains Tredegar's unique experience and illustrates the potential other southern cities chose not to embrace.¹³

Tredegar's story can only be explained through its owner for much of the nineteenth century, Joseph Anderson. The first phase from his start at Tredegar through 1865 illustrated a businessman willing to sacrifice all to achieve success for his company. He recognized the potential of Tredegar, being unique to the South, and set about guaranteeing contracts with companies nationwide and the Federal government. When the business-supporting Whig Party in Richmond failed, he shifted to the Democrats, convincing them to offer support for Tredegar because of the company's use of slaves. When war broke in 1861, Anderson broke ties with northern businesses and the Federal government, seeing the opportunity that the Confederate war effort provided.

After the war, again he altered his convictions, declaring loyalty to the Federal government, and reestablishing contracts with them and northern businesses, once more putting business interests first. The Panic of 1873 changed Anderson's adaptive quality. The depression forever ruined Tredegar's chance at national importance. Anderson became less likely to change his politics. He remained loyal to the Democrats, which also stagnated the physical growth of Tredegar. Without the support of Republicans, Tredegar continued to produce, but did not gain the reputation or capital necessary to

¹³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 78-123.

shift to steel. Anderson's opportunity to do so during the 1870s was ignored out of his refusal to change, costing Tredegar a nationally successful future. The adaptation which had served Anderson and Tredegar so well before and during the war eroded by the late 1870s and into the 1880s. Tredegar represented what could have been in the South before the war, but its declining role by the end of Reconstruction slowly pushed it into obscurity.

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