

1992

"The world was all before them": A study of the black community in Norfolk, Virginia, 1861-1884

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**“The world was all before them”: A study of the black
community in Norfolk, Virginia, 1861–1884**

Newby, Cassandra Lynn, Ph.D.

The College of William and Mary, 1992

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Ann Arbor, MI 48106

"THE WORLD WAS ALL BEFORE THEM": A STUDY OF THE BLACK
COMMUNITY IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA, 1861-1884

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By

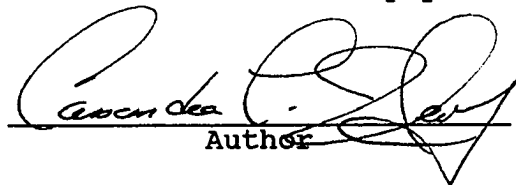
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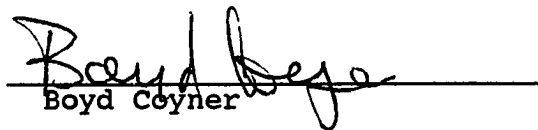
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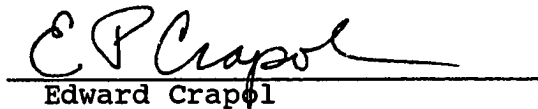


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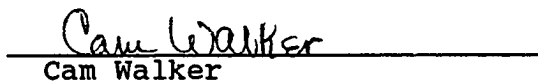
Boyd Coyner



Edward Crapol



Richard Sherman



Cam Walker



Tommy Lee Bogger
Norfolk State University

DEDICATION

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

and

to my Mother

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the lives, accomplishments, and struggles of the black community in Norfolk, Virginia, between the years 1861 and 1884, from the black perspective.

The integration of documents with statistics to uncover the mentalite of blacks is the focus of this study's research. The black community of this period was not always reactive, but active in determining its own fate. Even during slavery, Norfolk's blacks took an active role in their destiny through participation in the Underground Railroad.

This study suggests that blacks strove diligently to work with, and in some cases, conciliate, the white oligarchy. Unfortunately, their efforts met with resistance and defeat. Despite these difficulties, the black community pulled together to assist its members as the whites unified to subjugate them.

The results of the investigation suggest that had blacks continued to be politically active, Norfolk would have had an economically prosperous black community. Instead, the introduction of Jim Crow laws served to oppress blacks economically and produce a sense of hopelessness, socially and politically.

**"THE WORLD WAS ALL BEFORE THEM": A STUDY OF THE BLACK
COMMUNITY IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA, 1861-1884**

INTRODUCTION

John Milton concludes Book Twelve of Paradise Lost with Adam and Eve's departure from Eden. In those last few verses, Milton wrote: "Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon; /The world was all before them, where to choose /Their place of rest, and Providence their guide: /They, hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow, /Through Eden took their solitary way."¹ As it was for Adam and Eve leaving Eden, so it was for many black men and women when the Republican Party cast them out from their hope-filled "Eden of Reconstruction" into the real world where the former Confederates were free to roam and rule.

Twenty-five years after Emancipation the abandonment of the African-American by the Republicans was complete, ushering in a long period of deep disappointment and despair. The terrors of the Ku Klux Klan, the abandonment by northern and southern friends, the disorganization of industry, the institutionalization of Jim Crowism, and the devastation of the hopes brought on by the war left the African-American wandering alone in a nation hostile to the ideals of liberty

¹ John Milton, Paradise Lost: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism, edited by Scott Elledge (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1975), p. 281.

and equality for all people.²

Over the years, historians have written a great deal about the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. Debates have raged as to the causes and results of the war, the success or lack thereof of Congressional Reconstruction, the accuracy of historians when they labeled Reconstruction a period ruled by blacks, scalawags, and carpetbaggers, and the real impetus behind Reconstruction's demise. Historians typically cite 1877 as the official end of the Reconstruction era and self-determination for blacks, and the triumph of a white conservative resurgence in the South. In Virginia, however, this trend was forestalled by the activities of the Readjuster Party which shifted black political participation, power, and influence from the national and state to the local level. Consequently, this study will examine the effects of the Civil War through the post-Reconstruction period on Norfolk's black community and the participation of Norfolk's black leaders in the political arena.³

² W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk (New York: Washington Square Press, 1903, 1970), p. 6.

³ Although black political strength in the nineteenth century should always be examined and judged within a relative context, many historians either exaggerate its existence or discount it completely. The Dunning School of interpretation is noted for discounting the existence of capable and qualified black office-holders during Reconstruction. Although written prior to the creation of a Dunning School of interpretation, George Washington Williams' History of the Negro Race in America From 1619 to 1880 (2 vols., New York, 1883) and Joseph T. Wilson's Emancipation: Its Course and Progress, From 1481 B.C. to A.D. 1875 (Hampton, VA: Normal School Steam Power Press Print, 1882) are defensive studies

Throughout the 1870's and 1880's, in southern seaports and metropolitan areas with well-established large free black populations, black political participation and strength remained dynamic. Examples of such cities were Richmond, Hampton, and Petersburg, Virginia; Memphis, Tennessee; New Orleans, Louisiana; Charleston, South Carolina; and Norfolk, Virginia.⁴ Historians of Norfolk have long regarded the city as an anomaly among southern seaports. Its white citizens were known for their opposition to the war until the firing on Fort Sumter, at which point they became staunch secessionists. Its free black citizens were known for their quiet abolitionism: until Norfolk's occupation by Union forces in 1862, many were part of the underground railroad or helped area black slaves to escape within the city until they could

which early on answered to the charges leveled against blacks and, at times, tended to exaggerate some of their influence.

⁴ Several historical studies have focused on these cities' black communities during the years in question with the exception of Norfolk, Virginia. Two works that focus primarily on South Carolina are Herbert Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York: Vintage Books, 1976) and Michael Johnson and James Roark, Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984); Suzanne Lebsock, The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984) focuses on the women but also includes discussions concerning the black community as a whole; Annie Coleman, "The Negro in Virginia and South Carolina, 1861-1877, As Seen By Contemporary Observers and Newspapers and By Historians" (M.A. Thesis, Virginia State College, 1967); Joe Richardson, "The Memphis Race Riot and its Aftermath," Tennessee Historical Quarterly 24(Spring 1965); and Robert Engs, Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton, Virginia, 1861-1890 (PA: University of PA Press, 1979).

be smuggled out of the South.⁵ In fact, the majority of slaves who successfully escaped did so aboard ships leaving from ports in the Upper South, especially Norfolk. In the 1870's, many former abolitionists published books about their Underground Railroad operations. William Still, an ex-slave who worked as an operator in the Underground Railroad, collected and recorded a number of narratives and letters from Norfolk's slaves who became fugitives in the 1850's. Still kept records of the collected slave stories hoping to bring together the former slaves who were in search of long-lost family members. During the slavery and Civil War period, Still guarded his accounts and at one point, hid them in a cemetery building.⁶

One such account involved a narrow escape of twenty-one fugitives aboard Captain Fountain's ship which left Norfolk in

⁵ John Porter, A Record of Events in Norfolk County, Virginia (Portsmouth: W.A. Fiske, 1892), p. 228; Carroll Walker, Norfolk: A Tricentennial Pictorial History (Virginia Beach: Donning Company, 1981), p. 177. For a listing of selected runaway slaves from Norfolk, see Appendix 1.

⁶ William Still was in charge of the Underground Railroad in Philadelphia. In 1872, Still decided that with the new challenges facing blacks, the time was right to publish his accounts of the efforts, difficulties, and achievements that were made by blacks in their attempt to secure their freedom. Lerone Bennett, Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America, 1619-1966, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1966), 154; Still, The Underground Railroad: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, Etc., Narrating the Hardships Hair-Breadth Escapes and Death Struggles of the Slaves in Their Efforts For Freedom, As Related by Themselves and Others or Witnessed by the Author (Philadelphia: By the Author, 1871; Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1970), pp. v-vi.

1855. It seemed Captain Fountain frequently assisted slaves escaping to the North from southern ports where he traded wheat, grains, and other items. One day, word got around Norfolk that a boat was harboring fugitive slaves. Norfolk's mayor and a posse boarded the ship, and after an amateurish but destructive search, the men departed leaving the Captain and his stowaway cargo in place. Upon leaving Norfolk, the ship headed for Philadelphia where the Vigilance Committee awaited their arrival.⁷

Throughout the years of national political upheaval in the struggle between the North and South for political supremacy, Norfolk was affected. Its white citizens resented the abolitionists and their activities in Congress and in the private sector. Politically, Norfolk was a strongly conservative town with a long history of sending Whigs to the state legislature. However, the expanded power and influence of abolitionist societies, the increased aggression of the slaveocracy to strengthen the institution, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Dred Scott decision, and John Brown's raid combined to set the nation on the brink of secession and war. The victory of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860 resulted in the call by some southerners for the South to secede. The majority of white people in Norfolk, however, were not ready to sever their ties with the North or with tradition because of their memories of past wars and the

⁷ Still, pp. 161-165.

assistance Norfolk received from individuals from states along the Eastern Seaboard during the 1855 yellow fever epidemic. Despite widespread opposition in Norfolk to secession, there were those who did support armed resistance to what they viewed as the federal government's encroachment on Southern rights.⁸

Norfolk was a typical southern seaport in its development of urban slavery and the repression of free blacks. As a seaport town, it was also inundated with a variety of heterogenous people--free blacks, slaves, whites, foreign-born whites--affecting the community to the degree that social divisions emerged or increased. The city's politics, like those of New Orleans, Charleston, Memphis, and Mobile, reflected its economic concerns. Norfolk seldom followed the current of the rural South because its connections with the North and Great Britain often determined its survival.⁹

Within weeks after Lincoln's election, South Carolina seceded on December 20, 1860. Throughout the South, whites expressed support for the actions of South Carolina's

⁸ In December 1860, a large group of white Norfolk men formed the Norfolk Minute Men association which pledged to resist what they saw as the Northern aggressive power. Thomas J. Wertenbaker, Norfolk: Historic Southern Port, 2nd ed., edited by Marvin Schlegel (Durham: Duke University Press, 1962), pp. 197, 199, 202-203.

⁹ Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), p. 248; Claudia Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South, 1820-1860: A Quantitative History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 11, 13.

convention in the form of flag waving, parades, and celebrations. Even in Norfolk, flags and salutes were the order of the day. South Carolina's actions set off a series of events leading the nation to a war that many felt could not, at this late date, be averted. Norfolk's residents waited in anticipation of what Virginia would do. By 1861, many of Norfolk's white citizenry were in favor of war if the federal government chose to interfere in the affairs of the southern states, particularly those of seceded states.¹⁰

The Richmond Dispatch reported conditions in Norfolk in December 1860 and January 1861 as desperate. Feeling the winds of an upcoming war, the federal government began withdrawing its funds from the Norfolk Navy Yard, leaving many in hand-to-mouth financial straits. Many Norfolkiens caught in this dilemma began to call for an immediate settlement or separation between the North and the South. By early January 1861, the white citizens of Norfolk began to make preparations for the coming war. Resolutions were adopted in Norfolk calling for the arming of volunteer companies. Many of Norfolk's black residents were also doubtless anxious about upcoming events because, if Virginia seceded, slavery would be a permanent feature, forever dominating its political, social, and economic life. And so the stage was set, awaiting the first move that would change the course of Norfolk's history--

¹⁰ Bruce Catton, The Coming Fury, vol. 1: The Centennial History of the Civil War (5 vols., New York: Washington Square Press, 1961), pp. 99-100; Wertebaker, pp. 202-204.

black and white--and the African-American's understanding of his or her destiny.¹¹

When the war began in 1861, many of Norfolk's white men enlisted while the women utilized their varied talents to assist the war effort. The slaves were employed in the labor brigades while a few free blacks volunteered their services to the Confederate Army.¹² The majority of blacks patiently waited for freedom. Many believed, as a result of the articles and editorials published by abolitionist newspapers, that emancipation would eventually emerge as the real purpose behind the war. Once Union forces seized power and control in Norfolk in 1862, the blacks--both free and bond--began exercising and asserting their right to bear arms in the Union Army.¹³

Once the war was over and Radical Reconstruction was set in place, Norfolk's blacks asserted their rights in the political and social realms.¹⁴ Not surprisingly, the white community resented and rebelled against these actions in a variety of ways, although the usual method was through

¹¹ Richmond Dispatch, January 3, 1861, p. 2; January 11, 1861, p. 1.

¹² Porter, pp. 228-233.

¹³ Lenoir Chambers, "Notes on Life in Occupied Norfolk, 1862-65," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 73 (April 1965), p. 141.

¹⁴ In April 1866, for example, blacks had a grand parade to honor the passage of the Civil Rights Bill. H.W. Burton, The History of Norfolk, Virginia (Norfolk: Norfolk Virginia Job Print, 1877), p. 101.

economic pressure.¹⁵ Despite the efforts of the white citizenry to forestall the political, social, and economic advancement of the black community, Norfolk's blacks moved forward. This progress was accomplished primarily through the strong leadership of black Civil War veterans and free blacks, many of whom returned to Norfolk from the North once the city was occupied by Union forces. The emergence of the Readjuster Party and its inclusion of blacks in key political positions within the party, and as political candidates, extended the black community's political life, at least until the late 1880's.¹⁶ Afterwards, it was only a matter of time before the conservative forces, already set in motion by the federal abandonment of Radical Reconstruction, overcame the more liberal forces, and the overthrow of radicalism was accomplished.¹⁷ The result was Jim Crowism which manifested itself very subtly in its first few decades of existence in Virginia and in Norfolk.¹⁸

In The Souls of Black Folk, W.E.B. DuBois remarked that blacks found themselves in a peculiar situation in America. A double-consciousness evolved in which blacks felt a dual identity--one as a black, the other as an American. These two

¹⁵ Charles Wynes, "The Evolution of Jim Crow Laws in Twentieth Century Virginia," Phylon 28 (Winter 1967), p. 416.

¹⁶ Luther P. Jackson, Negro Office Holders in Virginia, 1865-95 (Norfolk: Guide Quality Press, 1945), pp. x, 78.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 84.

¹⁸ Wynes, p. 416.

souls with their unreconciled strivings, thoughts, and ideals constantly warred against the other in an attempt to attain what DuBois called "self-conscious manhood."¹⁹ Such was the case with blacks in Norfolk, Virginia. Blacks--both free and bond--have a long history in Norfolk. Attempts by those blacks to assert their manhood were seen on countless occasions in the occupations, political activism, and enlistment records during times of war.

Over the years, historians of Norfolk have included the participation and influence of the black community in their writings, but only in the most peripheral sense.²⁰ Although the most recent local histories have emphasized the importance of the labor of blacks in building Norfolk, few have even hinted at the active participation and direct influence many blacks had on the development of the city. Relegating blacks to the position of "the black masses," these studies ignored the active participation of blacks in determining their own destinies. Hence the exclusion of any detailed accounts of blacks and their participation in Norfolk's history is typical--except as the amorphous laboring masses of slaves and freedmen, or as a "Black Cloud" during the Civil War and

¹⁹ DuBois, p. 3.

²⁰ H.W. Burton; William Forrest, Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakinston, 1853); George I. Nowitzky, Norfolk: The Marine Metropolis of Virginia, and the Sound and River Cities of North Carolina (Norfolk: Published by George I. Nowitzky, 1888); John Porter; Wertebaker.

Reconstruction.²¹

While it is true that Norfolk's blacks of the era under investigation left few diaries, memoirs, letters, or other personal records, other primary sources have survived: newspapers, records of African-American churches and fraternal organizations, federal, state, and local records which recorded their activities from marriages to land ownership, wills to death certificates. Census records, Freedmen's Bureau reports, records from the Bureau of Colored Soldiers, Mayor's reports, minutes and proclamations recorded by the various black conventions, the American Missionary magazine, letters and diaries from black and white missionaries in Norfolk, and published accounts of Emancipation Day celebrations all provide the historian with concrete evidence as to the activities, accomplishments, and attitudes of blacks. The problem that confronts this and similar studies, however, is deciding upon the methodology that should be employed to interpret the data.

In examining the black community in Norfolk, Virginia, between 1861 and 1884, one must fall back on W.E.B. DuBois' axiom that a relevant history of the black experience can only be obtained "through a systematic and scientific methodology grounded on the assumption that there are discoverable patterns of human behavior about which generalizations are

²¹ Wertebaker, pp. 232-234.

possible."²² Since blacks in general, and Norfolk's blacks in particular, have left relatively little in the way of books, letters, diaries, and the like, an examination of the black experience must be open to various methodological innovations.

Quantitative analysis of public and official documents (i.e., census records, cemetery records) is one method through which the historian can attempt to get at the black community's mentalité.²³ Oral history is another. Although fraught with limitations of reliability and authenticity, oral history, in particular, the ex-slave interviews, allows the historian to scrutinize historical documents and events from the perspective of the black participant. It enables the historian to focus on what the person thought or heard as opposed to what actually occurred, thus broadening the historian's understanding of the subject's mental processes.²⁴

²² Thomas Holt, "On the Cross: The Role of Quantitative Methods in the Reconstruction of the Afro-American Experience," Journal of Negro History 61(April 1976), p. 169.

²³ The "Histoire des Mentalité" is from the French school of thought which asserts that man has a collective consciousness which can be observed in a repetitive series of ideas and actions. This is also an investigation of how ordinary people thought, using an organized and systematic methodology. The historian thus approaches history from an ethnographic perspective--studying the way ordinary people make sense of their world in their minds and express it in their behavior. See John Higham and Paul Conkin, eds., New Directions in American Intellectual History (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 30.

²⁴ Holt, p. 163; Charles Perdue, Thomas Barden, and Robert Phillips, eds. Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), p. xliv. Hereafter cited as Weevils in the Wheat.

Photographs and other illustrations are still another resource available to the historian which can be used in such a way as to reflect the old adage, a picture is worth a thousand words.²⁵ Finally, Richard Hofstadter suggested a fourth approach. By using social psychology and cultural anthropology, historians can "tease" the mentalité of blacks from the documents and thus reveal a unique interpretation from the black community's point of view.²⁶

This study examines the Black Community in Norfolk, Virginia, from the onset of hostilities between the North and South in 1861, to the end of the Virginia Readjuster period which marked the successful usurpation of the Reconstruction legacy by Jim Crowism. The focus of this study is upon the intervening twenty-three years during which the hopes, dreams, aspirations, goals, and accomplishments of equality, freedom, and self-determination emerged and were forcefully expressed by many within Norfolk's black community. While many blacks throughout the South were intimidated into political and social submission long before 1890, Norfolk's unique location and heritage permitted the survival of Radical Reconstruction's aims and self-determination among blacks beyond the 1870's.

²⁵ Holt, p. 164.

²⁶ Richard Hofstadter, "U.B. Phillips and the Plantation Legend," Journal of Negro History 29 (April 1944), p. 109.

"The Day and the War"

America! I thee conjure,
By all that's holy, just and pure,
To cleanse thy hands from Slavery's stain,
And banish from thy soil the chain.
Thou canst not thrice, while with the sweat
Of unpaid toil thy hands are wet,
Nor canst thou hope for peace or joy
Till thou Oppression doth destroy.

James Madison Bell¹

¹ James Madison Bell, born on April 3, 1826 in Gallipolis, Ohio, was an abolitionist who gave assistance to John Brown and his men in 1851. Bell became a Republican delegate to the national convention from Ohio in 1868. This poem excerpt was written in 1862 and taken from Benjamin Brawley, ed., Early Negro American Writers: Selections with Biographical and Critical Introductions (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), pp. 279, 284.

CHAPTER 1

THE CIVIL WAR AND NORFOLK'S OCCUPATION

The election of Abraham Lincoln sparked a fire throughout the South that would not be quenched for four and a half years. Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison foretold the war's inevitability and its resulting bloodshed as the judgment on America because of its "'covenant with death.'"² Indeed, the election of Lincoln brought the years of sectional strife to a head and resulted in the secession of South Carolina from the Union. Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas quickly followed South Carolina's lead by February 1861. Although Lincoln was branded an abolitionist by many in the South and denounced as not having a drop of antislavery blood by northern abolitionists, he was in fact a moderate whose only goal in 1861 was the preservation of the Union.³

It was in these early turbulent months of 1861 that four southern states--Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Tennessee--which would eventually become members of the

² Truman Nelson, ed., Documents of Upheaval: Selections from William Lloyd Garrison's, The Liberator, 1831-1865 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1866), p. 275.

³ Ibid.

Confederacy demonstrated uncertainty in deciding whether to follow the lead of their fellow southern states or remain with the Union.⁴ The effect this maelstrom had on Norfolk's black community forever changed the direction and vision of those who were and became a part of its communal polity.

Virginia was the largest and wealthiest--in population, natural resources, and economic output--of the southern states. Consequently, Virginia's decision as to which side she would choose directly affected the outcome of secession and the war. Initially, however, a substantial majority of the citizens of Virginia in general, and Norfolk in particular, opposed secession.⁵ When Virginia called a State Convention on February 4, 1861, Norfolk sent its Union delegate, General George Blow, instead of the secessionist candidate, James Hubbard, to consider the situation. With the call made to the loyal states by Lincoln to raise 75,000 troops, however, Blow threw in his vote (as per instructions from a mass meeting in Norfolk) with the majority of the delegates in favor of Virginia's secession.⁶

The debate over secession did not deter the efforts of many in Norfolk to prepare for war. At least nine military

⁴ Benjamin Hillman, editor, Virginia's Decision: The Story of the Secession Convention of 1861 (Richmond: Virginia Civil War Commission, 1964), p. 4.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Important News From Norfolk, Virginia," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, April 27, 1861, p. 361.

companies were organized⁷ under the direction of General William B. Taliafero, and troops were immediately deployed to take control of Fort Norfolk (which was used as a powder magazine). Concurrently, federal troops quickly sank ships and destroyed and abandoned the Norfolk Navy Yard to prevent valuable war materials from falling into enemy hands. Among those vessels sunk, albeit not irretrievably, was the U.S.S. Merrimack, soon to be used by the Confederates to terrorize federal troops located at Fortress Monroe.⁸

On May 18, 1861, Confederate troops began erecting land batteries at Sewells Point (located opposite Fortress Monroe) utilizing hundreds of conscripted blacks in work brigades. The erection of the battery was only one in a series of extensive defense preparations ordered by Governor John Letcher in the eight-month period following Virginia's secession. The primary objective was to protect strategic rivers and Confederate troops from enemy invasion or fire while launching counter attacks. Initially, many blacks--free and bond--in and around the Norfolk area volunteered or were sent by their masters to work in defense of their home state.

⁷ Among the military companies organized were the United Artillery Company, the Norfolk Juniors, and the Norfolk Light Infantry. Porter, pp. 228-229.

⁸ Ibid. During the Civil War, Fort Monroe was referred to as Fortress Monroe by newspaper correspondents and by Major General John Wool although it never enclosed the nearby village, Old Point Comfort, within its walls. See "Tales of Old Fort Monroe," No. 5 "Is it a Fort or a Fortress?" Civil War - Fortress Monroe, 1861-1865, Courtesy of Hampton University, Hampton University Archives, p. 1.

The Gosport Navy Yard employed slaves and free blacks in building ships for the Confederacy. As the war continued and the call for freedom echoed down from northern abolitionists, however, the attitude of blacks changed, making conscription of free blacks necessary.⁹

Col. Andrew Talcott, the state's engineer, was sent by order of Governor Letcher from Gloucester Point and Yorktown to Norfolk to superintend and hasten the construction of defensive batteries. Talcott also supervised the deployment of the slave labor gangs at the Naval Hospital (131 slaves), Fort Norfolk (197 slaves), Craney Island (82 slaves), Tanner's Creek (27 slaves), Sewells Point (115 slaves), Pig Point (72 slaves), St. Helena (42 slaves), Fort Boykins (118 slaves), Lamberts Point (30 slaves), and areas along the Elizabeth River and Norfolk Harbors (60 slaves). In addition, 874 slave laborers from Norfolk and 650 free blacks from the surrounding counties and Petersburg were utilized to sink small craft or anchor rafts across rivers. Most of the batteries were abandoned, however, when the Confederates evacuated Norfolk on May 10, 1862.¹⁰

⁹ George Tucker, Norfolk Highlights, 1584-1881 (Norfolk, VA: Norfolk Historical Society, 1972), p. 93; James Brewer, The Confederate Negro: Virginia's Craftsmen and Military Laborers, 1861-65 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1969), p. 132; William Paquette, "Lower Tidewater's Black Volunteers," in Jane Kobelski, ed., Readings in Black and White: Lower Tidewater Virginia (Portsmouth, VA: Portsmouth Public Library, 1982), p. 16.

¹⁰ Brewer, pp. 134-135; Tucker, Norfolk Highlights, p. 93.

The procurement of black laborers for the Confederacy in Virginia was efficiently accomplished using a five-point plan. The plan included black slaves procured from masters who offered them without requesting remuneration, free blacks volunteering their services, slaves and free blacks hiring out their services to the state's Engineer Bureau, and black impressment or conscription as ordered by Confederate officers for the purpose of relieving whites for military duty.¹¹

As the Confederates made plans to "dig in" in the Hampton Roads area, the Federal Government attached equal importance to retaining the area under Union control. Press reports circulated throughout the nation stating that Lincoln would not allow the harbor of Norfolk to be captured by the Confederate forces since "it may have vital bearing upon the supremacy of the Federal Government upon the ocean."¹² In a letter of July 4, 1861, to President Lincoln, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles emphasized the importance of Norfolk's Navy Yard and the surrounding harbor to the government. Welles encouraged action to insure their occupation by Union forces. Thus the Union government planned to insure supremacy by maintaining control of Fort Monroe and depriving the CSS

¹¹ Brewer, pp. 139-140.

¹² Gideon Wells to Abraham Lincoln, July 4, 1861. Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to the President and Executive Agencies, 1821-1886, vol. 13 (14 vols., Washington: National Archives Microfilm Publishers, 1963), p. 358.

Virginia of Norfolk as a supply base.¹³

The Union had already made it clear that Fortress Monroe would be held at all costs. Immediately after the fall of Fort Sumter, the War Department, on April 24, 1861, began reinforcing Fortress Monroe's existing garrison such that within six weeks its strength increased from 400 to 12,000 men. Because of these overwhelming numbers of reinforcements, Colonel Benjamin Ewell, commander of the Peninsula Confederate forces, abandoned any attempts to defend Hampton against future Union encroachments. Instead, Ewell concentrated on building up rebel defenses on the opposite shores of Hampton Roads. Consequently, Hampton's whites were faced with the decision to accept federal occupation or flee with the Confederate troops. The increase in Union troops at Fortress Monroe also resulted in numerous area slaves making their way to the Fortress area.¹⁴ So it was in this seemingly insignificant village located across the Bay from Norfolk that certain policies in the conduct of war would originally be tried and tested, policies that were eventually implemented for all areas occupied by Union forces for the duration of the war. Other developments at Fort Monroe would dramatically alter Norfolk's conduct and participation in the Civil War and

¹³ Engs, p. 7; Tucker, Norfolk Highlights, p. 94.

¹⁴ Engs, pp. 17-18; Betsy L. Fahlman, Beth N. Rossheim, David W. Steadman, and Peter Stewart, A Tricentennial Celebration: Norfolk 1682-1982 (Norfolk, VA: The Chrysler Museum, 1982), p. 70.

Reconstruction.

Lincoln sent General Benjamin Butler to Fortress Monroe on May 22, 1861, in hopes of keeping the controversial officer out of trouble in this "out of the way" post.¹⁵ The President was soon to discover the error of this assumption. Prior to his arrival, Butler discovered that the Confederates were constructing batteries at Sewells Point and Pig Point in an effort to command the Nansemond River. To counter these moves, Butler determined to extend Union control into Hampton and Newport News. One day after his arrival, Butler sent a detachment of Union soldiers to capture Hampton. The Confederates, however, chose to burn parts of the village rather than see it occupied. That night, three slaves (Shepard Mallory, Frank Baker, and James Townsend) made their way to the reconnaissance expedition and the next morning, May 24, were sent to General Butler for interrogation. Butler discovered that the three men ran away because their owner intended to take them along in his flight to join the Confederate army in North Carolina. This meant that the three slaves would have to leave their wives and families behind. The typical response would have been for Butler to refuse sanctuary to the escaping slaves, as had other Union generals in occupied regions throughout the South. Lincoln refused to formulate a policy regarding escaped slaves for fear of

¹⁵ Chester Bradley, "Controversial Ben Butler," Fort Monroe, Civil War, 1861-1865 box, Hampton University Archives, Hampton, Virginia, p. 1.

antagonizing the border slave states, but Butler decided that seizure and confiscation of these able-bodied slaves for military purposes would be beneficial to the Fort, unoffensive to the border states, and a small blow to the Confederacy.¹⁶ Since the rebels were already using blacks as laborers, Butler saw the return of slaves to their masters as hurting the Union war effort. So when their owner, Colonel Charles Mallory, came to Fortress Monroe and demanded the return of his slaves under the Fugitive Slave Act, Butler refused declaring the confiscated slaves "contrabands of war."¹⁷

News of Butler's actions quickly spread throughout Tidewater. By May 25, Hampton Village was abandoned, leaving most of the blacks hiding in the nearby woods and fields and the whites fleeing north to the Confederate lines. Soon news of sanctuary at Fortress Monroe reached the ears of many area blacks. On Hampton's May 25 evacuation day, eight slaves sought refuge at the Fort, followed by forty-seven the next day. It was not long afterwards that the stream became a

¹⁶ The slaves would be employed to build breastworks, transport or store provisions, serve as cooks or waiters, or bear arms. Edward Pierce, "The Contrabands at Fortress Monroe," Atlantic Monthly 49 (November 1861), pp. 626-627; Engs, pp. 18-19; "Fort Monroe in the Civil War," Fort Monroe, Civil War, 1861-1865 box, Hampton University Archives, Hampton, Virginia, p. 1.

¹⁷ The demand made by Colonel Mallory for the return of his slaves under the Fugitive Slave Act was ironic because with the Confederacy insisting they were no longer under the authority of the United States' government, Mallory could not appeal to a law he did not recognize as having authority over himself and his property. Pierce, p. 627.

flood. In a May 27 letter to Lt. General Winfield Scott, Butler wrote that he believed providing sanctuary to runaway slaves, rather than returning them to their owners, was a military necessity for the Union army because it deprived the South of the slaves' services. Consequently, Butler decided to employ all able-bodied blacks in exchange for food and supplies since the government did not provide relief for the runaway slaves. By July 1861, more than nine hundred contrabands had sought sanctuary within the walls of Fortress Monroe--with many coming from as far away as Richmond and North Carolina.¹⁸

Upon receiving news of Butler's actions, the nation came alive with talk of possible emancipation. Several newspapers sent correspondents to Fortress Monroe to get the facts firsthand. An article in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper reported that

from Fortress Monroe . . . gangs of fugitive slaves, in parties of twenty or thirty, were constantly arriving there, over one hundred having reached there on Monday. Some of them said they were about being sent South, and others alleged that they came in to get food. They complained that, whilst they were kept at work in sandhills, the soldiers ate up all the food. Some of them were free negroes who had been compelled to

¹⁸ Engs, pp. 20-22; Wilson, Emancipation, pp. 46-47; Sandra Gallop and Margo Gaither, "First Steps to Freedom," Fort Monroe, Civil War, 1861-1865 box, Hampton University Archives, Hampton, Virginia, p. 2; "Fort Monroe in the Civil War," p. 2.

work upon the enemy's fortifications in
in and near Norfolk.¹⁹

As the Union forces met with repeated defeats at the hands of the Confederacy, Congress increasingly favored the idea of using blacks to the North's advantage. Stirred by the success of Butler's actions at Fortress Monroe, the House of Representatives passed a resolution in July 1861 which made it clear that it was not the duty of a Union officer to return fugitive slaves. Although this resolution did not compel Union commanders to keep fugitive slaves, it did justify Butler's contraband policy. Not until the July 21 defeat at Bull Run, however, did Congress see the need to deprive the Confederates of their slave property.²⁰

As events in 1861 progressed, the period of Congressional inaction quickly disappeared. Even with Congressional sanction of the contraband policy, everything was not quiet on the Tidewater front. By the end of the summer, Butler was replaced by General John Wool, an officer with more Regular Army experience, who the War Department considered better equipped to handle the contrabands of war. Butler, however, believed he was relieved as commanding officer of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina because his

¹⁹ "Negroes Taking Refuge at Fort Monroe," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, June 8, 1861, p. 55.

²⁰ Slaves were generously used as laborers by the rebels, thus freeing the white southerners to fight. See Louis Gerteis, From Contrabands to Freedom: Federal Policy Toward Southern Blacks, 1861-1865 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), pp. 16-17.

continued interference in the "Negro Question" proved a political embarrassment for Lincoln who was trying to please the slaveholding border states still loyal to the Union. No doubt political considerations did play a part in Lincoln's decision to oust Butler and put the less controversial General Wool in his place. As for Butler, he was given command of all the volunteer troops outside the walls of Fortress Monroe and then eventually command of Union forces in New Orleans.²¹

General Wool was not without compassion for the plight of the former slaves. Aware of his predecessor's attempts to relieve the suffering of the runaways through governmental funds, Wool cooperated with missionary groups, such as the American Missionary Association, to assist many of the blacks. In October 1861, Wool issued a special order which procedurally formalized the care of escaped slaves. All able-bodied blacks were ordered to be put to work and employed as officer's servants in the Quartermaster's or Engineer's departments. Wages were set at eight dollars a month for men and four dollars for women, in addition to full rations for workers and half rations for dependents. It did not take long, however, for abuses to occur, especially in the Quartermaster's department that was charged with keeping the

²¹ Bradley, p. 2; Engs, pp. 26-27; Howard Nash, Stormy Petrel: The Life and Times of General Benjamin F. Butler, 1818-1893 (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1969), pp. 117-118. Nash considers the evidence and presents a sympathetic but well-balanced portrait of one of American history's best-loved and most-hated man.

pay records and distributing goods to blacks. Too often, clothing and rations were sold on the black market while credited in the books to the contrabands. General Wool finally forbade Captain G. Tallmedge and his assistants to distribute goods to the contrabands, although the problems continued to plague Hampton and Norfolk.²² One humorous story summarizes the problems faced by the contrabands:

'Dey said that we, de able-body men, was to get eight dollars a month, an de women four dollars and de ration; only we was to allow one dollar de month to help de poor an' de old--which we don't 'gret-- an' one dollar for de sick ones, an' den annudder dollar for Gen'l Purposes. We don't zactly know who dat Gen'l is, but 'pears like dar was a heap o' dem Gen'ls an' it takes all dar is to pay 'em, 'cause we don't get nuffins.'²³

The Union army's care and disposition of blacks was "the greatest internal problem" next to the planning and execution of battles in the war. To forestall widespread desertion, many southern masters told their slaves that Lincoln and his troops were intent on freeing the slaves only to drive them away as they did the Indians. Although this rumor expressed

²² Engs, pp. 30-32.

²³ The quote was taken from the reminiscences of AMA missionary W.L. Coan in April 1884. The Southern Workman 13 (April 1884), p. 46. Although the contrabands were appropriated a designated fee, part of their pay was withheld, going toward food, clothing, and care for the sick and aged. Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Progress Administration in the State of Virginia, compiler, The Negro in Virginia (New York: Hastings House, 1940), p. 191. Hereafter cited as Negro in Virginia.

the attitude of many white northerners, others truly cared about the welfare of those held in bondage. Other masters told their slaves that Yankees were horned devils who would have no mercy on their victims. Still others warned their slaves that northerners were itching to get their hands on blacks so they could sell them to Cuba. The Norfolk Day Book²⁴ was notorious for warning slaves of how cruelly and unmercifully the Yankees would treat them if they ever got their hands on them. Another method of control was removing the slaves deeper South, to Richmond, or through impressment. In Norfolk, impressment was the most-often-used tool of control. With the onset of the war, many blacks took advantage of the confusion by running away. Consequently, many were scattered and starving throughout the Tidewater area, and their pitiful state appealed to the sympathy of some white northerners who set about organizing relief agencies in the South. Headquarters for these relief organizations were in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Washington.²⁵

²⁴ The Norfolk Day Book was the only prewar newspaper to survive the war. It was suspended for three years by the Union military authorities and after the war, endured until its final publication in January 1881. Lenoir Chambers, Joseph Shank and Harold Sugg, Salt Water and Printer's Ink: Norfolk and its Newspapers, 1865-1965 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 5. Hereafter cited as Salt Water.

²⁵ G.K. Eggleston, "The Work of Relief Societies During the Civil War," Journal of Negro History 14 (July 1929), p. 272; Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), pp. 46-47; American Missionary, Supplement 5 (October 1861), p. 245.

As some slaveowners panicked, fleeing Norfolk and the surrounding area, an increasing number of blacks came to Old Point Comfort where they found food, employment, and sanctuary. The men were used as servants to officers, cooks, stevedores, trench diggers, and carpenters, while the women were detailed as cooks, laundresses, and chambermaids. Sadly for the contrabands, payment for services rendered was infrequent at best. As the army became more organized with its contraband camps, payment of wages increased in regularity.²⁶

The presence of Federal troops at Ft. Monroe attracted many area black refugees and placed stress and strain on the food, supplies, economy, and way of life of area residents. Adding to the strain was the absence of prominent white business owners who left the area or joined the army. As a result, the currency became worthless, tax receipts fell, supplies became limited or non-existent, schools began to close, and the status quo and social hierarchy were in serious danger of collapsing.²⁷

Early in 1862, the war once again centered on the Tidewater region of Virginia when President Lincoln, General George McClellan, and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton prepared plans to capture Richmond by way of the peninsula. The North thought victory would be quickly achieved in the spring of

²⁶ Negro in Virginia, pp. 189-190.

²⁷ Betsy Fahlman, et. al., p. 67.

1862 during their Peninsular campaign. The success of the Union's lower Virginia campaign depended upon control of the James River and its tributaries. In choosing to send troops up the York River by way of Fortress Monroe, they had to ensure absolute mastery of the Chesapeake by Union forces. This meant that rebel possession of Norfolk, with its railroads, Navy Yard, water routes, and the presence of the CSS Virginia had to be eliminated.²⁸

On February 26, 1862, Mayor William Lamb of Norfolk wrote a letter to Confederate President Jefferson Davis requesting 20,000 troops be sent to Norfolk to protect them from a Union attack. Lamb argued that the fall of Norfolk to the enemy would be a crushing blow to the Confederacy because of its Navy Yard and harbors. General Benjamin Huger's 9,000 troops were sent to Norfolk but were then diverted to assist General Joseph Johnston's troops at Richmond. On the morning of March 8, 1862, the whites of Norfolk were shaken by signs and rumors from local blacks of the "coming judgment." Although many whites tried to assure one another that they were in no danger, first-hand accounts related that it was on this day that many of Norfolk's blacks fell on their knees in prayer, while others ran through the streets, clapping their hands and shouting about the coming of the Lord. With the help of area

²⁸ Wertenbaker, pp. 213, 216; William Barney, Flawed Victory: A New Perspective on the Civil War (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), p. 6; Chambers, "Notes on Life in Occupied Norfolk," p. 132.

blacks who discovered valuable information about the operations of the rebels and the iron-clad, the Union forces were able to neutralize the CSS Virginia, the only clear Union victory in the campaign with the exception of securing a base on the James River. Afterwards, a number of prominent whites abandoned Norfolk permanently, while Huger withdrew the remainder of his troops, choosing to consolidate the forces in and around Richmond and Petersburg.²⁹

Six thousand Union troops, on the night of May 9, 1862, crossed the Hampton Roads and landed on Willoughby Spit at 9:00 a.m. General Wool marched slowly towards Norfolk, giving ample time for the Confederates to evacuate. By five o'clock p.m., May 10, the Union troops under the command of General Wool met with Mayor William Lamb and several councilmen just outside Norfolk's city limits. The mayor informed General Wool that no rebel troops remained in Norfolk and that "the city was his."³⁰

²⁹ U.S., Department of War, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, series I, vol. 51, Part II--Confederate Correspondence, etc. (51 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), p. 481. This collection offers pertinent information relating to black soldiers and Norfolk during the Civil War; Mark Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary (New York: David McKay Co., 1959), p. 633; U.S. Department of War, American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, Preliminary and Final Reports, transcripts of proceedings and of testimony taken, and other records of the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission; 1863-64, (Record Group 94, File 328 0 1863), p. 11; Barney, p. 6; Eleanor Shipp Johnson, compiler, Norfolk: Its Historical Features (Norfolk, Virginia: Nusbaum Book and News, 1904), p. 18.

³⁰ Chambers, p. 132.

Ironically, not all of Norfolk's blacks were overjoyed with the Union's victory over the CSS Virginia, or the occupation of the city. A slave married to Betsy Fuller, a free black huckstress, was apparently content with his servitude: at the beginning of the war he reportedly expressed his secessionist views quite ardently. When federal troops captured Norfolk, he was placed in a chain gang because of his pro-southern opinions. As strange as this may seem, cases such as this were not that unusual in the early years of the war because the Union objective was not as yet declared to be a war to end slavery.³¹

"Father Dick Parker,"³² a sixty-four year old ex-slave who was a preacher in Norfolk for forty years, in 1868 related a story to H.C. Percy, Norfolk's superintendent of black schools, about the day federal troops marched into Norfolk. On the night of that memorable day, black men, women, and children stopped working and walked the streets of Norfolk. The women threw up their arms and shouted, "'O Lord! Too good

³¹ Negro in Virginia, p. 123.

³² Richard H. Parker was age fifty-eight at the time of his interview with AMA missionary S.F. Goodell on February 26, 1866. Born a slave in Little York, Virginia in 1808, Father Parker had been a Methodist preacher for thirty-eight years. After being sold away from his mother at a young age, he came to live in Norfolk with the first of five masters. It was while in Norfolk under the guidance of his master's daughter that he learned to read and write. Father Parker was also a slave accustomed to hiring out his own time. John Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), pp. 465-66.

to be true! Bless the Lord! No more hand-cuffin' the children now! God bless Abraham Lincoln!"³³ Father Parker recalled that the blacks walked the streets even past curfew.³⁴ Although many of Norfolk's police tried to stop them, Union officers told the blacks they could walk all night with impunity. Father Parker also remembered that many of the rebels fled when they found out the Union army was about to enter the city. As things settled down, General Wool issued an order for blacks to observe a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to the Lord for all that was done on their behalf, which they did most gladly. On the appointed day, the sunrise services in all the black churches were fully attended.³⁵

After the services, five thousand blacks gathered together for a procession through the streets of Norfolk. Father Parker rode in the middle of the procession in a fine carriage with four black horses while a band played just ahead of him and the Union flag flew overhead. Upon reaching the place where General Wool awaited the procession, the crowd gathered around while Father Parker made a little speech and Wool followed with the main address that was well-received by the crowd. The people then dispersed, whereupon bonfires were

³³ American Missionary 12 (April 1868), p. 169.

³⁴ Norfolk had an old slave law requiring that all blacks--free or bond--be indoors by 9 p.m. under penalty of immediate arrest by any white person and the receipt of ten lashes and a fifty cents fine, *Ibid.*, p. 169.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

lit, and guns, bells, and tin horns sounded all night long in celebration.³⁶

Shortly afterwards, Father Parker desired to make a trip to Washington, D.C. Although Norfolk was an occupied city as of May 10, 1862, it was still unlawful for a slave to leave town without a pass signed by his master and the Mayor of Norfolk. Father Parker's master did not want him to go to D.C. and told Parker that he, the master, would die before he ever got a chance to go. Parker's master died about a month after making that statement, and Father Parker was able to leave. Upon reaching the capital, Father Parker joined a committee of black men gathered from different states to call on President Lincoln who graciously received them. Parker was struck by the sight of Lincoln who resembled a plain but kind farmer. As soon as they entered, Lincoln got up and welcomed them heartily, offering them seats. Lincoln then asked them not to be in such a hurry to get their rights. He said they would eventually get all their rights as soon as they were prepared for them.³⁷ Although the records do not discuss Father Parker's reactions to Lincoln's statements, it is certain that many of those in attendance were educated free blacks who took offense at being told to wait and be patient. As the years passed, newspapers, diaries, and first-hand accounts documented how many did not take Lincoln's advice.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 171-172.

Instead, freemen and freedmen alike continued to agitate for full equality.

With the fall of Norfolk, Union lines extended to add ten thousand blacks to the five thousand already under Union control in Hampton. The night of Norfolk's capture, with Union troops stationed in Hampton and Norfolk and with its fleet held back from entering Norfolk's harbor, the crew of the CSS Virginia set fire to their own ship and retreated behind Confederate lines. The next day May 12, General Wool appointed Brigadier General Egbert L. Viele the Military Governor of Norfolk. To assist Union commanders such as Wool and Viele to handle the tense situation involving runaway slaves, Congress took a more decisive stance with the Second Confiscation Act, in July 1862, providing freedom for slaves escaping from their rebel owners. Concurrently, Congress authorized President Lincoln to accept free blacks into government service, thereby hastening slave defection.³⁸

The Confederacy did not take Union actions with regard to blacks--both free and bond--lightly. In 1862, the Confederate Congress passed several resolutions condemning the Confiscation Acts and declaring that "the separation between the North and South [was] final and eternal, and whatsoever reverence for the Union may have lingered for a time in some minds, [has] been entirely dissipated by the cruel, rapacious,

³⁸ Gerteis, pp. 22-23.

and atrocious conduct of our enemies."³⁹ With the stroke of a pen the Confederacy doomed any possible chance for victory. For its stance, combined with military and diplomatic considerations, convinced Lincoln that his moderation on the subject of slavery would not persuade the Confederacy to lay down its arms.⁴⁰

In July 1862, Lincoln met with representatives from the border states still loyal to the Union, informing them that a "larger, harder, longer war was needed, and [that he] had to rally men who had iron in them, the men who were ready to be wholly immoderate in their backing of the Union cause."⁴¹ On July 22 Lincoln met with his cabinet to present a certain paper which, he insisted, required no advice since his mind had already been made up. Lincoln said that he was looking for comments as to what he should do to prepare for what was coming. That paper was the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.⁴²

Some of the cabinet members were taken aback by this radical change in policy. For Lincoln, in fact, was calling upon the slave to help save the Union. Lincoln explained that

³⁹ June P. Guild, Black Laws of Virginia: A Summary of the Legislative Acts of Virginia Concerning Negroes from Earliest Times to the Present (New York: Negro University Press, 1936), pp. 216-217.

⁴⁰ Edgar A. Toppin, "Emancipation Reconsidered," Negro History Bulletin 26 (May 1965), p. 235.

⁴¹ Catton, p. 364.

⁴² Ibid., p. 365.

he believed emancipation was "a military necessity absolutely essential to the salvation of the Union."⁴³ Secretary of State William Seward, however, urged Lincoln to disguise the real intent of this proclamation by withholding it until the Union won a decisive military victory. Lincoln agreed with Seward's reservations and awaited a change in events--never betraying his future intentions until the moment was ripe.⁴⁴ A few days later, Lincoln reiterated his determination to issue the proclamation by commenting, "we had about played our last card, and must change our tactics or lose the war."⁴⁵

While Lincoln was contemplating the fate of blacks in the course of the war, General Viele was affecting the lives of all of Norfolk's citizens. Because of the antagonistic behavior of Norfolk's whites and the potential of violence between the rebels and Unionists, in September 1862, Viele declared all municipal elections canceled and imposed martial law.⁴⁶ Many whites believed the rebel forces would eventually

⁴³ Ibid., p. 367.

⁴⁴ Toppin, p. 235; Catton, p. 367.

⁴⁵ Catton, p. 365.

⁴⁶ On August 16th, General Orders No. 109 from E.D. Townsend, Adjutant General in the War Department, declared that the military commanders in Virginia, South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas could seize and utilize any property they deemed necessary for supplies or military purposes. Further, the commanders were authorized to destroy any property that could be used militarily by the Confederacy and to employ blacks as military laborers with remuneration. Charles Wesley and

retake Norfolk, and as a result, the rebels were openly demonstrating their sympathies. Viele's policies did nothing to allay the belief that Norfolk would be regained. He was frequently accused by Unionists of sympathizing with the rebels because of his lenient policies. Rebels were allowed to congregate freely along the streets and demonstrate their secessionist sympathies, blacks were still treated as slaves or as second-class citizens, and black migrants to the area were herded like cattle onto Craney Island.⁴⁷

On September 17, 1862, changes came with the Battle of Antietam. Although not as decisive a victory as Lincoln had hoped to have prior to issuing the preliminary Proclamation, it was a victory nonetheless. McClellan succeeded in checking Lee's offensive by pushing him south of the Potomac, back into Virginia. The North went wild with the news, and Lincoln decided it was time to make his move.⁴⁸

On September 22, 1862, Lincoln issued his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. By September 23, the document had appeared in Washington, New York, Boston, and Cincinnati newspapers. Within a week, news of the Proclamation had spread to all regions of the North and South. Aside from the

Patricia Romero, Negro Americans in the Civil War: From Slavery to Citizenship (New York: Publishers Co., Inc., 1967, 1968), p. 65.

⁴⁷ New York Times, June 26, 1862, p. 2.

⁴⁸ John Hope Franklin, The Emancipation Proclamation (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1963), p. 46.

expected condemnation of the Proclamation by the Confederacy, the initial reaction was favorable.⁴⁹ Despite some criticism, much of the Northern press was elated by the Proclamation and proclaimed that the "Year of Jubilee" finally had come.⁵⁰

In 1936, Charles Grandy was one of many former slaves interviewed from the Norfolk area who remembered events surrounding the Emancipation Proclamation.⁵¹ Born in 1842, Grandy lived in Norfolk and was approximately twenty years of age at the time the Emancipation Proclamation was signed. He recalled how happy slaves were on Emancipation Day and the song they sang:

⁴⁹ Philip Foner, ed., The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass, vol. 3: The Civil War, 1861-1865 (5 vols., New York: International Publishers, 1954), p. 27. Frederick Douglass and other abolitionist leaders initially were enthusiastic, but as weeks passed, fear that Lincoln would never sign the final draft emerged. William Garrison's newspaper, The Liberator, published the complete text of the Proclamation on September 26, but noted that the Proclamation did not go far enough in proclaiming emancipation for all blacks, not just those in the states currently in rebellion. The Liberator, September 26, 1862, p. 154.

⁵⁰ The Liberator, October 3, 1862, p. 158. A purview of northern newspapers jubilant over the Emancipation Proclamation were the Washington Republican, Philadelphia North American, Cincinnati Commercial, Cleveland Herald, Hartford Courant, Chicago Tribune, and the Boston Journal.

⁵¹ Oral histories are the main source providing a great deal of the available information on the thoughts and feelings of black civilians and soldiers present prior to and following the issuing of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. One such source was compiled in 1936 by an all-black unit of the Virginia Writers' Project which began interviewing ex-slaves. The majority of those interviewed were between the ages of six and thirty at the end of the Civil War in 1865. Several ex-slaves interviewed, including Charles Grandy, were from the Norfolk-Hampton area during 1862-1863 and remembered events surrounding the Emancipation Proclamation.

Chorus Slavery chain is broke at las'
 Broke at las', broke at las'
 Slavery chain is broke at las'
 Praise God 'till I die.

Verse Come along valiant souls
 Git yo' words all ready
 Ma'ch wid General thoo de fiel'
 Dis ole chatterin groun'
 Oh! Slavery chain is ...⁵²

Uncle Moble Hobson, born in 1852, was about ten years old in 1863. He remembered how "de blacks is singin' an' prayin' an' shoutin' fo' joy cause Marse Lincoln done set em free."⁵³ Susie Melton had similar memories of 1863 at the age of ten. Melton recalled that night of freedom when she heard news in Williamsburg that President Lincoln was going to free the slaves. She was so excited that, although it was the dead of winter, she and the other slaves prepared to leave. Miss Melton said that she "didn't care nothin' 'bout Missus--was goin' to de Union lines. An' all dat night de niggers danced an' sang right out in de cold."⁵⁴

Events in Norfolk and Hampton seemed paradoxical in light of the general feelings of jubilation. While many--mainly blacks--celebrated the coming of emancipation, their actual physical plight, made worse by the severe winter, dampened

⁵² Charles Grandy was a cook in the army during the war, although he saw no fighting. After serving his time in the army, Grandy enlisted in the navy as a first-class boy on the U.S.S. Lawrence. In 1866, Grandy got a job digging out Norfolk harbor at \$1.25 a day. Weevils in the Wheat, pp. 114-118.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 143-144.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 212-213.

many spirits. Army recruiters found that their efforts with a local militia recruitment policy in Hampton were hindered because many blacks preferred to continue earning good wages as military laborers rather than enlist as soldiers. From August 1862 onward, Union commanders engaged in impressment raids on black communities in and around the Hampton Roads area. Consequently, captured blacks were dragged away into Union camps and ordered to enlist.⁵⁵ But impressment was not the only tragedy suffered by the black contrabands. With the burning of Hampton village by Confederate forces and the large numbers of escaped slaves flocking to the area, blacks were left without adequate food, clothing, or housing and suffered considerably during the fall and winter months.⁵⁶

Events in Hampton and Norfolk during the spring and summer of 1862 reflected the general dissatisfaction among blacks under federal jurisdiction in the occupied South. Many blacks refused to establish homesteads on abandoned lands for fear that the South was about to win, thus restoring slavery to the area. Blacks were also disappointed that the Union Army treated them as badly as the Confederates. General Viele organized the enrollment of free black males, totalling 175, to assist the fire department in the reduction of fires. It

⁵⁵ Ira Berlin, Joseph Reidy, and Leslie Rowland, eds., Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 115; Engs, p. 41.

⁵⁶ The Liberator, November 21, 1862, p. 187.

was also Viele who began recruiting and organizing blacks into garrisons, and then using them in expeditions and garrison duties.⁵⁷

Additionally, all civil courts in Norfolk were suspended, and the provost marshal courts, with Captain John A. Boles serving as provost judge, were instituted to try all misdemeanors and disloyalty cases (capital cases were remanded to military commissions). Many of the homes abandoned by the fleeing Confederates were confiscated by the occupying federal armies. Others were confiscated from active Confederates still living in the city.⁵⁸ General Viele decided to punish the white people of Norfolk by refusing to have any intercourse with them because of the Mayor's and members of the City Council's continued refusal to take the oath of allegiance.⁵⁹

Despite the problems in the months prior to the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, blacks in Norfolk were extremely excited and initiated proceedings for a grand celebration. Black leaders held a series of church meetings in preparation for the celebration and invited suggestions

⁵⁷ Engs, pp. 35-36; W.H.T. Squires, Through the Years in Norfolk (Norfolk, VA: Norfolk Advertising Board for the Tri-Centennial of New Norfolk County and the Bi-Centennial of Norfolk's Borough, 1936), p. 50.

⁵⁸ Kenneth Schwartz, "Ben Butler and the Occupation of Norfolk, 1862-1865: A Reappraisal," M.A. Thesis, ODU, 1972, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁹ New York Times, May 25, 1862, p. 5.

from several northern whites and Union army officers. They also obtained consent for a January 1 parade and a detail of troops to accompany the procession from General Viele's office to St. John's A.M.E. Church.⁶⁰

Being in Union-occupied territory, it was not difficult for blacks in Hampton and Norfolk to hear of the Preliminary Proclamation. It is probably safe to assume that many blacks took only what they wanted from the Proclamation because of the jubilation with which it was received among them in Norfolk and nationwide. Many years later, Joseph T. Wilson, a native of Norfolk and a black abolitionist, wrote that most black slaves knew the Proclamation would not make them free so long as they were held by their masters and remained behind Confederate lines. Wilson thus argued that the motivation behind many slaves choosing to flee and seek refuge behind Union lines was to protect the Union's promise of freedom until legalized by the course of the war.⁶¹

First-hand accounts in Norfolk and throughout much of the South seem to bear out Wilson's assertions as to the attitude of blacks. Most blacks, it seems, focused on the anti-slavery aspect of the Proclamation while ignoring its limitations,

⁶⁰ Thomas F. Paige, Twenty-two Years of Freedom: An Account of the Emancipation Celebration by the Freedmen of Norfolk, Virginia, and the Vicinity, on the First Day of January, 1885, Including the Literary Exercises, Oration, Poem, Review, Etc., introduction by Joseph T. Wilson (Norfolk, VA: Barron's Presses and Bindery, 1885), p. 9.

⁶¹ Wilson, Emancipation, p. 73.

such as the fact that it affected only those areas in rebellion, while excluding places such as Norfolk that were Union-occupied.⁶² Perhaps many blacks saw the Proclamation as inaugurating a new stage of war that would seal the doom of slavery. In any case, in 1862, blacks in Norfolk and across the nation prepared celebrations for the signing of the final draft of the Emancipation Proclamation.

On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, thus changing the war from a constitutional struggle to a crusade for human liberty. In this final draft of the Proclamation, however, no mention was made of compensation or colonization, in contrast to the Preliminary Proclamation. Of course, the Emancipation Proclamation was not issued for constitutional or legal purposes, but rather for military purposes: the survival and eventual victory of the Union government.⁶³

In Norfolk, blacks celebrated the Proclamation with one of the largest parades in the nation. A New York Times article titled, "News from Fortress Monroe. Excitement in Norfolk--4,000 Negroes in Procession, Celebrating the Advent

⁶² Benjamin Quarles, Lincoln and the Negro (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 148.

⁶³ Franklin, The Emancipation Proclamation, p. 103; Roy Basler, ed., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, vol. 6 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955), pp. 24, 29-30, 428. This collection was extremely valuable, containing letters and writings of Lincoln's views, opinions, and policies, especially as they related to the Emancipation Proclamation and the nation's black population.

of Freedom," reflected the black sentiment in the Norfolk area towards the Proclamation.

Considerable excitement was created in Norfolk, to-day, by a negro celebration. The contrabands collected together, with their marshals, formed a procession consisting of at least 4,000 negroes of all kinds of colors, headed by a band of music (drums and fifes) and paraded through the principal streets of the city. They carried several Union flags, and cheered loudly for the downfall of African slavery.

It was understood that they were celebrating the birthday of the Emancipation Proclamation.⁶⁴

Five hundred black soldiers accompanied the parade. The procession marched from Market Street to Dr. William Selden's residence (then occupied by General Viele), located on the corner of Botetourt and Freemason streets, where General Viele made an address to the crowd. Afterwards, the parade continued to the Fair Grounds (located on 18th and Church streets) where the celebration concluded with the burning and burial of a Jefferson Davis effigy in a nearby cemetery. Norfolk's whites were outraged by this celebration but could do nothing to suppress it because of the presence of armed black Union soldiers and the strict martial law governing the area.⁶⁵

Jefferson Davis, however, issued his own Proclamation the

⁶⁴ New York Times, January 4, 1863, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Wertebaker, pp. 220-221; Squires, Through the Years, p. 51.

day after Lincoln's, declaring that any blacks captured in Union uniform would be "speedily and painfully" put to death. This would mean, as The Liberator asserted, that the Rebel Confederacy proposed to meet the policy of Emancipation by "inaugurating a wholesale murder of prisoners."⁶⁶ History attests that Davis was serious in calling for the murder of any blacks found in Union uniform. Since black troops participated in nearly every battle between 1863 and 1865, the Rebels had ample opportunity to carry out Davis's threat--and unfortunately many did. Examples such as the Fort Pillow massacre provide evidence that Davis's call for the wholesale murder of blacks was implemented. Of the 200,000 black troops serving in the Union forces, 68,178 were killed. Thus blacks suffered a casualty rate 40% higher than that of white Union soldiers.⁶⁷

Some immediate good did come out of the Proclamation. In Norfolk and Hampton the Proclamation improved the military's treatment of blacks. Now that blacks in designated regions of the South were officially free, the government established the Bureau of Negro Affairs in the War Department to determine how blacks were to be treated. The Proclamation also affected the military enlistment machinery. The office of the Adjutant

⁶⁶ The Liberator, January 2, 1863, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Robert Mullen, Blacks in America's Wars (New York: Monad Press, 1973), pp. 22-23; Toppin, p. 236.

General established the Bureau of Colored Troops⁶⁸ to recruit blacks in the northern and southern states into segregated units. Recruiting posters quickly circulated, calling for the enlistment of black soldiers.⁶⁹

White southerners reacted harshly to the organization of black units because of their historically intense fear of a slave revolt. Consequently, the sight of black men bearing arms produced a blinding hatred among white southerners towards black troops and their northern officers. Nowhere was this more true than in Norfolk as the summer of 1863 was to prove. On May 1, 1863, the Confederate Congress authorized a retaliation against officers leading black troops or black troops themselves. In June and July, reports abounded of black soldiers' and white officers' executions. Those blacks not executed by Confederates were enslaved. These actions prompted Lincoln to issue General Order 100⁷⁰ which promised

⁶⁸ The Bureau of Colored Troops was established as part of the Adjutant General's Office of the War Department on May 22, 1863 for the purpose of organizing black troops, Long, p. 327. Interestingly, it was Butler who first stated that he believed blacks should be organized as federal troops, Jessie Marshall, ed., Private and Official Correspondence of General Benjamin F. Butler During the Period of the Civil War (5 vols., Norwood, MA: Plimpton Press, 1917), vol. 3, p. 181. This collection is a gold mine of insight into Butler's dealings with black and white civilians, black troops, and Union Army personnel in Norfolk and Hampton between 1862 and 1868. Hereafter cited as Butler Correspondence.

⁶⁹ Engs, p. 36; Franklin, The Emancipation Proclamation, pp. 129-130.

⁷⁰ Issued on April 24, 1863, General Order 100 declared blacks under federal jurisdiction free men and therefore afforded the same rights and protection as any other citizen.

federal retaliation against any atrocities committed against its soldiers because of color. The immediate result of this policy was a breakdown in the exchange of prisoners.⁷¹

After the Conscription Act of 1863 was passed, recruiting agents from all over the North flocked to Norfolk. The Act required every able-bodied male in Union territory between the ages of twenty and forty to enlist.⁷² Initially, black regiments were accepted in 1863 and started as state units with the exception of two Massachusetts regiments which recruited black men throughout the nation. On July 18, 1863, with Lincoln's approval, Congress authorized the enlistment of black troops in areas occupied by Union forces throughout the South at ten dollars per month with three dollars to be set

If their rights as prisoners of war were violated, the order promised swift retaliation. See Dudley Cornish, The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1956, 1966). p. 166.

⁷¹ The prisoner exchange was resumed only in the last few months of the war because the excessive numbers of Confederate prisoners proved too burdensome for the Union army. Cornish, pp. 158, 160-61, 163, 166, 168, 172.

⁷² The era of the Civil War was still the age of the gentleman. Consequently, the government made provision for the wealthy to avoid the draft. With each military district being required to provide a certain quota of soldiers, paying for a substitute became commonplace. When black soldiers became so plentiful, many whites drafted in northern states began going to the border states and Union-occupied territories in hopes of enlisting blacks as substitutes. Tommy Lee Bogger, "The Slave and the Free Black Community in Norfolk, 1775-1865," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1976), pp. 299-300.

aside for clothing.⁷³ In August, Secretary Stanton authorized the commander of the southern department to receive black soldiers as guards for plantations and settlements. By the spring of 1864, all the black regiments were eventually mustered into federal service under the banner U.S. Colored Troops. By the end of the war, 134 black regiments served in the Union army.⁷⁴

In June 1863, General Viele reestablished civil government in Norfolk and Portsmouth. The secessionists resisted its establishment, however, because of the requirement that all parties instituting a civil suit or engaging in business must take an oath of allegiance to the federal government.⁷⁵ As one might have expected, this, combined with the formal establishment of black schools, the confiscation of goods, houses, strict curfew laws, and the imprisonment of disloyal whites by the black provost guards, upset a good many whites and thereby raised racial and

⁷³ Sec. Stanton asked War Department solicitor William Whiting what pay rates should be remunerated to black soldiers once the Bureau of Colored Troops was formed. Whiting suggested blacks be paid as laborers rather than as soldiers. This suggestion was formally adopted in General Order No. 163 on June 4, 1863. Undaunted by the discriminatory pay scale, many blacks eagerly enlisted to defend the Union against the rebels. Charles Wesley and Patricia Romero, Negro Americans in the Civil War, pp. 97-98; E.B. and Barbara Long, The Civil War Day By Day: An Almanac, 1861-1865 (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1971), p. 255.

⁷⁴ John Mahon and Romana Danysh, Army Lineage Series, Infantry Part I: Regular Army (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1972), p. 26.

⁷⁵ Butler Correspondence, vol. 3, p. 282.

sectional tensions to new heights. All that was needed for an explosion was for a minor incident to get out of hand. One such incident in the summer of 1863 almost did.

The Wright-Sanborn case of June 17, 1863, clearly revealed the resentment by Norfolk's whites towards the presence of black troops. Lieutenant Anson Sanborn, a white Union soldier, was leading a detachment of black troops through Norfolk when David Wright, a white physician, called out to him in a disrespectful manner. Since any insults directed at Union soldiers were deemed illegal, Sanborn arrested Wright. But Wright, refusing to be arrested by a Union soldier, shot and killed Sanborn. Asked to explain his actions, Wright said that he experienced a desperate and unconquerable impulse to lash out at the sight of black troops.⁷⁶ Wright was subsequently convicted and executed on October 23, 1863, by a military tribunal. During the trial, rioting between Norfolk's blacks and whites occurred.⁷⁷ Even President Lincoln involved himself in the case as evidenced by a letter addressed to Major General John B. Foster on August 3, 1863, in which Lincoln ordered that "if Dr. Wright, on trial at Norfolk, has been, or shall be convicted, send me a

⁷⁶ For a thorough examination of the Wright-Sanborn case, see Ervin L. Jordan Jr., "A Painful Case: The Wright-Sanborn Incident in Norfolk, Virginia, July-October, 1863," (M.A. Thesis, Old Dominion University, 1977), p. 42.

⁷⁷ Wertenbaker, pp. 220-222; W.H.T. Squires, Through the Years in Norfolk, pp. 50-51; Lenoir Chambers, "Notes on Life," pp. 142-143.

transcript of his trial and conviction, and do not let execution be done upon him, until my further order."⁷⁸ No records exist that Lincoln took any further actions, and only the execution of Wright eased tensions in Norfolk.

On October 28, 1863, General Butler was reassigned as the commander of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, and none too soon for the blacks. Upon taking command at Fortress Monroe and Norfolk on November 11, 1863, Butler issued a series of orders designed to improve conditions in the area that he felt had deteriorated under General Viele. He was particularly upset at the laxity of federal forces in allowing whites openly to show hostility towards Union soldiers, their officers, and blacks.⁷⁹ Consequently, Butler removed all Confederate sympathizers from office and placed a tax on all merchandise entering the district, with the resulting revenue to be used to restore city services, such as street maintenance and the gas works. His goal was to control all trade within his command. In doing so, Butler could grant exclusive trading privileges to those whites living in the occupied territories. He knew that loyalty could not be fostered with a bayonet; thus he used business as a carrot to

⁷⁸ General Foster was in command of the military department at Fort Monroe. See Basler, vol. 6, p. 362.

⁷⁹ Upon assuming command, General Butler revamped the city's police and sanitation departments, provided for schools and fairer treatment in the courts for blacks, and insured that all Norfolk's citizens received proper health care, relief, fire protection and street lighting. Schwartz, p. 47.

draw whites to take the oath of allegiance.⁸⁰

There were approximately 64,000 blacks within the limits of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina by the end of 1863. Despite these numbers, Viele did not see the necessity of adopting a comprehensive plan for the management and care of the blacks whose numbers were in a constant state of flux. Upon Butler's arrival in the area, he immediately put a plan into action removing the refugees, many of whom were herded together like cattle on Craney Island, to the abandoned farms in the area. Many blacks in Norfolk were employed in the army's various staff departments (i.e., the Quartermaster Department, the Chiefs of Ordinance Department, the Medical Bureau, the Engineer's Department).⁸¹

Butler also began employing freedmen as laborers the moment they came within Union lines. He desired that the freedmen be given the chance to stand on their own feet rather than remain paupers on government farms. This eagerness to employ freedmen as laborers, however, became a hindrance to Butler's efforts to speed enlistment. Freedmen earned higher wages as military laborers than they did as soldiers. To resolve this dilemma, Butler issued General Order No. 46 ordering each soldier and officer to assist in the recruitment of black troops. Some became overzealous in carrying out that

⁸⁰ Fahlman, et. al., p. 75; Burton, p. 86; Schwartz, pp. 47, 69, 105.

⁸¹ New York Times, May 7, 1864, p. 2.

order. The ire of the black community, northern missionaries, and the Quartermasters' Department was aroused when reports came in that men were being dragged away from their jobs and families and forced to join the army.⁸²

H.S. Beals, a northern missionary based in Portsmouth, wrote Butler on December 10, 1863, that soldiers stationed at Craney Island, under the command of Colonel John A. Nelson, were daily arresting black men in Norfolk and Portsmouth "for the purpose of compelling them to volunteer in the U.S. service."⁸³ John Banks from Parrish Farm near Newport News made a sworn statement before an army judge advocate that he had been taken away by a group of black soldiers under orders to take all black men and enlist them in the army. Mr. Banks was taken to Craney Island where he heard stories of how blacks were punished if they refused to enlist, and he was detailed for duty in Norfolk's Quartermaster's Department for five days. Butler ordered that Col. Nelson be dismissed from the army because of his impressment policies. Although Lincoln refused to approve the dismissal, the War Department took over the matter and carried it out in defiance of Lincoln.⁸⁴

Butler's work was further hindered by the tremendous degree of prejudice among the department's white troops. Many

⁸² Berlin, Freedom, vol. 2, p. 115; Chambers, p. 141.

⁸³ Chambers, p. 139.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 139-140.

interfered in the recruitment process until Butler issued a general warning that an investigation and punishment would be forthcoming if anyone mistreated black troops in his department. Thus, Butler became the freedmen's protector, swiftly punishing any who opposed him.⁸⁵

Despite these obstacles, Butler assembled eight hundred black men as the Tenth U.S. Colored Volunteers at Norfolk by the middle of November and placed them under the command of Colonel Edward A. Wild, a northern abolitionist. These troops were recruited to serve two purposes: to engage the enemy in combat and to seek out slaves and draw them into their advancing line. When two columns of cavalry and additional artillery were added, these men left for raids in North Carolina. The unit returned with 2,500 men (700 more than they started with), distinguished themselves in fighting and military ability, and conducted themselves with all propriety. By 1864, Wild and his men had secured Princess Anne and Norfolk counties from rebel infiltration and freed thousands of slaves.⁸⁶

The First Colored Cavalry was formed at Camp Hamilton under the command of Lt. Colonel Albert N. Seip on December 22, 1863. Consisting of 1,170 men with Companies A to L, the First Colored Cavalry included seventy-seven men who were natives of Norfolk. Ranging in age from eighteen to forty-

⁸⁵ Butler Correspondence, vol. 3, pp. 269-270

⁸⁶ Wesley, p. 64; Squires, Through the Years, p. 53.

five, the men of the First were primarily farmers and laborers prior to their enlistment. The First Cavalry was involved with fighting at Cabin Point, Ft. Pocahontas, Bermuda Hundreds, Wilson's Landing, Smithfield, and Powhatan. Upon completion of their mission, the First Cavalry returned to the Tidewater area until June 1865, whereupon they were transferred to Texas to serve in the Rio Grande area because of the fear of U.S. hostilities with Mexico. Eventually, the troops were mustered out of service in February 1866.⁸⁷

The Second U.S. Colored Cavalry, organized on December 22, 1863, under the command of Brevet Brigadier General George W. Cole, enlisted 1,162 recruits in Companies A to M at Fortress Monroe. Forty-seven men were listed as natives of Norfolk with ages and occupations similar to those in the First. Both these regiments were deployed to Fortress Monroe and Williamsburg until May 1864 because of intelligence reports that the enemy was making extensive preparations from Petersburg and Richmond to capture Norfolk (a short time prior to the Confederates' preparations, the Union forces cut the railroad lines linking Richmond and Petersburg). This planned

⁸⁷ Paquette, pp. 19-20; Joseph T. Wilson, The Black Phalanx: A History of the Negro Soldiers of the United States in the Wars of 1775-1812, 1861-1865 (Hartford: American Publishing Co., 1890; New York: Arno Press & the New York Times, 1986), p. 464; War of the Rebellion, series I, vol. 33, p. 681; William Paquette, compiler, United States Colored Troops from Lower Tidewater in the Civil War (Portsmouth, Virginia: Portsmouth Public Library, 1982) (hereafter cited as U.S. Colored Troops). For a more detailed account of the exploits of selected black soldiers from Norfolk, see Tommy Lee Bogger's Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 300-303.

attack was thus designed to coalesce the entire area under Confederate control. Miss L. Shepherd, a Norfolk white whose letter to a friend in one of the Confederate areas was intercepted, wrote that in April 1864 there was a tremendous commotion among the soldiers. According to Miss Shepherd, a great many soldiers were leaving the area and "seizing all the negroes under sixty-five years of age to work somewhere. There is a great fuss, but no one knows what is the matter." What Miss Shepherd was in fact seeing was the mobilization of troops initially to defend Norfolk against a rebel attack.⁸⁸ As it turned out, Norfolk was not attacked, but rather, battles raged in Petersburg and in the Richmond area. So from May 4-8, 1864, the First and Second Regiments were deployed in those areas. And like the First Regiment, the Second returned to the Tidewater area in June 1865 and transferred to Texas until they were mustered out in 1866.⁸⁹

George Cole was the Second Colored Cavalry's recruiting officer who worked diligently to enlist the black troops in a camp located between Hampton and Fortress Monroe. Keeping a diary of his life in the army, Cole wrote that he found the black men adapted so quickly to the idea of becoming soldiers that it did not take long before eighty-five men had been

⁸⁸ New Regime, April 26, 1864, p. 2.

⁸⁹ Horace Montgomery, A Union Officer's Recollections of the Negro as a Soldier (reprint from Pennsylvania History Quarterly Journal of the Pennsylvania Historical Association, 28 (April 1961)), p. 166; Paquette, pp. 19-20; U.S. Colored Troops.

recruited for each of the ten companies in the Second Regiment. Cole also found that the years of slavery made the men submissive and obedient soldiers who "accommodated themselves to the exactions of the service freely."⁹⁰ By the end of the sixty-day training period, the men were ready for battle.⁹¹

The Second Colored Cavalry did not disappoint the expectations of Cole. After distinguishing themselves in the Battle of New Market Heights in September 1864, the troops were transferred to Brazos Santiago, Texas, at the end of the war. There, a large part of the regiment was detailed to build the first railroads in west Texas running from Brazos to Brownsville. By February 1866, the men were mustered out of service with many returning home to Norfolk.⁹²

The Second U.S. Colored Light Artillery, Battery B, was organized under the command of Captain Francis C. Choate on January 8, 1864, at Fortress Monroe. Although only one person from Norfolk was recruited to serve in this 192-member unit which ranged in age from twenty-one to forty, a few veterans settled in the city at the conclusion of the war. As in the other regiments, most of those who enlisted were farmers and laborers. The Second Light Artillery served at Fortress

⁹⁰ Robert Dollard, Recollections of the Civil War and Going West to Grow up with the Country (Scotland, South Dakota: By the Author, 1906), p. 100.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 146, 152, 154.

Monroe, Portsmouth, and in duty stations along the James River. It also saw action at Wilson's Wharf and City Point. Additionally, the Second Light Artillery was engaged in battles at Richmond and Petersburg and in May 1865 was transferred to Texas.⁹³

The last three regiments formed in the Tidewater area, stationed in Norfolk and Portsmouth, and containing a number of men enlisted in Norfolk, were the Thirty-sixth, Thirty-seventh, and Thirty-eighth Regiments Colored Infantry. The Thirty-sixth was organized on February 8, 1864, under Lt. Colonel William Hart, and enlisted 1,074 men (twenty-six enlisted in Norfolk). The Thirty-seventh also was organized on February 8, 1864, under the command of Colonel Nathaniel Goff, and enlisted 1,203 men (thirty enlisted in Norfolk). The Thirty-eighth was organized on January 23, 1864, under the command of Colonel Robert W. Hall, with 1,307 enlistees (fifty-eight enlisted in Norfolk). All three regiments had enlistees whose ages ranged from fourteen to forty-five and who were primarily farmers or laborers. In the summer and fall of 1864, all three regiments were sent to participate in the siege operations in Petersburg, New Market Heights, and Richmond. The Thirty-sixth and the Thirty-eighth were part of Paine's Third Division of the Eighteenth Corps. It was the Thirty-sixth and Thirty-eighth regiments that had the

⁹³ Paquette, p. 20; The Black Phalanx, p. 466; U.S. Colored Troops.

privilege of participating in the fighting at Chaffin's Farm on September 29, 1864, and the Appomattox Campaign.⁹⁴

In keeping with the statistics of the army in general, the Thirty-sixth and Thirty-eighth's mortality rate (219 deaths out of 1,074 enlistees and 237 deaths out of 1,307 enlistees, respectively) resulted more from disease than from battle wounds. And they, like all the other regiments formed in Tidewater, were part of the Third Division of the Eighteenth Corps transferred to Texas in May 1865 to serve in the fighting along the Rio Grande. The Thirty-sixth was mustered out of service in October 1866. The Thirty-seventh was mustered out in February 1867, while the Thirty-eighth was mustered out in January 1867.⁹⁵

Cornelius Garner, a veteran of the 38th Regiment, told the story of his experiences in battle to a WPA interviewer on May 18, 1937. Garner was typical of many young black enlistees in Norfolk who came from different parts of the state or from surrounding out-of-state counties and found their way to Norfolk to serve in the Union Army. Garner was born on February 11, 1846, in St. Mary's County, Maryland, and

⁹⁴ Paquette, pp. 20-21; The Black Phalanx, pp. 469-70; U.S. Colored Troops.

⁹⁵ Paquette, pp. 20-21; forty-nine men from the Thirty-sixth regiment died from wounds incurred in battle whereas 170 died as a result of disease. For the Thirty-eighth regiment, those numbers were forty-three and 194, respectively. See William Fox, Regimental Losses in the American Civil War, 1861-1865 (Albany, N.Y.: Albany Publishing, 1889), pp. 55, 522.

came to Norfolk to enlist in the army in February 1864 at the age of eighteen. While serving in the 38th Regiment, Garner helped defeat the Confederate forces in the battle of Deep Bottom on the James River, on September 29, 1864, after he and his fellow recruits withstood seven attempts by the rebel army to break their line. And when Grant made his last charge on Lee at Petersburg, Garner's regiment was the first to be sent to Richmond to plant their colors at the capital in April 1865. Garner also remembered that he and his regiment were chosen to guard Richmond at the time of Lee's surrender. After the war, the men of the 38th Regiment were sent to Texas until 1867, whereupon most returned home to Norfolk.⁹⁶

Numerous times black troops individually and collectively distinguished themselves in battle and in behavior; yet, Union forces continued discriminatory practices common for that day. Black soldiers were enlisted into segregated, non-regular regiments and were given inferior weapons, lower pay (paid seven dollars per month regardless of rank while white enlistees were paid thirteen dollars per month plus a clothing allowance), and inferior medical care. Despite these inequities, blacks continued to enlist because the army provided economic and social opportunities otherwise closed to them. It was not until July 28, 1866, that Congress passed an act enabling blacks to serve in the regular peacetime army with equal pay (thirteen dollars per month, along with food,

⁹⁶ Weevils in the Wheat, pp. 102-103.

clothing, shelter, and job security).⁹⁷

Dividing up and tabulating the occupations of the black troops into categories, Paquette's compilation shows that clearly the majority of the enlistees could be categorized as agricultural workers (primarily farmers) followed by unskilled laborers. None of the enlistees, however, was listed as a professional or semi-professional [see Table 1].⁹⁸

The enlistment polls divided the men into categories of Black, Dark, and Mulatto. Of those enlisted in Norfolk, there were 134 men listed as Black. The most frequent recruiter of the Black enlistees was Captain Orlando Brown. The most frequently cited regiment was the First Colored Cavalry, Company H. The most common month of enlistment was December 1863. Thus, on an average, black enlistees were primarily farmers between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who enlisted in Norfolk County.⁹⁹

There were eighty-seven men classified as Dark, who were most frequently farmers between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. Their most frequent enlister was Colonel George Cole along with Lieutenant Horton who most frequently enlisted

⁹⁷ By August 1866, two black regiments, the Ninth and the Tenth U.S. Cavalry, were formed to fight the Indians in America's Indian war. Some of those troops were formed by individuals from Norfolk who proudly bore the name "Buffalo Soldiers". William Leckie, The Buffalo Soldiers (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), pp. 6-7, 9-10.

⁹⁸ U.S. Colored Troops.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

them into the 38th Infantry, Company G while in the City of Norfolk during the month of January of 1864.¹⁰⁰

TABLE 1
OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES OF BLACK TROOPS ENLISTED IN
NORFOLK¹⁰¹

Occupation	No.	Race (%)		Regiment	Company	Year of Enlistment	Age Range
		B	M				
Agricultural Workers	148	88	12	1st Cav. (37.3%)	H (24.6%)	1863 (53.4%)	18-25 (66.3%)
Skilled	5	60	40	1st Cav. (40%)	I (40%)	1863 (60%)	23-40 (100%)
Semi-Skilled	4	75	25	38th Reg (50%)	A (50%)	863-64 (100%)	23-28 (100%)
Un-Skilled	67	100	0	38th Reg (41.7%)	G (25%)	1864 (56.7%)	18-25 (61.3%)
Water-Related	13	46	53	1st Cav (72.7%)	K (4.5%)	1863 (53.8%)	32-40 (77%)
Domestic	25	80	20	2nd Cav (56.5%)	G (52.2%)	1863 (95.1%)	18-25 (44%)

Those forty men classified as Mulatto also most frequently were farmers between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. Their usual place of enlistment was Norfolk County during the month of December 1863. Their most common enlisters were Lieutenant Monroe and Lieutenant Hudson, who enlisted them in the First Colored Cavalry, Company I.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

According to William Paquette's compilation of Lower Tidewater blacks who served in the U.S. army during the Civil War, the majority of those enlisted in Norfolk were classified as farmers (followed closely by laborers) who were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five (59.8%). The average age was 25.37 years. The most common last names of these men were Smith (4.5%), Wilson (3.4%), and Johnson (3.4%), while the most common first names were James (8.6%), John (7.9%), and William (7.1%). And while a large percentage were enlisted in December (41%), in 1863 (33%), and by Captain O. Brown (23%), a small but significant number were enlisted in the 38th Regiment (21.8%) and at a camp in Norfolk County (24.8%).¹⁰³

According to the records, a total of 6,108 men comprised the five regiments discussed. From that number, 266 were listed as having enlisted from Norfolk. Only twenty-five men from the city of Norfolk, however, were cited as enlistees in one of the five regiments discussed. Interestingly, of those native Norfolkiens who served, eight were listed as holding the rank of corporal, three of sergeant, three died from enemy or friendly fire, and only one was listed as a deserter. An explanation for this high percentage of higher ranking enlisted men may be found in the fact that most of the men from Norfolk had the experience of independence--hiring out their services and providing their own food, clothing, and shelter--that slaves in the rural areas did not have. Also,

¹⁰³ Ibid.

most of the Norfolk men who served in these regiments were older, between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, followed by twenty-four percent who were between the ages of sixteen and nineteen, and sixteen percent who were between twenty-six and thirty. In keeping with the trend, 52% of Norfolk's enlistees were farmers and 28% were laborers (a common occupation for black males in Norfolk). The vast majority of Norfolkiens also enlisted in January 1864 (64%) and were placed in the Thirty-Eighth Infantry (92%).¹⁰⁴

Butler's concern over the fair treatment of black soldiers, whom he encouraged to enlist, extended to a variety of other activities that did not proceed without criticism and sometimes opposition. Butler's General Order 46 ordered that all blacks enlisting for three years be paid a ten dollar bounty for their and their families' immediate needs and that ten dollars be the monthly pay. The black troops' public image concerned Butler so much that he set out to eliminate all commanding officers who failed to conduct themselves properly before their men. There were repeated problems of public drunkenness among the white officers commanding black troops in the Tidewater area. As Butler wrote in a March 4, 1864, letter to Massachusetts Congressman Henry Wilson, "Drunken officers are the curse of our colored soldiers, and I will reform it in this Department if I can."¹⁰⁵ Butler was

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Bradley, p. 4; Nash, p. 184.

also determined to eliminate any discrimination against black troops by whites in the military, even if they were not in his command.¹⁰⁶ These and other actions in defense and protection of blacks endeared Butler to the thousands of blacks under his command.

As Butler's recruitment program met with increasing success, fear among Norfolk's white citizenry increased. Mr. F. Morton wrote a letter to Butler on December 4, 1864, pleading for protection from the black troops who, he and many local whites believed, were going to attack the helpless white women and children. In typical "Butlerian style," the General told Morton if the whites of the city simply behaved themselves, they might live to a ripe old age.¹⁰⁷ No matter how glib his comments, Butler was concerned that the black troops remain impeccable in their behavior and manner. Katie Wallace, a local white, wrote in her diary in 1864, that "two negro officers came up here, this morning, to enquire if we

¹⁰⁶ In March 1864, Captain J.K. Herbert addressed a most serious complaint to Butler about a Major H.O. Whittimore of the 30th Massachusetts Volunteers who remarked, while aboard the U.S. transport Mississippi traveling from New Orleans to New York, that he would never obey any commands from an officer of a black regiment. When a black regiment from Key West boarded the vessel, Whittimore ordered that they not be allowed to sleep in the vacant berths below deck, forcing them to sleep on deck and exposed to the elements. Enraged, Butler sent a note and copy of Herbert's letter to the Governor of Massachusetts, John Andrew, in hopes that Whittimore would be dismissed. It is unclear from the records examined whether Governor Andrew did in fact dismiss Whittimore. Butler Correspondence, vol. 3, pp. 565-567.

¹⁰⁷ Butler Correspondence, vol. 3, pp. 182-183.

had any complaints to make against the negroes."¹⁰⁸

Not one for cooperating with the enemy, Butler engendered considerable hostility from the white residents and the Union-designated Governor of Virginia, Francis Pierpont, who accused Butler of refusing to work with Norfolk's civil authorities. The accommodationist Pierpont believed that the enemy could be persuaded without coercion and saw Butler's actions as "high-handed interference" in civil matters.¹⁰⁹ Over Pierpont's objections, Butler continued to govern the area as he saw fit. And despite Pierpont's letter of complaint to Abraham Lincoln (and Butler's reply to Lincoln on the charges leveled against him), Pierpont's policies did not prevail. Between November 1863 and June 1864, Butler worked to reduce the effectiveness and importance of Norfolk's civil government. Butler eventually quieted all attacks by arranging a vote among local residents on June 20, 1864, to suspend the civil government and allow him even to arrest magistrates who refused to comply with the new military regulations and tried to enforce the suspended civil authority.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Eleanor and Charles Cross, ed., Child of Glencoe: Civil War Journal of Katie Darling Wallace (Chesapeake: Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, VA, 1983), p. 93.

¹⁰⁹ Schwartz, p. 127.

¹¹⁰ Fahlman, et. al., p. 75; Schwartz, pp. 50, 63, 127. For the Pierpont letter to Lincoln in which charges were level at Butler, as well as Butler's response to Lincoln, see Butler Correspondence, vol. 3, pp. 282-284, 450-456. Although Butler consulted Lincoln prior to taking a vote on whether to suspend the civil authority in Norfolk, Lincoln partially reversed his

A great friend to the freedmen and free blacks, Butler prosecuted any white who expressed rebellious sentiments. Butler ordered that any disrespectful language directed to or about a federal soldier was punishable by a fine or imprisonment. Butler then paid spies to report on sentiments expressed throughout the city. Butler even made life difficult for the white ministers who were notorious for preaching contempt for the federal government and its activities in Norfolk and for fostering an atmosphere of hatred towards blacks. Rather than making a display of his abhorrence for such attitudes, Butler chose to demonstrate his intolerance by example. Butler had the Reverend George D. Armstrong of Norfolk placed in solitary confinement at Fort Hatteras in North Carolina for preaching contempt for the federal government. Word quickly spread to Norfolk of this situation, and changes were soon seen.¹¹¹

Butler was also forced to seize the Norfolk Gas Company's plant because it refused to supply the gas necessary to light the city streets for six to eight months as a way of nonviolently refusing to cooperate with the federal authorities. Using thieves, deserters, and military

support as increasing pressure was brought to bear from Pierpont. Lincoln informed Butler that only military necessity justified the suspension of civil authority. He also warned Butler to keep accurate records "to show every item of money received and how expended." See Basler, vol. 7, p. 488.

¹¹¹ Fahlman, et. al., p. 75; Squires, Through the Years, p. 52.

prisoners, Butler formed prison gangs to clean up the streets of Norfolk which he described as one of the filthiest places he had ever seen. Butler also confiscated abandoned farms and placed black tenants on them to work, promoted public education by reorganizing the school system and instituting mandatory attendance for all children ages five to sixteen, and removed any minister or teacher who failed to take the oath of allegiance sincerely. By May 1864, almost every adult had taken the oath in Norfolk, although their loyalty was reported to be only skin deep.¹¹²

Conditions in Norfolk were desperate in 1864, not only because of the financial status of the city, but also because large numbers of free blacks from other counties and states poured into the city after the 1862 Union occupation. The city Alms House was filled to overflowing. Additionally, rations and clothing were issued daily, applying tremendous financial pressure on the already overextended budget of the federal government.¹¹³

In an April 30, 1864, letter to General Orlando Brown, Edward Murphy (U.S. Assistant Superintendent for Negro Affairs) described the extreme destitution of Norfolk's

¹¹² New York Times, January 10, 1864, p. 2; Fahlman, et. al., p. 75; Nash, pp. 185, 186; The New Regime, May 23, 1864, p. 2; Bogger, p. 292.

¹¹³ U.S., Department of War, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, M1048, roll 47 (Washington: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1977), p. 137. Hereafter cited as BRFAL.

blacks: "In different parts of the City they are huddled together in old Houses, in unhealthy Lanes and Alleys and in places where all kinds of sickness and disease exist."¹¹⁴ While Union Army officials attempted to remove many to the healthier surrounding county farms, most of the freedmen were averse to leaving for fear that they might miss a relative who wandered into the city looking for food and clothing. Murphy also discussed the large numbers of freedmen who were aged and infirm, thus requiring rations and clothing from the government. Although attempts were made to involve the civil authorities in their relief efforts, Murphy concurred that the city was near bankruptcy and unable to help the destitute and infirm.¹¹⁵

An outbreak of small pox did not help conditions in Norfolk during the month of April 1864. Not surprisingly, blacks were particularly affected by this disease, given their living conditions. The New Regime reported on April 26, 1864, ninety-seven cases of small pox currently under medical treatment at the Pest House in Norfolk. Out of this number, twenty cases were discharged while five, all black, died.¹¹⁶ Miss L. Shepherd recalled the small pox epidemic in her letter

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid,

¹¹⁶ The New Regime was a Union newspaper established by General Benjamin Butler in 1864. The newspaper's purpose was to present the news from the Union's position and to better relations between the Union authorities and the natives in Norfolk. Ibid; New Regime, April 17, 1864, p. 2.

to a relative on April 20. She said that "at the Pest House, white persons and negroes often occupy the same bed, which has increased the aversion to the place."¹¹⁷

To help foster a sense of unity and pride, Captain Orlando Brown, the Superintendent of Negro Affairs in the district,¹¹⁸ organized a ploughing match among the area's freedmen in March of 1864. Held on Baxter's farm No. 2, the event was well-attended by freedmen from the various government farms and helped promote a healthy spirit of emulation. Prizes of clocks, watches, and money were awarded to the winners,¹¹⁹ producing a sense of pride and accomplishment not only for the winners, but for those who attended the match as well.

While changes in the composition of the black population continued, conservative government leaders scrutinized Lincoln's colonization plan in March 1864, because of Norfolk's recent troubles with Butler's pro-black policies. Lincoln requested \$600,000 from Congress for the purpose of relocating freed blacks. According to Lincoln's report, in April 1863, 450 freed blacks left from the Fortress Monroe area to settle on the Ile a Vache (part of the Republic of

¹¹⁷ New Regime, April 26, 1864, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ General Order 46 provided that all business relating to blacks in the district would now emanate from the Superintendent of Negro Affairs' office headed by Captain Orlando Brown The New Regime, March 30, 1864, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ The New Regime, March 11, 1864, p. 2.

Haiti). Transported by steamer to Ile a Vache, the unfortunate blacks were the victims of the mismanaged company of Forbes and Tuckerman of New York. Aside from the comfortless journey to Haiti during which they suffered through an outbreak of smallpox, the immigrants reached the island where no proper accommodations were provided for their needs.¹²⁰

The New Regime reported that the debacle ended with the deaths of eighty-two blacks and the squandering of \$35,000 of the government's money. Lincoln ordered that the remaining 368 blacks be returned immediately. The lack of sympathy among many in the Union for blacks as human beings was reflected in the Washington Chronicle which cynically wrote that it hoped this situation "will teach us the folly of attempting to depopulate the country of its valuable labor."¹²¹

Later in 1864, the large numbers of freedmen, combined with the white secessionists and a large number of prejudiced white federal troops made for another explosive situation, similar to the Wright-Sanborn affair in June 1863. The New Regime reported a number of scuffles between black guards and white sailors stationed in Norfolk while their ships underwent

¹²⁰ New Regime, March 24, 1864, p. 2.

¹²¹ Lincoln's colonization plan had been reinstated early in 1864, with 450 of Hampton Roads' black community participating in the newly established plan. See the New Regime, March 24, 1864, p. 2 and March 25, 1864, p. 3.

repairs at the Navy Yard. On September 12, 1864, a fight broke out between a group of black guards and a drunken sailor who refused to obey the request of one of the guards. Other like incidents occurred, prompted by the drunkenness of the white sailors and their bitterness at having to take orders from blacks.¹²² A more serious incident occurred the following day, provoked by a black boy hitting one of the sailors in the back of the head with a brick. The sailors pursued the little boy through the streets of Norfolk, but with no luck. Finally, the black guards appeared and began to arrest those creating the greatest disturbance. As usual, the arrests were accompanied by a fierce struggle from the white sailors and shots being fired from the guards, resulting in the gathering of a large crowd of hostile whites. Despite these challenges, the guards were commended by Murphy for behaving well under the circumstances.¹²³

As if race relations were not tense enough, Norfolk was also beset with a large numbers of unemployed workers. The New Regime noted that hundreds of boys, recently out of slavery and wearing only rags, crowded Norfolk's streets. The editor thought this a tragedy and suggested that Marshal Sanders needed to take time to look into this matter and find employment for the idle young boys who "fill the air with

¹²² New Regime, September 14, 1864, p. 2.

¹²³ Ibid.

curses."¹²⁴ This situation was typical of the emancipation period when thousands of blacks chose to come and go as they pleased with impunity. The hostility from the whites was not surprising because the incident brought to their minds visions of race riots. This hostility also revealed white attitudes towards black idleness--the conviction that if blacks remained idle, trouble would certainly follow. The clashes between blacks and whites late in 1864 seemed to bear out this belief; however, there is such a thing as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The prejudice of many whites against blacks was such that the slightest spark could produce a conflagration. To help relieve the problem of black idleness, the Union Army issued General Order No. 46 which contained provisions allowing any black males refusing work to be compelled to work on fortifications.¹²⁵

Aside from these disturbances, Norfolk was temporarily free from turmoil as the year 1864 came to a close. The many changes and accomplishments in that period from 1861 to 1864, which amounted to a social revolution, explain why disturbances between blacks and whites occurred. History is replete with examples of American society's intolerance of social revolutions. Add to this intolerance racial prejudice, and Norfolk in the post-war years was an explosion waiting to happen. Most whites, in both the North and South, were

¹²⁴ New Regime, September 3, 1864, p. 2.

¹²⁵ New Regime, May 8, 1864, p. 2,

unaccustomed to and unprepared for blacks entering their world as equal partners with the same rights and privileges as any human being.

"The Poem"

Shout forth all ye people, from mountain to sea,
The fetters are burst, the captive is free,
The taskmaster's whip is forever laid by,
No agonized voices to Heaven now cry,
For Freedom is come.

No longer our foreheads are furrowed with care,
No longer our hearts are bowed down with despair,
No longer we pant, we weary, we thirst,
For the dark clouds of bondage to roll back and burst,
For Freedom is come.

The link once far sundered is welded once more.
And the sisterhood chain is as strong as before;
Despite the strong prejudice, bitterness, pride,
Truth over deception, triumphant will ride,
For Freedom is come.

In the darkness of Ignorance blindly we groped,
For the bright sun of Knowledge we scarcely had hoped;
But the light is now dawning, its rich gleam appears,
Though the clouds thick and dark, have hung o'er us
for years,
The sunlight is come.

M.E. Chapman¹

¹ This is an excerpt of an 1884 poem written by Miss M.E. Chapman, a Norfolk black, and read in honor of the twenty-second Emancipation Day celebration in Norfolk on January 1, 1885. Taken from Paige, Twenty-Two Years of Freedom, p. 51.

CHAPTER 2

THE MISSIONARIES

Robert Engs' Freedom's First Generation sees Hampton as the Tidewater area's focal point in southern race relations during the war and Reconstruction. Located directly across Hampton Roads from Norfolk, Hampton exerted tremendous influence on the course of events in Norfolk and the surrounding area during the early years of the war. Because Hampton was home of the original contraband camps and missionary field in Hampton Roads, it also became home of the regional headquarters of the Freedmen's Bureau and of Hampton Institute, Tidewater's first black teacher-training college.

At the onset of the war, many blacks from the Norfolk-Hampton area, primarily women, children, and the elderly--those who could not support themselves--sought refuge at Fortress Monroe. General Butler appealed to Washington for instructions as to how to deal with the care of these blacks. Washington's response was to send Treasury Secretary Edward Pierce, a white northern abolitionist, to supervise the manual labor of able-bodied blacks. As for those who could not support themselves, nothing was done. The bleak prospects for

the majority of area blacks, however, did not last long. By 1862, missionaries, sent primarily by the American Missionary Association, poured into the Norfolk area to assist in the education and provisioning of the poor and needy blacks.²

Lewis Tappan, treasurer of the American Missionary Association (AMA), avidly followed newspaper accounts of increasing numbers of contrabands at Fortress Monroe. Finally, on August 8, 1861, he wrote to General Butler commending Butler for his treatment of the contrabands and asking his advice on bringing them to the free states.³ Tappan reported that many people in the North wanted to relieve the suffering of the contrabands by helping them relocate and obtain employment in the North. Butler replied promptly that since there was considerable work in cultivating land in Virginia, it was not necessary to relocate them in the North. Tappan wrote Butler again on August 11 asking if a discreet and intelligent man could be given facilities, if sent, to preach to the contrabands and provide for their needs. In another letter dated August 21, 1861, from the Chaplain of the 1st Regiment N.Y.S. Volunteers located at Camp Butler, to the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) of New York City--a letter that found its way to the AMA--Chaplain P. Franklin Jones wrote that there was a tremendous need for

² Joe Richardson, Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), pp. 3-4.

³ Ibid.

workers at Fort Monroe. Many contrabands were in desperate need of religious instruction and provisions. Although he did find many among the blacks who were pious and educated, many more were destitute and desolate. He encouraged the YMCA to send workers to assist in educating and evangelizing the contrabands. Jones noted that a faithful missionary could be supported at a small expense and would find the work in Hampton a fruitful field. The Reverend Lewis C. Lockwood was commissioned as the AMA's first missionary to the freedmen for the next thirteen months, even though Butler said that the contrabands' needs were being taken care of by the government. Shortly after Lockwood's arrival, on September 3, 1861, General Wool became the new commander of Fortress Monroe.⁴

Lewis Lockwood wrote that immediately upon arriving at Fortress Monroe, he was cordially received by General Wool and Colonel John Butler,⁵ who were very appreciative of the enterprise he was about to undertake. Lockwood explained that he planned to teach the blacks how to read and write, to which the two officers had no objections. In fact, General Wool and Colonel Butler encouraged Lockwood to "bring on as many teachers as you please."⁶ There were others, such as the

⁴ Ibid., p. 4; American Missionary, Supplement 5 (October 1861), pp. 241-242; Engs, p. 30.

⁵ Colonel Butler was the brother of General Butler, American Missionary, Supplement 5 (October 1861), p. 242.

⁶ According to Reverend Lockwood's September 10, 1861 letter to Misterns Whipple, Jocelyn, and Tappan, there were 1500 contrabands at Fortress Monroe, American Missionary,

Reverend C.W. Denison, Chaplain of the Hospital at Fortress Monroe, who were also very happy at his arrival because Lockwood would now be able to assist the many contrabands assembled in the Hospital Chapel.⁷

On the second evening of his mission to the Hampton area, Lockwood was led to a long, low building outside the entrance of the Fortress by the sound of music. There he found a number of blacks assembled for a prayer meeting. The leader of the meeting was a brother in Christ by the name of Carey whose physical presence reminded Lockwood of Frederick Douglass and whose expressions and religious style he found very impressive. At the end of the meeting, Lockwood explained what his mission was to the area in and around Fortress Monroe. To his great joy, this declaration was met with tremendous gratitude and emotion because, as the contrabands exclaimed, their prayers had been answered; since the war began, they had been without a pastor.⁸

Supplement 5(October 1861), pp. 243, 245.

⁷ The sick were placed in the front of the Hospital Chapel while the blacks were placed in the rear. American Missionary 5 (October 1862), Supplement, p. 242.

⁸ Lockwood also had a chance to talk with Mr. Carey and found that he and other slaves were expecting God to undertake something for the slaves. Carey said that three years before the sky assumed a strange appearance and after he inquired of the Lord what it meant, God told him that it was a sign of the coming judgment on the land because of oppression. Carey said his convictions on this matter were laughed at until John Brown's raid. When Lincoln was elected, his master accused him of causing all the disturbance. The church that Carey attended was attacked because of their prayers and convictions on this same matter. When the Union army sent reinforcements

Shortly after his arrival, the Rev. Mr. Lockwood began visiting the people to understand more about their life and whether they were Christians so those who were could labor together to bring about the conversion of the non-Christians. Carey told Lockwood how Mrs. Mary Peake, a member of Pastor Bailey's Baptist Church that was destroyed by fire when the rebels burned Hampton, taught many of the church's leaders, such as himself, Thornton, and Hubbard, and others how to read and write.⁹ Consequently, the first project Lockwood undertook was to establish three sites for Sunday services: the Seminary building (also occupied by many of the contrabands), the house of ex-President Tyler, and the Hospital Chapel at Fort Monroe. He then employed Mrs. Peake as a permanent teacher for the AMA. Additionally, Lockwood and Chaplain Machett organized a Sabbath and day school and requested school primers and tract primers to be sent immediately for instructing the knowledge-starved contrabands

to Fortress Monroe at the beginning of the war, many local whites threatened to burn the black Baptist church which was pastored by an ex-slave named Bailey, because they saw the war as the result of the black church members' prayers. Their consciences, however, would not allow the whites to burn the church. American Missionary, Supplement 5 (October 1861), pp. 243-45; American Missionary 5 (December 1861), p. 288.

⁹ Upon further examination of later letters from the Rev. Mr. Lockwood in the American Missionary, I discovered that Hubbard was actually a man named Peter Herbert. Perhaps Lockwood mistook the pronunciation of his name because Lockwood had just recently arrived at Fortress Monroe at the time this letter was written.

who would then teach one another.¹⁰

It is a credit to the Union officers in Hampton, that the AMA experienced considerable cooperation from the Union army, unlike what would occur in Norfolk by 1862. Union soldiers present at Fortress Monroe often volunteered their services to help in the Sabbath schools while many of the contrabands assisted themselves by engaging in public service, fishing, clamming, and oystering. The Union government provided the deserted Confederate homes near the Seminary and tents in the Fortress as housing facilities for the contrabands, as well as regular rations for those able to work. The AMA, however, collected clothing and bedding that was distributed among the especially needy contrabands.¹¹

Generally, those persons who went as teachers, missionaries, and superintendents were given transportation, quarters, and subsistence from the Union army, while the relief agencies paid the salaries on a monthly basis. The

¹⁰ According to Lockwood, those who were from the Hampton Church demonstrated remarkable knowledge of the scriptures and were well-versed with the hymns, church order, propriety, and church discipline. American Missionary, Supplement 5 (October 1861), pp. 243-246; American Missionary 5 (November 1861), p. 256.

¹¹ The American Missionary magazine regularly published excerpts of letters from their missionaries around the globe. Since the work began in Hampton, the magazine published constant appeals for funds and donations to be made to the AMA on behalf of the contrabands in Hampton. Many of these appeals were also published in contemporary newspapers throughout the North, American Missionary, Supplement 5 (October 1861), p. 244; American Missionary 5 (November 1861), p. 256.

Union government, however, paid the salaries of the superintendents. Government funds were procured from the selling of cotton seized or grown on confiscated farms throughout the South. Unfortunately, many of these workers returned home shortly after coming South, and the majority returned after one year's time. The reasons given for this high turnover rate among relief agency workers were hard work, lack of adaptability, and climatic conditions.¹²

Although the AMA experienced some opposition from local whites in the establishment of schools, Lockwood proceeded with his plans and utilized the previously established Sabbath schools as day and evening schools to train the contrabands in the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as the essentials of Christianity. Other schools were later established at the Fortress under the instruction of Mrs. Bailey, a free black woman, who was assisted by Miss Jennings, and a private school for black patients in the Hygieia Hospital operated under the instruction of a crippled black man. Peter Herbert, a freedman and leader of the Hampton Baptist Church, taught afternoon classes at the Tyler home.¹³

In addition to the AMA, the Boston Educational Society

¹² Eggleston, pp. 272-275.

¹³ "Notes From Conversation of E.K.G. and E.A.G. with Mrs. W.T. Anderson, nee Gertrude Peake, Hampton, '92, September 7, 1967," Hampton University, Hampton University Archives, p. 1; "The Peake Family" folder taken from the Southern Workman (March 1891), Hampton University, Hampton University Archives; American Missionary 5 (November 1861), p. 257; Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, p. 5.

Commission (BESC), organized on February 7, 1862, also provided relief in the Tidewater area by sending garments, shoes, and teachers to Norfolk. Their teachers also visited the sick, taught night and Sabbath schools, gave supplies to the needy, and offered instruction on thrift, cleanliness, and household management. The BESC had many branch societies including the Leister Society which was responsible for sending Sarah E. and Lucy Chase to Norfolk. By April 1865, the BESC had twenty-eight branch societies.¹⁴

The AMA, however, surpassed all others in the amount of relief and the number of teachers sent out and schools established. Founded in Washington, D.C. in 1846, the AMA became especially famous for the work of its teachers and farm superintendents in the Tidewater area and for its erection of orphan asylums. The mission of the AMA during the Civil War was the organization of schools and the evangelization of the South in areas not already occupied by other societies or areas where those societies were not preaching the Gospel. So it was early in August 1861 that AMA became involved with the contrabands of Hampton and later Norfolk.¹⁵

Norfolk's own Mary Peake began the tremendous work in Hampton that demonstrated to the AMA that freedmen should be

¹⁴ Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, pp. 274-277.

¹⁵ Rev. Lewis C. Lockwood, Two Black Teachers During the Civil War: Mary Peake, Missionary to the Freedmen at Fortress Monroe (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969; republished from Boston: American Tract Society, 1862), pp. 53-54.

educated and then sent out to lead their own people. Mrs. Peake proved that freedmen could be educated to teach one another. Her maiden name was Mary Smith Kelsey, and she was born in Norfolk in 1823. She was the only offspring of a very light-skinned free black woman and an Englishman "of rank and culture."¹⁶ At the age of six, Mary was sent to Alexandria to be educated and to get away from the morally unhealthy situation at home. While Mary lived with her aunt, Mary Paine, she became a Christian and came in contact with Rollins Fowle, a kind white man who helped set blacks up in their own businesses. While in Alexandria, Mary attended both a select black school taught by a black female teacher and a black school taught by white teachers. After ten years, she returned to Norfolk at a time when all areas of Virginia were compelled to adhere to a state law forbidding black schools.¹⁷

Mary Peake lived in Norfolk on Fenchurch and Church streets for eight years until moving to Hampton with her mother and stepfather, Thompson Walker, in 1847. While in Norfolk she was a faithful member of First Baptist Church on Bute Street¹⁸ and a founder of the Daughters of Zion to aid the ill and poor. Mary married Thomas Peake, a fair-skinned,

¹⁶ Lockwood, p. 5.

¹⁷ The morally unhealthy situation stemmed from the fact that Mary Peake's parents were not married. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

¹⁸ First Baptist Church's pastor at that time was Rev. James A. Mitchell, a white man, who served in that post from the time before Nat Turner's rebellion until his death in 1852. Ibid., pp. 8, 11.

blue-eyed man who was born a slave in Hampton and freed in 1851 at the age of twenty-one by the terms of his master's will. They had one child, a daughter Daisy, born in 1855.¹⁹

Sometime in the 1850's, Mrs. Peake secretly began teaching blacks--both free and bond--how to read and write. Although her work was preceded by Margaret Douglass, a southern white woman who opened the first reading and writing school in 1852 for free blacks in Norfolk, Mary Peake was the first black woman to open a similar school for blacks in Hampton. Unlike Mrs. Douglass, who was fined and imprisoned in Norfolk for one month for violating a state statute forbidding the instruction of blacks because it threatened the "peace and dignity of the Commonwealth of Virginia,"²⁰ Mrs. Peake was never arrested. Because of her experience, Mrs. Peake's school was considered by Lockwood to be a model for other schools established in Norfolk.²¹ After her school was burned, she was moved to the Tyler house where the numbers were so large, 500 students, that she divided her pupils into several different departments. Mrs. Peake, like many of the blacks who taught the contrabands, expected no compensation, feeling instead that their compensation was in doing good. In

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 8, 11-16.

²⁰ American Missionary 5 (December 1861), p. 287.

²¹ The day school was from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon, while the evening school was from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., American Missionary 5 (November 1861), pp. 259, 261; American Missionary 15 (September 1871), p. 196.

a letter to the AMA dated December 1861, Mary Peake spoke of how grateful she was for the small donation of \$17.89 collected at an annual AMA meeting after her school located near the Seminary was burned.²²

Unfortunately, Mary Peake did not live long enough to see the fruits of her labor. The loss of her house and all of her furnishings at the time Hampton was burned, combined with her zeal to teach the blacks in Hampton resulted in the failure of her health. Tuberculosis took her at the early age of thirty-nine on February 22, 1862. Mary Peake was buried a hundred yards from the Seminary on the bank of an inlet.²³

Norfolk, unlike Hampton, initially was not receptive to missionaries because General Viele was nothing like General Butler. He had neither compassion for the freedmen nor the fire of an abolitionist. And in Norfolk many whites remained after its capture and occupation by the federal forces, making it difficult to work well with a man like Viele as military governor. Preferring to maintain the status quo, Viele was sharply reminded of his lack of commitment to the blacks by men such as Dr. Orlando Brown, Army surgeon, and Major Beauvais, Provost Marshall of Norfolk, whom Viele labeled black Republicans, a charge to which Beauvais replied, "and

²² Mary Peake Box, Courtesy of Hampton University, Hampton Archives, pp. 288, 289; American Missionary 5 (November 1861), p. 259.

²³ American Missionary 15 (September 1871), pp. 196-197; Lockwood, p. 44; Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, p. 4.

I am proud to own it.'"²⁴ Despite the presence and work of sympathetic Union men like Brown and Beauvais, many of the blacks were still treated as slaves by the white civilian and Union military populace. White ministers, who presided over black churches by law, still preached submission to one's master and denied Lockwood's request that he be allowed to preach to their black congregations. And the military government refused to allow missionaries to start schools for the blacks within the city limits. Regardless of these impediments, Norfolk's blacks remained defiant in the months after Union occupation and began their own Sabbath and day schools in the homes of literate blacks.²⁵

Viele should not bear the entire blame for his lack of compassion to area blacks. General John Dix, who replaced General Wool as commander of the Virginia Department at Fortress Monroe in June 1862, set the tone of the Union army's policy towards freedmen. No friend to the freedmen, Dix tried to implement a plan in which the contrabands would be crowded into one area and removed to the North. This move gave considerable plausibility among the blacks to the idea that indeed northerners intended to sell them to Cuba as the slaveowners contended. When Dix's plan proved unfeasible, the

²⁴ Henry Swint, ed., Dear Ones At Home: Letters From Contraband Camps (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966), p. 53.

²⁵ Engs, p. 52; American Missionary 12 (April 1868), p. 170.

General declared Craney Island a contraband camp.²⁶ General Dix did implement a plan which provided for the arming of black troops as guards in contraband camps and on plantations in order to free white soldiers from such duty. He also recommended that the Negro quarters be placed at a distance from the white quarters to prevent "the frequent intercourse between negresses and soldiers which was almost impossible entirely to prevent."²⁷

When the Reverend Mr. Lockwood visited Norfolk in June 1862, he found "several thousand refugees there quartered in storehouses and elsewhere."²⁸ He then assembled many of the blacks and explained the work that was being done at Fortress Monroe and Hampton and promised that the AMA would soon send missionaries to Norfolk. Lockwood was deeply affected by the response of the people, many of whom gathered around, pressing his hand, hugging him, shouting, and dancing in expression of their deep gratitude to what was promised.²⁹ He spent Sunday, May 19, with the blacks of the city, and despite the limitations imposed by the white leadership, Lockwood was able to plant many seeds of hope, although it was not until

²⁶ Ira Berlin, Freedom, vol. 1, p. 66 and vol. 2, p. 144.

²⁷ U.S., Department of War, American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, "Preliminary Report Touching the Condition and Management of Emancipated Refugees, made to the Secretary of War by the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, June 30, 1863," Record Group 94, Roll 200, p. 3.

²⁸ American Missionary 15 (September 1871), p. 197.

²⁹ Ibid.

October-November that his promised assistance arrived.³⁰

In October 1862, shortly after the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was released, Lockwood reported that a school had been established in Norfolk, and another was in the process of being started in the Pest House barracks. Although most of the teachers were black men with limited qualifications, they were preferable to white teachers to avoid backlash from local whites which might jeopardize the work before it had a chance to begin. One black woman who was also teaching a day school in her home for her neighbors' children and several black churches were expected to introduce Sabbath schools to the city's children.³¹

Other preparations were made by the AMA for the freeing of thousands of slaves that would probably come to Norfolk as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation. American Missionary Association secretaries George Whipple and S.S. Jocelyn made charitable appeals for clothing to be given to the destitute freedmen who fled from their masters once news of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation reached the ears of Tidewater area blacks. They fled to Norfolk in droves and were placed in camps outside the city, for a total of 1,130 freedmen by November. Most of the needy were women and children whose husbands worked for the government and who received nothing but rations or a small amount of money,

³⁰ American Missionary 6 (June 1862), p. 139.

³¹ American Missionary 6 (November 1862), pp. 254-255.

insufficient to care for a family. The remainder of the needy were old men or the infirm.³²

The issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation and the subsequent desertion of increasing numbers of blacks from bondage created an even more pressing need for relief societies in the Norfolk area. Charles Grandy recalled that many blacks came to Norfolk in search of employment but ended up begging for food. He said that although the army tried to feed them, its resources were insufficient to the task at hand. The suffering in Norfolk was so great--two to three women and children dying of starvation each day--that he and other employed blacks would steal bread while at work to feed the women and children. A group of freedmen led by a black AMA teacher, John Oliver, formed a relief association in 1862 to aid contrabands coming into Norfolk. So great was the need and so moved with compassion were the freedmen, that within a short time, this group had collected forty dollars and five barrels of clothing.³³

Missionaries were repeatedly astonished at the generous and genuine Christian attitudes of the freedmen, despite their extreme suffering. Miss S.S. Smith, an AMA missionary, wrote

³² Locations such as Fort Norfolk, which had 780 freedman refugees, and the barracks and storehouse areas, which had 350, were used as camps after the release of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. American Missionary 6 (November 1862), p. 252.

³³ Weevils in the Wheat, p. 118; Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, p. 62.

from Norfolk in April 1864, that freedmen interpreted these kinds of sufferings as God's dealings in the life of believers. Frequently, they told Miss Smith that it was necessary for some people to be oppressed so "that God might have his witness."³⁴ To try to ease the suffering the Army and, later, the Freedmen's Bureau created a work program which attempted to place blacks on confiscated plantations in the countryside. This policy began as early as 1862 in the Norfolk area, but proved unsuccessful because of the concentrated presence of missionary groups who provided food, clothing, and schools, and because of the presence of the Army which provided rations and protection against the white southerners. The city was also the area where blacks hoped to reunite with long-lost relatives.³⁵

Not all those who chose to remain in Norfolk accepted government handouts. Miss Smith noticed in March 1864 that some freedmen were refusing rations because they did not want to tax the government, which they felt was already doing a great deal to help them. They also wanted to prove their masters wrong when they told the freedmen they could never help themselves. Numerous little boys even worked hard to earn dimes and quarters by holding horses, blacking boots, and carrying bags. And many of the black families took in

³⁴ American Missionary 8 (June 1864), p. 137.

³⁵ Howard Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-90 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) p. 20.

orphans. It was not unusual to find at least one orphan in each of the black households. In these ways, Miss Smith felt they gained pride in themselves because they were providing for their own (and their community's) wants and needs.³⁶

Friends of Worcester, Massachusetts, a society supported by the Boston Educational Commission of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, in 1863 sent Quaker missionaries Lucy and Sarah Chase to work among the freedmen at Craney Island.³⁷ Craney Island was the only contraband depot in the Norfolk area recognized by the federal government as under absolute military rule. The Chase sisters arrived at Craney Island on January 15, 1863, and found two thousand hungry, cold, and homeless blacks, many of whom had run away to Union lines, and were sent to Craney Island to work as laborers for the Union government.³⁸

Prior to the arrival of the Chase sisters, the AMA worked to assist the freedmen. Mr. King, a black teacher, gathered the children on Craney Island for one to two hours of instruction every day. An evening school was also doing well,

³⁶ American Missionary 8 (June 1864), p. 137.

³⁷ Craney Island is located six miles from Norfolk. Swint, pp. 4, 19; Gerteis, p. 27.

³⁸ Prior to the January 1, 1863 Proclamation, the Chase sisters discovered that General Viele mistakenly told blacks they were free. Upon the issuance of the final document, Viele had to rescind his declaration, although by that time, it mattered little to those who accepted freedom in their hearts and ensured it in their feet by making their way behind Union lines. Swint, pp. 5, 23; American Missionary 7 (March 1863), p. 63.

he wrote in January 1863, instructing working men two to three evenings each week. And although the teaching was not systematic or regular, books were distributed, awakening a desire to learn. Mr. King also noted excitedly that those who knew their alphabet were teaching others. This was especially good news because there were 1,700 people on that tiny island, and he was expecting the arrival of two thousand more.³⁹

The Chase sisters were assigned accommodations at Dr. Orlando Brown's residence, a Craney Island house recently seized and occupied by Union officers. Their commander was General Viele, who was headquartered in Norfolk, and they received twenty-five dollars per month for their work with the freedmen. The sisters' immediate supervisor was Dr. Brown, Superintendent of Negro Affairs under General Viele, and later General Butler. In March 1863 the sisters moved to Norfolk which became their "special field of labor," although they returned twice a week to teach the contrabands on the island. Craney Island would eventually become a hospital station for the contrabands.⁴⁰

On the first day of their missionary stay in January 1863, the Chase sisters painted a bleak picture of the blacks at Craney Island. Almost one-half of the freedmen were basically without clothing, and the missionaries were

³⁹ American Missionary 7 (March 1863), p. 63.

⁴⁰ Swint, pp. 5, 19, 27, 51.

expecting two hundred more to join them very soon. Most had repeatedly to go out into the cold for rations and wood in a half-clad state only to return to barracks with unglazed windows and no doors. This continuous exposure to the cold brought on coughs, colds, and eventually tuberculosis. In their hospital, two out of three patients died from tuberculosis. The Chase sisters also reported that many of the women would take the bed-ticking to make dresses; but almost always, the women preferred to sacrifice a piece of material to cover their hair with a head wrap rather than utilize it for clothing if there was not enough for both. To the Chase sisters, this preference perfectly illustrated how blacks were made to feel that their hair as well as their person was inferior.⁴¹

It did not take long for the Misses Lucy and Sarah to get acquainted with their charges on the mission field. On former Governor Henry Wise's farm, abandoned once the war began, the Chase sisters started a school in the old carriage house to teach the contrabands, including Wise's ex-slaves, how to read and write and how to be self-reliant.⁴² In 1864, the school was enlarged by the AMA to accommodate the 300 students taught by Professor A.W. Eastman. In addition to teaching the

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 29-30, 33.

⁴² Henry Wise was the Governor of Virginia from 1856 to 1860. In May 1861, Wise was commissioned as Brigadier General of the Confederate Army. By April 1865, Wise was promoted to the rank of Major General in an army that was soon to be defeated. Ibid., p. 50.

contrabands how to read, write, and to perform elementary mathematics, the missionaries discovered they had to teach basic Christian values. The conditions of slavery produced three chief vices that were high on the missionaries' list to be eradicated: lying (especially if the freedman believed it pleased the white person or would prevent punishment), stealing, and fornication. Additionally, many black women, especially those in freedmen's villages inhabited chiefly by women and children, believed it was better to be the illegitimate offspring of a white man than to be born black. The missionaries believed these problems could be solved by educating the freedmen about self-respect, personal rights, and Christian values--all the things slavery prevented blacks from attaining.⁴³

To assist in the practical side of education for the blacks, Dr. Brown invited ministers to the island to marry all freedmen who wished to be married or to make legal the common-law arrangements in which many lived. Virginia's law did not recognize marriage between slaves because it inconvenienced slaveowners who frequently sold or willed husbands, wives, and children as chattel. So it was important that the freedmen receive Christian teachings as to the sanctity of marriage. The freedmen did not need to be taught common courtesies,

⁴³ Ibid; Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds., Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents, vol. 3: Freedom and Jim Crow, 1865-1917 (3 vols, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1977), p. 69.

however, because they were daily seen saying, "Good day" and "good health" to all they met. Interestingly, the Chase sisters noted that the freedmen were respectful to all whites they encountered, but not to the degree that they fawned or cringed, and they were always ready to save the whites from any type of manual labor. They also noticed it was the habit of many freedmen to say what they thought their white interrogator wanted to hear.⁴⁴

During their stay on the island from January to August 1863, the sisters cared for more than 2000 freedmen, distributed clothing, books, and writing slates, and taught the educational basics. Most of the freedmen at Craney Island were refugees from Suffolk, driven into Norfolk by the presence of federal troops into the South. Lucy and Sarah remained on the island until General Naglee commanded that the island be evacuated because it was declared to be outside Union lines. By 1864, however, Craney Island was once again part of the Union Department of Virginia and North Carolina, and regiments of black troops were subsequently stationed there.⁴⁵

Initially, Lucy and Sarah were not pleased with Norfolk or General Viele. They described Norfolk in 1863 as dirty, dilapidated, dull, and dead. The general feeling was one of apathy. And although some of the homes were described as

⁴⁴ Swint, pp. 22, 34, 37.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 134-135.

beautifully situated with a few of the streets kept very clean, most businesses were closed because their proprietors refused to take the oath of allegiance. Norfolk therefore enjoyed little economic or social activity. The Chase sisters also had little praise for Viele, whom they described as too cautious and vacillating in his decisions to engender much loyalty and confidence among his officers.⁴⁶ Under Viele's regime the old 9:00 p.m. slave curfew law was reinstated, encouraging the acceptability of white supremacy. The Chase sisters, however, found the attitudes of Norfolk's whites repugnant. Many boldly said, "'I'd poison a Yankee, in a moment, if I could get a chance.'"⁴⁷

During the war, the AMA recruited and sent many teachers and ministers, both black and white, to work with the blacks in Norfolk. By October-November 1862, the AMA had eighteen missionaries and teachers assigned to Craney Island, Newport News, Hampton, Fortress Monroe, and Norfolk. In April 1863, an AMA missionary was sent to open schools in two black churches in Norfolk. So successful was one school that at the first session 350 scholars came while 300 attended the evening session. By the third day, 550 scholars attended the day school and 500 in the evening. The AMA also engaged fifteen black assistants to help in the schools. In June 1863, the AMA, together with the BESC, established a school in Norfolk

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 51-52, 69.

⁴⁷ Swint, p. 68.

at the Bute Street Baptist Church with three hundred and fifty children in the day school and three hundred adults in the evening school.⁴⁸ By April 1863, two schools had formally opened in Norfolk and were the largest in the area with 1,200 pupils. Mr. Tyler and Mr. William Coan were two white superintendents sent by the AMA which employed eleven missionaries and teachers, black and white, and ten black teaching assistants. The two schools met at the Bute Street Baptist and Bute Street Methodist Churches. Mr. Tyler and Miss Pitts worked as teachers in the Baptist Church while Miss Chase worked in the Methodist Church. A Sabbath school with 1,400 students was also begun. And to prevent any confusion, Professor William H. Woodbury was assigned to systematize all the schools. Initially, Woodbury established schools taught by an all-black faculty to demonstrate the competency of black teachers. Additionally, to assist in the housing and education of the many black orphans excluded from the white orphanage or not taken in by the black families, Professor Woodbury instituted a black orphan asylum at Ferry Point located just outside the city limits. The AMA also provided schools and religious instruction for 14,000 freedmen and 5,000 freemen cultivating the seized government farms in the

⁴⁸ Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, pp. 11, 17; Luther P. Jackson Papers, Special Collections, Notebooks--Series 6, University Archives, Johnston Memorial Library (Virginia State University, Petersburg); American Missionary 7 (June 1863), p. 137.

Norfolk vicinity.⁴⁹

Both schools received some aid from local blacks while the AMA bore the bulk of expenses. The Reverend Mr. Greene wrote to the AMA in April 1863, that there were two to three thousand blacks in Norfolk who were still in great need. And to make matters worse, many of the secessionists were trying very hard to make trouble through such tactics as interfering with children going to school and taking away their books. The schools were even being attacked by "slavery defenders and negro haters" in the army. These people used various means to annoy, persecute, and wrong the blacks. Greene warned that if it got any worse or continued, he would have to report it to Gen. Viele.⁵⁰

Once schools were established, the missionaries' work in Norfolk had only just begun. Many like the Reverend W.S. Bell, went around Norfolk caring for and visiting the sick and elderly. Bell wrote on September 5, 1863, that many freedmen just coming out of slavery and not knowing how to

⁴⁹ There were a total of 27,000 blacks in the Virginia Department under federal control in 1863. American Missionary 7 (June 1863), p. 137; American Missionary 7 (November 1863), p. 242. As time went on, Woodbury changed the policy of schools with an all-black faculty because many of the AMA teachers--white and black--felt this was unwise because it generated rumors that blacks and whites could not work together. Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, pp. 190-191.

⁵⁰ It was not until Butler's return in October 1863 that the government intervened on behalf of the AMA's schools. Under Viele's regime, many of the military officers obstructed the expansion of and even attacked the black schools. American Missionary 7 (June 1863), pp. 137-138; American Missionary 7 (October 1863), p. 233.

take care of themselves financially, were being cheated by local businessmen and heretofore had no one to whom they could appeal. Bell also found many sick children who received no medical attention and destitute families who suffered without complaint. Many who suffered were unaware that life was not synonymous with suffering. Bell noted that when he surveyed the area, asking many of the freedmen who were dressed in rags, living in a hovel and existing on hoe-cake, whether they knew of any who were destitute, would say, "'Deys non round here.'" They were so thankful to be free from bondage, some having prayed thirty to fifty years for deliverance, that the freedmen in general were not inclined to grumble.⁵¹

Other missionaries noted that the applications for clothing always exceeded the supply. For the most part, the AMA was only able to supply one-third of the need. It was an especially sad situation because there were numerous women with large families who had no husband and no visible means of support. In addition, there were constant influxes of people into Norfolk because of the activities of the black troops. In November 1863, a company of black soldiers brought back five hundred slaves, many of whom were in families of eight to ten. Most were destitute and needed homes and the basic necessities. A case in point was a woman who came into Norfolk with eight children, all of them partially covered with rags held together with strings. Hall's Jail Yard and

⁵¹ American Missionary 7 (October 1863), p. 234.

the Pest House were the two debarkation places for refugees entering Norfolk. They were also the reunion place where many anxious parents awaited the arrival of new refugee groups in hopes of seeing children sold off in the years prior to the War.⁵²

On October 22, 1863, the day before David Wright's execution, the AMA took possession of a formerly white four-room public school house; with each room seating fifty children, the move took two hundred children out of the overcrowded church. On the day of Wright's execution, Mrs. J.N. Coan wrote to the AMA that she had allowed her boys, forty of the brightest in the system, to see the procession. When they returned, the boys came back singing, "'John Brown's soul is marching on!'" Mrs. Coan spoke of what exciting times they lived in and how glad everyone associated with the AMA was that justice was fairly meted out to the man who, because of his intense hatred of blacks, murdered an officer of the black troops.⁵³

By March 1864, four schools were operating at the Queen Street school building. Miss Blanche V. Harris was selected as principal, assisted by Misses Clara Duncan, Edmonia G.

⁵² American Missionary 8 (January 1864), p. 7; Swint, p. 99.

⁵³ American Missionary 7 (December 1863), p. 279.

Highgate, and Sallie Daffin.⁵⁴ Other black teachers sent by the AMA to Norfolk included Mary E. Watson, a twenty-three year old graduate of the Rhode Island Normal School, Sara G. Stanley, a free black woman who attended Oberlin College for three years, Marcia Colton, and William D. Harris. After a few months, other teachers arrived and were placed as instructors of the various schools. Miss Taylor taught the most advanced group, divided into five classes, in School No. 1. Mrs. Clark taught School No. 2, Miss Mary Reed was the instructor in School No. 3, and Miss Atkinson, who previously was a substitute floating teacher, taught School No. 4. The Fenchurch Street building was also operating with four graded schools. The teacher of School No. 1, Miss Duncan, discovered there was considerable religious interest among her pupils. Therefore, to assist the children's religious instruction, Miss Duncan conducted prayer meetings at the homes of her students.⁵⁵

Not surprisingly because of the large number of black

⁵⁴ Blanche Harris was a highly qualified principal who was a graduate of Oberlin College. Unfortunately, Harris had to be replaced by a white teacher when she became gravely ill. Sallie Daffin was an educated woman who was described as a faithful Christian and excellent teacher. Clara Duncan also attended Oberlin College, but unlike Harris, was an orphan who worked her way through college by teaching and doing housework. Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, pp. 191, 193, 206.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 193, 197. The two other teachers at the Fenchurch Street School were Miss Case, who taught at School No. 2, and Miss Haskell, who taught at School No. 4. American Missionary 8 (June 1864), pp. 138-39.

troops who were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, the schools were affected when many reached enlistment age. Miss Duncan recalled quite sadly when twelve young men left her class in late March 1864, to join the Thirty-sixth U.S.C. Regiment, stationed at Point Lookout as guards for rebel prisoners. She was comforted in the knowledge that many of these young men left Norfolk knowing how to write letters to their families and loved ones.⁵⁶

As more northern blacks volunteered as teachers and missionaries to the Norfolk area, reports abounded as to their mistreatment en route south. In response to the mistreatment of their missionaries, AMA officials insisted that Butler intervene on their behalf. The New York Anglo-African published one such account on April 6, 1864, of mistreatment of a black AMA teacher headed to Norfolk, Miss Clara Duncan. Miss Duncan left New York City in the company of two white AMA teachers, Mr. Walker and Miss M.R. Bassett, who were also en route to Norfolk. AMA Secretary George Whipple made arrangements for the two ladies to share the same stateroom aboard the boat. At dinner, the clerk told them, "We don't allow niggers to eat at the first table. And you go and tell

⁵⁶ These missionary schools taught not only blacks but white children as well. Miss Duncan wrote that there were two white boys in her class: a former messenger boy who was aboard the Merrimac and a drummer boy once in the Confederate Army. Both boys were enrolled in the school because they heard there were missionaries in Norfolk and were interested in learning to read and write. American Missionary, 8 (June 1864), p. 139.

her to come down out of that saloon to a place prepared for her, or I shall take her down publicly.' During the conversation, the mail-agent by the name of Rollins, stepped up and said that Mr. Walker 'was no gentleman for travelling with a nigger wench,' . . . neither was Miss Bassett a lady for occupying the same state room."⁵⁷

After a heated discussion, arrangements were made for Miss Duncan to remain in the same stateroom until they arrived at Fortress Monroe. The incident was immediately reported to General Butler, who had the authority promptly to call in the accused parties for a rigorous interview. After hearing their side, Butler stressed to the guilty parties the rights of free blacks to travel without harassment. He reminded them that slaves were allowed to eat with and sleep in the state rooms with their masters and mistresses with impunity. After the interview, Butler pressured the steamboat company into firing the mail-agent and severely warning and reprimanding the clerk. ⁵⁸

Miss L. Shepherd, a white Norfolk native, sent a letter to a secessionist friend in April 1864 in which she wrote that many in Norfolk heard the account of this Baltimore vessel, its steward, and captain whom Butler "broke" because they refused to allow a black woman to sit at the table or stay in

⁵⁷ Reprinted in The New Regime, April 14, 1864, p. 2.

⁵⁸ The Anglo African reported that many other black teachers, aside from Miss Duncan, experienced similar indignities aboard Baltimore ships, Ibid.

the cabin traditionally reserved for whites. Appalled that Butler would decree that blacks had the right to be lodged in the state rooms and seated at the same tables as whites, Miss Shepherd reflected the view of many whites in Norfolk when she denounced the notion that blacks were equal to whites. Miss Shepherd's letter also reflected Norfolk's whites' opinion of Butler. She wrote that her cousin, who was coming from Portsmouth shortly after the incident with the Baltimore vessel, ran into two finely-dressed black women in the ladies' cabin. Horrified at their presence, the engineer tried to make them leave. When they refused, quoting Butler's directives on black equality and threatening to report him, the ladies were allowed to remain--to the abhorrence of Miss Shepherd's cousin.⁵⁹

Incidents like this, however, did not adversely affect the growth of Norfolk's missionary schools. Instead, it probably bolstered the freedmen's resolve to get an education. In March 1864 the average school attendance was 400 in the day school and 375 in the evening school. Those in attendance ranged in age from four to sixty-six. Each of the fifty teachers--some of whom were sent by the AMA, the NFA, and the Educational Commission, in addition to soldiers and wives of soldiers who assisted--were assigned fifty pupils. One night school had the cooperation of a large number of soldiers from a Connecticut regiment who served as teachers. The fact that

⁵⁹ New Regime, April 26, 1864, p. 2.

many of the children were quiet, gentle, obedient pupils only served to endear them even more to the teachers who sacrificed to come to this mission field. Letters abounded from Norfolk's teachers who were amazed at the way something special was revealed to them daily about the freedmen. One teacher wrote in April 1864, that she went to the homes where many were sick, aged, and shivering from the lack of heat and clothing, but coped with their problems without complaint. She remarked that many had endured numerous trials and tribulations with "patience and long suffering."⁶⁰

As large numbers of freedmen poured into Norfolk daily, a Sabbath-school was opened at Rope-walk, one of the refugee receiving stations, on April 3, 1864. Miss Duncan, a black teacher, remarked that many of her students at Rope-walk were old men and women just out of slavery and eager to learn how to read. She was especially impressed by a 108-year-old man at the school who was trying to learn how to read. With an average attendance of 148 students, the work prospered until the government removed all those refugees to the plantations (e.g., the Baxter and Wise Farms).⁶¹

In a September 1, 1864, letter to the AMA, Miss Sallie L. Daffin, a black teacher located in Norfolk, excitedly related that her students eagerly pursued their studies in both the

⁶⁰ American Missionary 8 (April 1864), pp. 83, 98; American Missionary 8 (May 1864), pp. 126-127;

⁶¹ American Missionary 8 (June 1864), p. 139; American Missionary 8 (October 1864), p. 233.

day and evening classes. Miss Daffin also reported that the rest of her day was spent visiting the homes of sick students and teaching Sabbath school. An AMA minister, the Reverend W. Hamilton, who toured the Norfolk-Portsmouth area in late 1864 reported that nowhere else did he find matters more prosperous and satisfactory than in Norfolk. Three of the four school houses were occupied by the black children and their teachers, and the progress of these students proved encouraging to all who visited the area.⁶²

Other glowing reports abounded. In a November 1863 letter, the Principal of the First School District commented that the black students of Norfolk were well-behaved and learned more readily than the white children. Concurrently, the Principal of the Third District sang praises of the night school held at the Bute Street Methodist Church. Speaking of the students, many of whom were middle-aged and older, the Principal said that although they spent the day engaged in hard labor, they faithfully and enthusiastically attended their classes.⁶³

Despite the advances made by many of the AMA teachers, the mission suffered a setback in late 1864. In a letter to

⁶² American Missionary Association, "Letters to Armstrong/Frissell, Miscellaneous Information, Reports, Letters, etc," Courtesy of Hampton University Library Archives (Hampton, Virginia), p. 196. Hereafter cited as "Letters to Armstrong/Frissell"; American Missionary 8 (April 1864), p. 83; American Missionary 8 (January 1864), p. 15.

⁶³ American Missionary 8 (January 1864), p. 15.

the AMA headquarters Major Southard Hoffman, Assistant Adjutant General in Norfolk, reported what happened to the black schools when power was returned to the city government. He said that the city allowed all public school houses to be repossessed for the sole use by white children. Two of those repossessed houses were occupied by the black students who found refuge in Concert Hall and Bute Street Baptist Church. Major Hoffman said, "The loss of these conveniently arranged school rooms was severely felt by the teachers, and produced a partial check to the progress of their pupils." Nevertheless, Hoffman reported that the overall progress of the black students was encouraging. He said that those who began their alphabet in October 1863 were now in the Primer or First Reader.⁶⁴

In 1864 in the Norfolk and Portsmouth areas there were sixty-four teachers, four of whom were also preachers. In a letter dated July 1, 1864, the Reverend. James Tynes, a black minister, noted that blacks in Norfolk were intelligent, anxious to have a school established for their children, and eager for religious instruction. And although the war had taken a heavy toll on the spirits of the people, which Tynes described as low and despondent, he noted that the people were experiencing a religious revival and fast becoming self-sustaining and respected because of the work by the AMA. Tynes also noted that in Norfolk's city schools, the teachers

⁶⁴ "Letters to Armstrong/Frissell," pp. 196, 235.

won the love, confidence, and respect of their students and parents. So it was that among all the relief agencies, the AMA was the most successful in educating Norfolk's freedmen and freemen, primarily because they sent black teachers and ministers to work with and among the blacks. As a result, Butler asked the AMA to provide 120 teachers, with the government helping to provide food and shelter. Unfortunately for Butler, this request both improved and complicated race relations in Norfolk and public relations.⁶⁵

In addition to schools organized for the education of blacks in Norfolk, many northern societies arranged to bring blacks North. The New Regime reported on August 3, 1864, that the day before the steamer George Leary had sailed for Philadelphia, New York, and Boston with sixty children and fifty young ladies. The children were sent to be educated at the expense of wealthy northerners wishing to do something to aid the nation in its time of need, while the young ladies went North in search of employment as maids.⁶⁶

In 1864, AMA Secretary George Whipple visited the Norfolk schools. While noting that all were good, he found that the best was taught by Blanche Harris, a free black woman and Oberlin College graduate who came South to help her people. Whipple also optimistically observed that black and white

⁶⁵ "Letters to Armstrong/Frissell," p. 189; Eggleston, p. 292.

⁶⁶ New Regime, August 3, 1864, p. 2.

teachers worked well together. In truth, however, relations were not as pleasant between the white and black AMA teachers as Secretary Whipple described in his report. Friction developed between black and white teachers who shared a predominantly black mission home located on York Street in an abandoned house once owned by rebels. Mary Reed, a white northerner, declared that she was willing to teach blacks, but not to eat and sleep with them. Undaunted by criticism, Reed argued that her views reflected those of most other white teachers. Unfortunately, Reed's views did reflect a typical abolitionist attitude that favored political freedom for blacks but not social equality.⁶⁷

Exceptions to Reed's views, however, did occur in Norfolk. Samuel Walker, another white teacher, denounced Reed's views as "'copperheadism'"⁶⁸ and offered the suggestion that the AMA should fire him if he ever balked at socializing with his black colleagues. To relieve tensions, a black and white female teacher decided to sleep in the same bed to demonstrate Christian unity. W.L. Coan, however, objected to this peace offering, with the result that many accused him of racism. The situation continued to worsen until Coan opened a second mission house into which all the black teachers

⁶⁷ Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, pp. 190, 204; U.S., Department of War, Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, 1865-70, BRFAL, M1053, roll 6 (Washington: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1977), p. 123.

⁶⁸ Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, p. 204.

moved, except Sara Stanley, who continued to accuse Coan of racism.⁶⁹

At the outset, W.L. Coan seems an enigma as a northern white missionary in the South. When the mission field first opened in the South, Coan traveled with fellow black missionaries and advocated the hiring of black teachers. He also denounced the caste system and threatened to fire any teacher or superintendent who showed race partiality. When it came to social interaction, however, Coan stressed the avoidance of interracial coupling--i.e., kissing, except in private, walking arm in arm, or those of the same sex sharing the same bed--because it provoked unnecessary hostility from local whites. Some blacks and whites agreed with his views, and some did not. Given nationwide white hostility towards integration and white southern hostility towards the presence of northern missionary teachers and the education of blacks, Coan was probably right in trying to keep conflict in Norfolk and elsewhere in the South to a minimum. Afraid that their missionary efforts would be compromised or discontinued if integration rather than education appeared to be first on their agenda, Coan sought a more careful, moderate path. Despite Coan's attempts at compromise, however, conflicting views and opinions regarding the behavior of missionaries

⁶⁹ Sara Stanley launched a vehement attack against Coan who, in turn, labeled her a racist although she was, at that time, having an affair with a white teacher, Samuel Walker. Ibid., pp. 204-205.

continued to resurface into confrontations periodically throughout the white AMA teachers' and missionaries' tenure on the mission field in Norfolk.⁷⁰

Many of the white missionaries, such as Mary Reed, who came to the South to teach and train the freedmen, were not ready to accord blacks' social equality. Blacks, on the other hand, wanted and expected changes. Whites like Benjamin Butler, Lucy and Sarah Chase, George Whipple, and Orlando Brown were among the few genuinely committed to helping and protecting the blacks. It was to their credit that in the last few months before the Union victory, they remained resolute in their commitment to political and social equality for blacks in Norfolk.

In the months prior to the end of the war, missionary Sarah Chase wrote, on May 25, 1865, with sadness that black affairs were being miserably conducted in Norfolk. Lost was General Butler, transferred to another state in early January 1865. In his place was General Israel Vodges, a man considerably less sympathetic to the plight of blacks than was Butler. Also problematic was the failure by the federal government to establish an organization which would shield freedmen from the injustices certain to be rained upon them by the returning and vengeful southerners. Sarah Chase was also disturbed that many of the freedmen who had purchased confiscated and abandoned property without receiving any

⁷⁰ Ibid.

deeds, would find it almost impossible to prove ownership once the former rebels returned.⁷¹

With the return of the former rebel soldiers, Sarah Chase noted the bold and frequent robberies occurring in Norfolk. In writing to her family in May 1865, Miss Chase recalled witnessing a well-dressed rebel steal a watch from a black man. In the robbery, however, the white man not only stole the watch, but cut his victim's head while white Union soldiers allowed the man to escape unhindered. In another tale, Miss Chase said that Union and former rebel soldiers accosted, robbed, and sometimes murdered innocent blacks. Pitying the tenuous position of blacks who received no protection from army or city officials, Sarah Chase wrote that many blacks were staying home, fearful of what might befall them on the streets of Norfolk.⁷²

On June 25, 1865, Lucy Chase sent a clipping from an unidentified newspaper to relatives in New England illustrating the adversities endured by blacks in Norfolk. According to the newspaper, the cry of the returned rebel soldiers in Norfolk was, "'The day of bayonets are [sic] passed! . . . We'll kill every nigger, or drive 'em all out of town.'"⁷³ Despite General Oliver O. Howard's promises to protect the city's blacks, whites continued their vengeful

⁷¹ Swint, p. 159.

⁷² Ibid, pp. 159-160.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 165.

attacks. Lucy Chase, on June 25, 1865, wrote about an incident involving a group of black men on their way to see a circus performance. Before they arrived at their destination they were fired upon by whites. The local newspaper reported a black man found hanged on a lamp post by local authorities. And in two separate incidents, after leaving evening church services, one black man was knocked down and severely injured while another was shot and robbed.⁷⁴

Illustrative of the difficulties faced by blacks during this period was the story of Aggie Peters, a sixty-five-year-old black Christian woman who owned a grocery store and hack. Returning home after a trip to the North, Mrs. Peters was arrested by the Union officials, thrown into prison, and later cross-examined by several rude judges who wanted to know "all she saw or heard of the North and her views thereon." If Mrs. Peters' experience was the exception, then the state of affairs for blacks in Norfolk would not have been too difficult. Unfortunately, according to Sarah Chase, Mrs. Peters' treatment was the standard.⁷⁵

A committee of prominent black men eventually formed and

⁷⁴ Although General Howard was Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, he kept abreast of potentially dangerous situations throughout the South. Consequently, his knowledge of the Norfolk incident was not unusual. Ibid., pp. 165-66.

⁷⁵ In a May 25, 1865 letter, Sarah Chase wrote to her family about Aggie Peters, a black business woman who was attributed with purchasing the freedom of her husband and many other blacks. Ibid., p. 161.

went to Mayor Thomas C. Tabb seeking protection. Unsympathetically, Mayor Tabb said, "You must fight it out, I can do nothing for you."⁷⁶ Discouraged, the men told Lucy Chase their difficulties. For them, 1865 was similar to May 1862. When the Union troops first came to Norfolk, the blacks rejoiced to see them, showering them with gratitude and respect. According to one black man, "There was nothing we would not do for them; and they knew it, too."⁷⁷ But as the Union troops swept through Norfolk, the soldiers destroyed the blacks' property and shot them down. The result was a downward turn in the spirits of the blacks. For the blacks in Norfolk, the months following the war were sadly similar to those in 1862; they felt there was no one left to protect them but themselves. Fortunately for the city's blacks, Colonel Orlando Brown, a northern abolitionist doctor who worked with the Chase sisters at Craney Island, was appointed Assistant Commissioner of Freedmen's Bureau Affairs in Virginia in July 1865.⁷⁸

Letters from missionaries working in Norfolk and published in the American Missionary magazine are consistent with the sentiment Howard Rabinowitz found in his study, Race Relations in the Urban South. Missionaries noted that although some freedmen came to Norfolk in search of food and

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 167.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 169.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 19, 159, 169.

supplies, the majority came in search of education. Despite the many hardships faced before and after Emancipation, the missionaries' letters depicted a group of people who generally demonstrated considerable pride, kindness, and forgiveness towards their former masters. According to Miss Smith, writing in March 1864, many believed that it was necessary for some people to be oppressed that God would have a witness to His mercy and delivering power. That was why many freedmen interpreted God's dealings without complaint.⁷⁹

For three years, Norfolk's blacks experienced dramatic changes in their city, society, and privileges allotted them in the years prior to and including the first year of the Civil War. With the advent of Union occupation and the entrance of missionaries, the light of freedom and education became available to a people imprisoned in subjugation and ignorance for many years. With education and freedom, however, came exposure to and a desire for a better life. In Norfolk, many blacks were unwilling to sit, wait, and be abused by whites who refused to grant them what they had earned over their 246 years of residence in this nation. Vocal black leaders emerging in this period were educated free

⁷⁹ On March 30, 1864, Miss Smith further recounted a tale of how one mother visited the Pest House and Rope Walk areas whenever new groups of freedmen arrived because some years prior her eldest sons were sold away. So precious were her sons that before they were sold, they would "steal away at night to get the little learning they had, while she paid, from her slender purse, twenty-five cents per month for instruction." American Missionary, 8 (June 1864), p. 137.

blacks, runaway slaves returning to the area after years of living up North, and black soldiers who enlisted in the 1863-65 period. The vast majority of Norfolk's blacks, however, were those recently emancipated slaves on the verge of gaining the confidence, education, and unity that would propel all of them into modern America.

"Freedom"

O Freedom! Freedom! O! how oft
Thy loving children call on Thee!
In wailings loud, and breathings soft,
Beseeching God, Thy face to see.

With agonizing hearts we kneel,
While 'round us howls the oppressor's cry,--
And suppliant pray, that we may feel
The ennob'ling glances of Thine eye...

O! purify each holy court!
The ministry of law and light!
That man, no longer, may be bought
To trample down his brother's right.

We lift imploring hands to Thee!
We cry for those in prison bound!
O! in thy strength, come! Liberty!
And 'stablish right to wideworld round.

We pray to see Thee, face to face:
To feel our souls grow strong and wide;
So ever shall our injured race,
By Thy firm principles abide.

Charles L. Reason¹

¹ Charles L. Reason was born on August 18, 1818 in New York City. Reason became a teacher of languages and mathematics at New York Central College and a principal at Philadelphia's Institute for Colored Youth. The excerpt was published in 1847 and appears in Benjamin Brawley, ed. Early Negro American Writers, pp. 250-251.

CHAPTER 3

"We Lift Imploring Hands to Thee!": NORFOLK AND PRESIDENTIAL RECONSTRUCTION

At the end of 1864, Norfolk was an occupied city under formal military rule. Refusing to take the oath of allegiance when General Wool and his troops marched into Norfolk in 1862, the great majority of white citizens were forced to witness changes in their social, political, and economic order. The presence of federal troops and the subsequent issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation made freedom for the thousands of area blacks a de facto reality. Passage of the bill providing for the enlistment of black soldiers in the Union Army gave blacks an independence and confidence they never knew was possible for the darker races to have in America. Many of Norfolk's free blacks moved into public positions of leadership impossible under the system of slavery. In addition, Norfolk's civilian government was replaced by direct military rule from May 1862 to June 1863, at which point Virginia's Governor, Francis Pierpont, put pressure on the federal government to provide for the restoration of civilian government from June 1863 until July 1864.

On April 9, 1865, Confederate General Robert E. Lee,

surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant. Although this was the effective end of the Civil War in Virginia, it marked the beginning of an era of social strife which would be almost as violent and repressive for blacks as had been the previous four years. At no time during Reconstruction did blacks achieve the same rights and privileges as whites. Instead, privileges were given piecemeal then taken away as a punishment for achieving too much.² How the Norfolk government reacted to the requests and later demands for civil rights, the calls made by many fearful and hostile whites to re-enact the "Black Codes," and the refusal by the black community to be silent as the possibility grew that their newly granted freedoms would be forever lost, are the focus of this chapter.

During General Benjamin Butler's reign, disloyalty and noncooperation were so prevalent among Norfolk's white populace that Butler felt it necessary in Norfolk to reinstitute direct military rule until the end of the war. Accompanying a politically unstable situation was the hopelessness among the white populace. The existence of two military regimes in three years produced a lack of incentive and power among the people of Norfolk to maintain any economic foundations. General Viele wrote in 1864 that 20,000 people in Norfolk were on the brink of starvation. The need for food and supplies had reached the point of desperation for many.

² Rabinowitz, p. xv.

For the six-month period ending on January 1, 1864, the city government of Norfolk took in receipts totalling \$13,241.20, compared with \$68,414.62 for the same six month period in 1859.³

Despite the pressures by the Army to relocate on many confiscated farms that had no guarantees of ownership and the depressed financial conditions, Norfolk's blacks began the New Year of 1865 as they had since 1863: celebrating their emancipation with a public parade. Escorted by a battery of the Second Colored U.S. Artillery and a company of the Colored Cavalry stationed in Norfolk, black leaders and representatives from two societies marched in the parade. The Colored Free-Masons and the Colored Charitable Society participated, publicly informing all of Norfolk of the self-help groups that, although patterned after white societies, had been begun by members in the black community. The New Regime reported that the sidewalks were crowded with blacks of all ages and both sexes, but concluded that the affair proceeded quietly and without incident.⁴

Shortly after the traditional New Year's celebration, Norfolk's black community suffered a heavy blow. The man who had been a long-time advocate and friend of the black community, who had established a freedman's normal school in Norfolk County and built school houses from funds obtained

³ Chambers, "Notes on Life," pp. 136-137.

⁴ New Regime, January 3, 1865, p. 1.

from confiscated lands, was relieved from duty by order of the President. Prior to his departure, General Benjamin Butler, on January 8, 1865, gave his farewell order and tribute to the Black troops of the Army of the James for their exemplary conduct during the war. Few troops were ever given higher praise by their commanding officer than Butler gave these men gathered to bid farewell to a fair and loyal commander:

In this army you have been treated, not as laborers, but as soldiers. You have shown yourselves worthy of the uniform you wear. The best officers of the Union seek to command you. Your bravery has won the admiration even of those who would be your masters. Your patriotism, fidelity, and courage have illustrated the best qualities of manhood. With the bayonet you have unlocked the iron-barred gates of prejudice, opening new fields of freedom, liberty, and equality of rights to yourselves and your race forever.⁵

H.M. Turner, chaplain of the First U.S.C.T., remarked that there was never a man more beloved by the black troops than General Butler. He was not only regarded as an invincible friend, "but as a benign father, one in whose hands their interests and rights were safe."⁶

With the transfer of Butler, events in Norfolk quickly degenerated as Butler's enemies assembled for the kill. General Israel Vodges complained to General Grant that large amounts of contraband goods were sent from Norfolk to rebel

⁵ New York Times, January 12, 1865, p. 1; Butler Correspondence, vol. 5, p. 612.

⁶ Butler Correspondence, vol. 5, p. 546.

forces in the Carolinas. Acting upon Grant's orders, General J.N. Palmer supposedly investigated and later confirmed these accusations. Eight Provost Marshals including R.T. Renshaw and G.W. Lane, were subsequently arrested on \$50,000 bond; the New Regime was suppressed; General G.F. Shepley, a Butler ally, was removed; and a military commission sat in place of the Provost Court, the only court in Norfolk that provided a semblance of equality before the law for the city's black citizens. In addition, Butler himself was accused of doing nothing good for the citizens of Norfolk and the Hampton Roads area.⁷

W. P. Webster, a loyal friend who kept Butler informed of occurrences in Norfolk, wrote him that black troops stationed in the city were assigned picket duty while white troops were given Provost guard duty. He believed this was done to prove Grant's assertion that large amounts of contraband goods were being stolen from the area. Webster argued that in his opinion, the facts did not justify Grant's and Palmer's accusations. Ironically, the state of affairs in Norfolk unraveled to such an extent after General E.O.C. Ord replaced Butler, that even the white citizens of Norfolk who considered themselves Butler's enemies, wanted a change in commanders, seeing Ord as worse than Butler. Eventually, Butler was exonerated of any charges of misconduct or embezzlement, thus

⁷ Butler Correspondence, vol. 5, pp. 550, 557.

silencing his contemporary enemies.⁸

Prior to Butler's exoneration, many of his southern enemies, particularly those who aligned themselves with the Republican Party as Unionists during the war, met to consolidate their forces. As early as February 1865, white Unionists began organizing their efforts to win political dominance in Virginia. In Norfolk, white Unionists set up a meeting to discuss the reorganization of the civil government and invited Governor Francis Pierpont to attend. Pierpont accepted the invitation probably as a means of garnering support from white Unionists throughout Virginia. Under President Lincoln's reconstruction plan, Pierpont was set up as governor of the restored government in Virginia in 1863. So small was his support among the white citizens in Virginia's federally-occupied areas that Pierpont was all but powerless to perform his duties. No doubt fearing a loss of position and power, Pierpont accepted the invitation to attend the meeting at Mechanics' Hall in Norfolk on February 16, 1865. Welcomed by an enthusiastic crowd, the Governor complimented the loyal citizens of Norfolk and Portsmouth for their patience during the Confederate domination and congratulated Norfolk's citizens on the restoration of their

⁸ Secretary Salmon P. Chase recognized the exemplary work Butler achieved, especially for the black community, while commanding the Department of Virginia and North Carolina. Chase was so impressed that he wanted Butler as commissioner of the newly formed Freedmen's Bureau, a post later accepted by General O.O. Howard. Butler Correspondence, vol. 5, pp. 562, 610-611.

civil government which was suspended during the war under Butler's military regime.⁹

In his speech, Pierpont attacked those who opposed the restoration of civil courts because they believed the magistrates were not qualified for their positions. Pierpont also validated his regime, reminding his listeners that he had worked to assist the federal government in every way possible. He then moved on to address the "negro question" and asked, "What is to be done with him?" Pierpont argued that everyone agreed that blacks were currently unfit to care for themselves and needed instruction. Although he was aware of the fact that many blacks had proved their capabilities in the army and others in industrial pursuits, the majority were unaccustomed to caring for themselves as free men and still relied upon the military for assistance.¹⁰

Justifying his stance and emphasizing the unfitness of blacks for suffrage, and the need for continued civil rule,

⁹ Edward Younger and James T. Moore's, The Governors of Virginia, 1860-1978 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1982), pp. 38-39, 41-42. This book provided a sound account of Governor Pierpont's term as head of Virginia's restored government. According to the authors, Pierpont was known as a moderate because he consistently cooperated with Union military authorities, commissioned officers, enlisted Union troops, and helped lay the foundations for a moderate policy regarding race relations. "Reorganization of Civil Government, Speech of Governor Pierpont [sic], Delivered At Mechanics' Hall in the City of Norfolk on Thursday Evening, February 16th, 1865," [courtesy of Kirn Memorial Library, Norfolk], p. 1.

¹⁰ "Reorganization of Civil Government, Speech of Governor Pierpont," pp. 3-5.

Pierpont publicly attacked Butler's regime and accused him of selling army supplies, intended to assist the people of Norfolk, on the black market. At that point Major R.S. Davis, a former staff officer during Butler's regime, stepped up on the platform and demanded to know whether Pierpont was charging Butler or General Shepley with knowing about these irregularities. All at once the meeting became enmeshed in a confusion of shouting, shoving, and bitter arguing. As things quieted, Pierpont continued to allude to the federal army's guilt in the matter, with the crowd's full approval, and Davis threatened to arrest Pierpont if he continued to pursue this line of accusations. Overwhelmed by the numerous supporters in the crowd, Davis withdrew amidst the crowd's thunderous cheers in support of Pierpont, and the meeting adjourned.¹¹

Alarmed by this meeting, black leaders decided to call a public meeting. On February 27, 1865, the black community held its first meeting at Mechanics' Hall, adopting resolutions protesting the restoration of civil government until freedom and equality for all of Norfolk's citizens were firmly established. Copies of this resolution were subsequently sent to President Lincoln, Major General Ord, the new commander of the Virginia District, and Brigadier General George W. Gordon, the army commander of the District.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

¹² Maxwell Whiteman, ed., "Equal Suffrage. Address from the Colored Citizens of Norfolk, Virginia, June 5, 1865," Afro-American History Series, III (Wilmington, Delaware:

In the midst of political and racial turmoil throughout the South and in the city of Norfolk, Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau on March 3, 1865, to feed, educate, and protect the former slaves. In May 1865 President Johnson appointed Major General Oliver Otis Howard Commissioner of the Bureau. Union General Orlando O. Brown, a long-time worker among the freedmen in the Norfolk area, was appointed Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia. Among the Bureau's many responsibilities was the hiring of Northern teachers to manage the Bureau's two-hundred-plus schools in Virginia. Additionally, the Bureau cooperated with benevolent societies in issuing rations, controlling confiscated and abandoned property, supervising labor contracts, maintaining freedmen's schools, and assisting black servicemen in collecting bounty claims, back pay, and pensions.¹³ Despite these provisions, times were extremely hard for the thousands of freedmen who crowded the streets of Norfolk.

Charles Grandy, an ex-slave who worked as a cook in the army and then served in the navy on the U.S.S. Lawrence, remembered the conditions in Norfolk during the years 1865-1866. Grandy recounted his experiences as a ditch digger earning \$1.25 per day. He remembered that after the end of slavery, many blacks came to Norfolk and ended up begging for

Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1970), p. 9. Hereafter cited as "Equal Suffrage."

¹³ **Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 1.**

food because of the lack of jobs to meet the pressing needs of the incoming blacks. The army tried to feed them, according to Grandy, but their numbers were too great for the limited rations supplied.¹⁴

Although the Bureau provided rations for as many freedmen as possible, with the limited funds at its disposal, clearly more was needed. For the month of August 1865, 573 men, women, and children in Norfolk were totally dependent upon the government for support (423 were children, twenty-six were men, and seventy-seven were women), although thirteen of the men receiving rations were compensated by the federal government through employment in government service. Norfolk's recipients received 9,749 rations valued at \$1,669.59, as compared with Virginia's total of 1,939 people receiving rations valued at \$8,581.58 for the month of August. Three months later, in November 1865, only 314 people from Norfolk were listed as government dependents which included fifty-eight men (twenty-two of whom were employed in government service), 115 women, and 184 children. The November dependents received 7,980 rations valued at \$1,614.60.¹⁵

Even with these government provisions of rations to the freedmen, Charles E. Johnston, Assistant Superintendent of the

¹⁴ Weevils in the Wheat, p. 118.

¹⁵ **Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69**, BRFAL, M1048, roll 55, pp. 1, 10, 104.

Freedmen's Bureau in Norfolk, felt the amount had been cut so severely and the quality was so coarse that it was scarcely enough to live on. For the elderly freedmen residing at the Rope Walk Hospital, the suffering was greater because the rations were too coarse to be eaten. Although the Commissary General's office agreed to change the rations (from hard bread to bread stuffs, and from salt beef to pork or bacon), the suffering continued because of the quality and amount of rations distributed. In his letters to Captain A.L. Flagg, Johnston seemed to hint that the Quartermaster's Department was defrauding the government of rations by selling the better quality of foodstuffs on the black market. Although Johnston could not prove his suspicions, he recommended that some of the freedmen be given Hospital Rations as a supplement.¹⁶

The stated policy of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865 was to protect blacks from white violence and re-enslavement while concurrently compelling them to work on plantations. These directives led the Bureau to support discriminatory regulations which ordered the arrest of black vagrants, prohibited the movement of blacks from plantations, prohibited freedmen from traveling without passes, and compelled them to sign annual labor contracts. The last regulation created special problems for Bureau agents because it coerced blacks into signing contracts committing them to work below market

¹⁶ **Register of Letters Received and Endorsements Received, Aug. 1865-April 1867, vol. 1, BRFAL, Record Group 105, File 4178, pp. 31, 66-69.**

price. It also made them subject to white fraud.¹⁷

To combat these problems, Assistant Commissioner Orlando Brown issued Special Order No. 12 ordering all superintendents to report on the conditions of freedmen within their respective districts. To be sure that the superintendents would do a thorough job, Brown instructed them to see whether freedmen were willing to work cooperatively for their former masters; whether the former masters treated the freedmen kindly; whether those masters favored education for the freedmen; whether the freedmen were being charged a fair rent on the land; and whether the behavior of the former masters inspired trust. A few weeks later, as extra insurance that his orders would be carried out, Brown issued Special Order No. 3. This order reiterated Brown's concern that each superintendent make a concerted effort to insure that freedmen were treated properly and not defrauded in their employment contracts. It also informed each superintendent that all the records and contracts would be examined with any deviations reported to him.¹⁸

In November 1865 Assistant Superintendent Johnston faced another problem entailing regular protests from whites against freedmen carrying weapons. Local ordinances forbade the carrying of concealed weapons by anyone in the city of

¹⁷ Theodore Wilson, The Black Codes of the South (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1965), p. 59.

¹⁸ **Orders and Circulars Received, 1865-68**, BRFal, Record Group 105, File 4158.

Norfolk. Johnston did not doubt that some freedmen were in violation of that ordinance; however, he believed the local whites were more frequently in violation of that law than were the blacks. A case currently before the Municipal Court involved a white man who deliberately shot a black man twice. Despite these problems, Johnston did not feel a Freedmen's Court would ease tensions and insure equity for all of Norfolk's citizens.¹⁹

The Freedmen's Bureau issued numerous general orders and circulars specifying that blacks be treated as a special class requiring special regulations. Although directed at freedmen, these regulations applied equally to all free blacks. The irony was that, although these regulations were designed to protect blacks from abuse, they were issued on the assumption that all blacks were ignorant and inexperienced. For educated black citizens of Norfolk, such as Dr. Thomas Bayne, Joseph T. Wilson, and the Reverend John M. Brown, this assumption was an insult, and the regulations were an impediment to their achievement of equality before the law.²⁰

During the war, Virginia was the center of Confederate

¹⁹ The Freedmen's Court was established by the Freedmen's Bureau to handle civil and criminal cases in which freedmen and freemen were involved so as to insure impartiality in the outcome of their cases. It was not until later that a Freedmen's Court was established in Norfolk. **Register of Letters Received and Endorsements Received, Aug. 1865-April 1867**, vol. 1, BRFal, Record Group 105, File 4178, pp. 205-206.

²⁰ Theodore Wilson, p. 58. See Chapter 6 for a more thorough discussion of these men.

power and geared its entire economy to the war effort, although a considerable number of "Unionists" were powerful enough to secede from Virginia to form West Virginia. Virginia supplied the military and civilian populations with many of the necessities and was the chief battleground during the war. The result was that by the end of the war Virginia had sustained severe damage to its land (i.e., large stretches of the Shenandoah Valley lay in ruins), its economy (i.e., wrecked crops, burned barns, damaged fences and homes, and destroyed bridges), and its people (i.e., 15,000 out of 170,000 soldiers dead while many survivors lost limbs and eyes). Norfolk did not suffer the damage that many parts of the state did. Not surprisingly, however, many survivors of the war migrated away from the centers of devastation to areas like Norfolk. Many southern blacks migrated away from areas where they were held in bondage to large cities in the South and East, such as Norfolk, where food, clothing, shelter, and protection were provided by the Union army or relief organizations, or to the southwestern part of the United States where employment opportunities were better.²¹

²¹ Virginius Dabney, Virginia: The New Dominion (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1971), pp. 353-54; Carter G. Woodson, The Negro in Our History, 10th ed., further revised and enl. (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1962), pp. 353-354; Carter G. Woodson, A Century of Negro Migration (Washington, D.C.: Association for Study of Negro Life and History, 1918), p. 118; Walter Fleming, ed., Documentary History of Reconstruction, vol. 1 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), pp. 77-78; Charles Simmons, "Racist Americans in Multi-Racial Society: Confederate Exiles in Brazil," Journal of Negro History 67 (Spring 1982), pp. 34-36.

With the assassination of Abraham Lincoln on April 14, 1865, Andrew Johnson became President of the United States. Johnson continued Lincoln's Reconstruction program in April of 1865 by issuing proclamations for seven of the unreconstructed states, which required constitutional conventions and the appointment of military governors. The spirit behind the reconstruction program, however, was not the same spirit as that under the Lincoln administration. Johnson was a poor white from Tennessee who fought his way to the top by overcoming opposition from upper-class whites. Consequently, Johnson, being a working-class white, probably viewed free blacks as an economic threat. He envisaged the readmission of seceded states on the basis of control, both on the federal and state levels, by small white farmers. But his concept of democracy did not include blacks. For Johnson, the war was the effort to defeat the economically rich and powerful, and his reconstruction plan did not include blacks as beneficiaries. Thus, Johnson's plan for restoring seceded states did not provide assistance for ex-slaves.²²

Acting quickly upon his plan of Presidential Reconstruction, President Johnson issued two proclamations which established terms for individual amnesty. In the first,

²² Eric L. McKittrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 120, 122; Dabney, pp. 354-355; E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in the United States (New York: Macmillan Company, revised ed., 1957; original printing, 1949); Harold Hyman, ed., The Radical Republican and Reconstruction, 1861-1870 (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1967), p. 246.

Johnson issued an executive order to "reestablish the authority of the United States and to execute the laws within the geographical limits known as the State of Virginia" on May 9 1865.²³ The Confederate government was declared null and void, while the restored government of Virginia was declared legal and Francis Pierpont was recognized as governor. In the second proclamation, Johnson extended full pardon and the restoration of civil rights to all whites who took the oath of allegiance by June 1, 1865. The proclamation granted amnesty (with a \$20,000 liability) "to all but the most extreme secessionists who might seek clemency, and, upon good behavior, obtain a pardon." Quite as expected, many rebels rushed home to take the oath so as to "reclaim their confiscated property" and the vote. Norfolk citizens such as J.J. Biggs, Emma Blacknall, and William Barry, clerk of the U.S. District Court, applied for pardons and the restoration of their confiscated property. A total of fifty-five dwellings were abandoned, confiscated, or leased by Freedmen Bureau officials and the Army between January 1863 and June 1865. The majority of these dwellings were used as military quarters, while the remainder were used as offices, shops, and schools for freedmen.²⁴

²³ Alrutheus Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia (Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926), p. 9.

²⁴ Throughout 1865, the Freedmen's Bureau in Norfolk was flooded with requests by former Confederates for the restoration of their confiscated property. Unfortunately for

The end of the Civil War also brought about unexpected changes for the Republicans and blacks throughout the nation. Johnson, initially viewed by Republicans as a moderate, eventually aligned himself with the ex-Confederates. Initially, he gave vent to the hostilities he had towards the old leaders of the South and towards the blacks. In the case of blacks, Johnson's antagonism was based on their alleged "inferiority" to whites. Johnson regarded blacks as free people of color who owned themselves, but not as people qualified to vote. At the war's conclusion, Johnson informed the northern black troops that they must prove themselves competent in order to claim their full rights as citizens of the United States and that he hoped the "experiment" of freedom would prove successful. If not, he warned the blacks, they might be deported. Johnson also remarked to a delegation of black gentlemen, who requested that he redress the wrongs suffered by southern blacks, that many poor southern whites had suffered wrongs as well: what of them? It was in this brief exchange, according to the Norfolk Post newspaper,²⁵

many of the blacks, restoration of the ex-Confederate property meant eviction for them, including some who had paid (but received no deeds) for the confiscated property. Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction, p. 9; Schwartz, p. 112; McKittrick, p. 7; New York Times, June 19, 1865, p. 4; Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 52, pp. 223, 251 and roll 50, pp. 3, 7, 11, 127.

²⁵ The Norfolk Post was established in 1865 at the end of the war. The Post was known for its blatantly unsympathetic views towards blacks, and consistently defended the South, criticized northern radicals, derided military rule, and

that Johnson "struck the key note of his policy and gave a hint to politicians as well as philanthropists that--it were well to heed." The editors of the Post believed they could take Johnson's comments as a sign that the nation would begin to think and act on the wrongs and sufferings of the poor whites. They predicted that the outcome of the next Presidential election would not depend upon the Black Republicans' vote but rather on votes of the poor whites.²⁶

Norfolk's politicians paid considerable heed to Johnson's initial hints of the policies that would follow. The Norfolk Post frequently published editorials discouraging the black citizenry from "the folly" and possible dangers of agitating for political and social equality. In a series of satirical editorials, the paper recounted the ongoing saga of Mr. Calvin Pepper and Mr. Peter Snicker: two self-deputed, mischief-making leaders. In actuality, these two men did exist, although the Post denigrated their efforts for the purpose of influencing the opinion of the educated within the black community. According to the Post's version of what was occurring in Norfolk, Mr. Pepper encouraged his black brethren to believe in their own superiority; Mr. Snicker, a white

decried suffrage for blacks. Salt Water, pp. 10-11.

²⁶ Norfolk Post, June 26, 1865, p. 2. In February 1866, a delegation of black men again visited Johnson urging him to support their right to vote. Refusing to yield to their urgings, the delegation concluded that the issue would have to be settled by the people, Norfolk Post, February 9, 1866, p. 2; Paul Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 18-19.

radical, echoed similar sentiments. The editors snidely assured their readers that the more sensible and shrewd individuals within the black community laughed at the philosophical nonsense spouted by Misters Pepper and Snicker. They subtly warned that those carried away by Pepper and Snicker's speeches would find themselves unemployed and in some way harmed.²⁷

The Norfolk Post's editors also published unsigned cards and letters from black citizens who disagreed with the platform of Mr. Pepper and Mr. Snicker. The editors did this to give the veneer of having the black community's best interests in mind. The Post also repeatedly denounced the idea of black suffrage as detrimental to the black community and dangerous to the peace and prosperity of the city. Fortunately, Norfolk's blacks were sufficiently unified and their leaders politically savvy enough to ignore the patronizing sentiments of the former rebels. This was not to say that the black community worked to provoke the anger of the ex-Confederates; to the contrary, black leaders did everything they could to assure their fellow white citizens they wanted to live on peaceable terms by showing them every respect. Edward Williams, a black leader, explained that the mayor and city council members were invited to attend the black citizens' meetings as a goodwill gesture to demonstrate that the whites of Norfolk had nothing to fear from the

²⁷ Norfolk Post, June 26, 1865, p. 2.

blacks. As time passed and as long as the blacks did not challenge the status quo, some of the upper class former rebels showed a desire to live at peace with the blacks while the lower class did not.²⁸

President Johnson's views clearly reflected the prevailing lower-to-middle-class opinion of blacks. Despite any efforts on their part to allay fears of insurrection, whites remained hostile and refused to consider the idea of political sovereignty for the Negro race. In emphasizing his point of view and dispelling any doubts about his feelings, President Johnson commented in a December 1867 message to Congress that blacks had "'shown less capacity for government than any other race of people. No independent government of any form has ever been successful in their hands. On the contrary, whenever they were left to their own devices, they have shown a constant tendency to relapse into barbarism.'"²⁹ Clearly, Andrew Johnson was ill-equipped and ill-prepared to handle the problems of reconstruction.

Despite Johnson's broad threats of deportation and his lack of understanding of reconstruction's problems, the reality of the situation was that blacks comprised fourteen percent of the total population in the United States, with the

²⁸ Norfolk Post, June 27, 1865, p. 2 and June 25, 1865, p. 2; U.S., Congress, House Executive Document, No. 72, XI, 39th Congress, 2d sess., 1866 (Washington, D.C., 1867), p. 33. Hereafter cited as "Riot."

²⁹ Robert Cruden, The Negro in Reconstruction (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1969), p. 5.

great majority concentrated in the South.³⁰ In the spring of 1865, Census reports estimated that approximately 500,000 blacks were distributed among 700,000 whites in the state of Virginia, with many of the counties having black majorities. The Census estimated that in 1865, Norfolk's population experienced a slight increase among blacks and whites (total population of 15,000: 11,250 whites and 3750 blacks).³¹

An article from the Boston Commonwealth, entitled "The Reign of Terror in Norfolk," reprinted in the Norfolk Post on July 13, 1865, described the outrages committed against the freedmen of the city. The article asserted that former rebels and white Union soldiers conspired to injure blacks. According to the writer, on June 22, 1865, a riot occurred in Norfolk against blacks and their property by ex-rebels on the day the Tabb ticket defeated the Union ticket for mayor.³² Additionally, on the previous Thursday, men from the N.Y. 13th Artillery, in their drunken state, began assaulting blacks. On Friday, a group of black men wanting to go to a circus were

³⁰ There were 3,838,000 freed slaves and 258,000 previously free blacks living in the South in 1865. Cruden, pp. 5-6.

³¹ Benjamin Childs, The Negroes of Lynchburg, Virginia (Charlottesville: Surbee-Arundale Company, 1923), p. 15; John P. McConnell, Negroes and Their Treatment in Virginia From 1865 to 1867 (Pulaski, VA: B.D. Smith and Brothers, 1910), p. 1; Salt Water, p. 3.

³² Thomas C. Tabb, a Conservative and hardened secessionist, won the mayoral race against the Union party, a league of northern and southern Republicans--both black and white. Wertenbaker, pp. 235-236, 248.

fired upon, with two or three being shot. Other acts of violence included a black man found hanged from a lamp post while on Sunday two black men were found hanged from trees; a black man shot and robbed while leaving church; and two blacks shot at while leaving church. The writer concluded that daily white boys and soldiers could be heard yelling "'Nig, Nig'" at the sight of a black man and often rushed to assault him.³³

On June 19, 1865, Governor Pierpont read President Johnson's proclamation to the General Assembly and submitted several important recommendations. First, he requested the establishment of the institution of marriage for blacks, then the "abrogation of the disfranchising clause of the Constitution of 1864"³⁴ for the ex-Confederates. The General Assembly passed an act which would submit the disfranchising article to the electorate at the next election; that is to say, disfranchisement could be removed by taking the Presidential oath of allegiance. The Pierpont government of Virginia was more eager to restore suffrage to the former white secessionists than to enfranchise the blacks. The reason no action was taken to enfranchise Virginia's blacks until 1866 was that the General Assembly, the Unionists, the

³³ The Boston Commonwealth was a northern Republican newspaper. It is not surprising that the Post denied the credibility of this article and warned the Norfolk government to take notice of this sentiment. The contents of the article was verified by the letters of Lucy and Sarah Chase in Henry Swint's Dear Ones, p. 167.

³⁴ Taylor, p. 10.

Radicals, the Conservatives, and even some of the blacks, were divided on the question of whether blacks were politically educated enough to take on the responsibility of voting. Most of the blacks, the Radicals and some of the Unionists believed that blacks were ready.³⁵

To begin the reconstruction process under Johnson's plan, each Confederate state held a state convention in 1865 to write a new constitution. In these constitutions, the states undergoing reconstruction were required to abolish slavery, repudiate the Confederate state debt, and void any prewar ordinances calling for secession. Afterwards, the reconstructed states were allowed to hold regular elections in which federal, state, and local representatives were elected.³⁶

Cognizant of the efforts being made by many white Unionists who were not in favor of immediate black suffrage, the blacks of Norfolk were unwilling to allow their fate to be determined by an all-white group or the promise of full citizenship to be betrayed by a nation that owed them a tremendous debt. They were aware that their legal, political, and social status remained undefined, although they were free. Consequently, three months before the constitutional convention met in Richmond, Norfolk's blacks held meetings and issued a pamphlet affirming their stance on equal suffrage and

³⁵ Ibid., p. 10; McKittrick, p. 9.

³⁶ McKittrick, p. 9.

encouraging other Virginia blacks to organize and unite politically. "Equal Suffrage. Address from the Colored Citizens of Norfolk, Virginia," was printed and issued on June 5, 1865, to all blacks throughout Virginia. The efforts by Norfolk's blacks was indicative of their determination to set their own agenda for full freedom, citizenship rights, and enfranchisement.³⁷ From April to June 1865, blacks met at Norfolk in a series of meetings during which a pamphlet was published with the objective, "to give a succinct account of the movement, in the city of Norfolk, Virginia, to obtain for the colored people of this state and Nation its inestimable and indispensable right of suffrage."³⁸ Blacks feared that their rights would be snatched away when white Virginians made an attempt to restore civil government, as had happened under General Viele's administration in 1862 until Butler was recalled as the area's military commander. Shortly before Lincoln's assassination, Norfolk's blacks leaders petitioned him and appealed to Butler for protection. They also began forming political groups, such as the Colored Monitor Union Club on April 4 at Mechanics' Hall with the Reverend William I. Hodges as president, to secure the right to vote and to promote union and harmony among the black community in

³⁷ Philip Foner and George Walker, eds., Proceedings of the Black National and State Conventions (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), p. 80; "Equal Suffrage," p. i.

³⁸ "Equal Suffrage," p. 9.

Norfolk. Dr. Thomas Bayne, an ex-slave and chairman of the Committee which held a public meeting on June 5, 1865, and the Reverend John Brown, pastor of the A.M.E. Church on Bute Street, recounted the efforts made by Norfolk's blacks to achieve the right to vote in the "Equal Suffrage" pamphlet.³⁹

Five other meetings followed on April 25, May 2, May 11, May 16, and June 5. In these meetings, the black community met together and adopted a program which advocated the establishment of land associations to assist blacks in becoming landowners. The program also promoted efforts to secure wage rates, the protection of the right to serve on juries and to testify in court, and a resolution asserting their right to vote. They further established committees to contact blacks in other cities throughout Virginia to establish similar organizations. By June 1865, Williamsburg and Hampton had similar associations functioning in their cities.⁴⁰

The pamphlet, "Equal Suffrage," resulted primarily from the June 5 meeting hastily called by the black leaders once word got around that state elections had been set, and from the state constitutional elections held on May 30. Norfolk's black leaders saw that a restored civil government, under the

³⁹ Interestingly, the pamphlet was published in New Bedford, Massachusetts, where Dr. Bayne resided prior to returning to Norfolk, rather than in Norfolk, "Equal Suffrage," p. i; Foner and Walker, p. 80.

⁴⁰ "Equal Suffrage," p. i.

leadership of Governor Pierpont, would lead to the election of Norfolk representatives who did not favor black suffrage. The June 5 meeting, organized by five black and two white leaders, was attended by one hundred and fifty whites and over two thousand blacks. Also in attendance were the Union candidates to the state constitutional convention, who with one exception, pledged that if elected they would vote for the enfranchisement of blacks. Local newspapers branded this meeting "incendiary" and created tremendous fear among the whites in Norfolk.⁴¹

Addressing all who read the pamphlet as "Fellow Citizens," Bayne and Brown discussed their appointment by the organizing committee at a public meeting, held on June 5 at the Catharine Street Baptist Church, which began to lay the foundations for their claim of equal rights and suffrage. They described how blacks had toiled in this nation since 1619, had helped to develop every colony in America, had caused the crops and lands of the South to flourish, and had fought bravely in each war. Despite these accomplishments, blacks were still deprived of basic, fundamental rights as citizens. They noted that in many southern states, it remained a crime to educate blacks or for blacks to travel without passes. Additionally, southern state constitutions contained no provisions to insure the legality of their marriages, the right to own property, citizenship rights, or

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 11-13.

the right to negotiate their own labor contracts. In Norfolk, the writers mentioned that many returning whites refused to pay wages for the labor or duties contracted by the blacks, and no recourse in the courts was possible.⁴² Instead, the request for wages was met "by a contemptuous and violent refusal to honor the stipulated compensation."⁴³

Bayne and Brown stressed the need for action, not reaction, among blacks and those sympathetic to the cause of freedom, for which so many gave their lives. They noted how recently, the Virginia legislature, acting under the advice of Governor Pierpont, restored the vote to thousands of secessionist whites and repealed sections in the new state constitution forbidding the assumption of any rebel state debts. In Norfolk, the Mayor and City Council acted quickly upon this turn of events by voting to pay off the bonds purchased to support the rebel cause. Bayne and Brown also noted with disgust that the enemies of blacks sought to prove black unfitness to exercise the right to vote by arguing that they were uneducated and unaccustomed to caring for themselves. Themselves products of both slavery and education, Bayne and Brown derisively refuted this argument, noting how thousands of blacks were educated daily and in the evening by the hundreds of missionaries and teachers sent

⁴² Ibid., pp., 1-3.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 4.

South since the beginning of the war.⁴⁴

Bayne and Brown advised their brethren in Virginia that the settlement of the question of their right to vote depended upon them. They encouraged all political associations of black men in Virginia to communicate their existence to Joseph T. Wilson of Norfolk, so that they could coordinate and cooperate with each other to achieve their goals, and to form black labor associations to protect their interests. They warned their readers, however, that Virginia's whites were forming similar political and labor associations to prevent blacks from ever receiving the vote or rising above the economic poverty level by fixing prices and controlling wage rates. The pamphlet concluded with the admonition that "the surest guarantee for the independence and ultimate elevation of the colored people will be found in their becoming the owners of the soil on which they live and labor."⁴⁵

At 8:00 a.m. on May 25, election day, a large meeting of five hundred blacks took place at the Bute Street Methodist Church. Norfolk's blacks had mobilized their community to vote. On that day, over one thousand blacks voted, registering at their places of worship. The Bute Street meeting decided that a committee consisting of four groups, one for each Ward, would proceed to the polls to record whether the votes of black citizens were received. The

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 4, 7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

committees from Wards One, Three, and Four reported that the conductors of the elections refused to accept the black votes while those in Ward Two recorded the votes on a separate list for "votes whose qualifications were a matter of dispute."⁴⁶ Each of the committees recorded the vote rejections at the Bute Street A.M.E. Church while those in the Second Ward proceeded to the polling place in groups of ten.⁴⁷

The total number of black votes cast in the Second Ward was 1,066, all for Union candidates Todd, DeCordy, and Hall who, city-wide and among the white voters, came in second. This outcome was a miracle given the fact that three years earlier, anyone suspected of Unionist leanings was driven out of town on a rail. That evening, the blacks met to decide how to handle the current situation. The following day, Calvin Pepper and the committee called on the Inspectors of Election at City Hall to protest the rejection of the black votes, but without success. The black political leaders therefore resolved that a pamphlet recounting recent political events in Norfolk should be written and distributed nationwide and that a petition should be drawn declaring the election void, because of the improper refusal of the black vote.⁴⁸

Not surprisingly, the ex-secessionist candidates won the election. Black leaders contested the election on the grounds

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p., 14.

that the votes of qualified registered black men were rejected solely on the basis of color. The Committee reported this outrage to the New York Times which quickly published this indignity with the hope that its readers, many of whom fought in the war to free blacks legally and politically, would rise up in outrage. Nothing was ever done by the conciliatory Pierpont government, however, to correct this violation.⁴⁹

On June 30, 1865, a convention was called by the Union Association of Virginia⁵⁰ either to amend the old constitution or to frame a new one, so as to prevent the complete domination of the state by ex-secessionists. The convention representatives were chosen by Virginia citizens, without regard to color, but excluded as members or electors all persons who had voluntarily aided the rebellion. The convention proposed that Governor Pierpont's government be regarded as a territorial or provisional government since it had been established to guarantee the total and equal civil rights of all former masters.⁵¹

This organization of Unionists severely condemned the policies of the Restored government because of its feeble

⁴⁹ The publication of the incident by the New York Times was surprising since it was a politically conservative newspaper in 1865. New York Times, June 4, 1865, p. 2; American Missionary, 9 (August 1865), p. 172.

⁵⁰ The purpose of the Union League was to secure equal rights for blacks and to foster support for the Republican party especially among freedmen throughout the South. The Negro in Virginia, p. 227.

⁵¹ Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction, pp. 11-13.

attempts to form compromising policies to satisfy the two extremist groups of the State--the Unionists and the former Secessionists. The Unionists, however, were not so much interested in fulfilling the desires of the freedmen as they were in furthering their own political goals.⁵² The freedmen decided, as a result, to express their own dissatisfaction with the government in a strongly-worded petition. In August 1865 the convention reviewed the evidence submitted by the freedmen which called for the need for protection because of

'the indignities, brutalities and inhumanities' to which the Negroes were subjected as slaves, [and the] large number of Virginians [who bore] the Negroes undeserved malice because they were black, and had been freed by the United States Government.⁵³

The freedmen also demanded equal rights, privileges, and immunities so as to be guaranteed legal protection. The freedmen declared their readiness to exercise their right to vote intelligently, by pledging their loyalty to the State and to the Federal government.⁵⁴

The fall of 1865 witnessed a breakdown in relations

⁵² Ibid., pp. 13-14. The resolutions adopted expressed dissatisfaction with the policies of the state administration and the protection against "the removal of the disfranchising restrictions against secessionists, and requesting legislation to bar such persons from office."

⁵³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 15. Congress refused to seat those ex-secessionist representatives from Virginia, but the General Assembly accepted and seated them.

between President Johnson and Congress because of events in the South. Two developments emerged by the winter of 1865-66 that proved intolerable to the North and created an irrevocable break between Johnson and Congress: the character of men being elected to public office, most of whom were high-ranking ex-Confederates, and Southern behavior towards the black community, particularly in the area of labor contracts that all but re-enslaved blacks. In Virginia, this policy was reflected in the General Assembly's removal from office of almost all the Unionists. This was accomplished because of Pierpont's conciliatory policies that allowed former Confederates to seize political power shortly after the end of the war.⁵⁵

To make matters worse and without warning, on February 19, 1866, Johnson vetoed the bill extending the Freedmen's Bureau. He did this because he saw the measure as a Republican scheme to enlarge the powers of the federal government. It was not until Johnson vetoed the Civil Rights Bill on March 27, however, that the northern press totally abandoned him. In his own defense, Johnson charged that both bills violated the federal constitution.⁵⁶

The years under Johnson's administration were hard times for the African-American community in the nation and in

⁵⁵ McKittrick, pp. 4, 10; Younger and Moore, p. 40.

⁵⁶ McKittrick, pp. 11-12; Michael Perman, Reunion Without Compromise: The South and Reconstruction, 1865-1868 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 186.

Norfolk. Freedmen were required, by law, to make labor contracts with their former owners, and the local Freedmen's Bureau was charged with enforcing those contracts. Many of the freedmen who left their plantations and fled to areas occupied by the Union army were forced to return to their home plantations, "and the Bureau became an agency which assisted white supremacy and black subordination."⁵⁷ Not all Bureau agents enforced such discriminatory practices, but those who refused to were soon replaced by others who would.⁵⁸

The Norfolk Post continually published articles defending its hostile view of blacks. In an August 1, 1865, article, the editors argued that it had published several lengthy reports proving that blacks were useless and worthless members of society as free men. They argued that without coercion, blacks refused to work or to assume their responsibilities as citizens. They concluded that slavery was the blacks' proper status and without it, they would continue to be vagrants and charges of the state. By December, the Norfolk Post was warning whites of the coming black insurrection. Although any hint at an insurrection was denied by Norfolk's black leaders, the newspaper finally issued a warning to all blacks in Norfolk: if they were arming themselves in preparation for an insurrection and a disturbance occurred, a massacre would

⁵⁷ Engs, p. 121.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

result.⁵⁹

Black politician and dentist, Dr. Thomas Bayne, wrote to John C. Underwood, chairman of the Virginia Constitutional Convention, that it was suicidal for any state to disfranchise part of its natural-born citizens. Underwood expressed his understanding of the black people's distress in feeling that Governor Pierpont had abandoned them, that President Johnson had violated promises made by Lincoln, that the Black Codes would be enforced, that the Freedmen's Bureau was turning them over to their masters, and that the whites would bring about their own prophesy of making freedom a curse to the black people of Virginia. Underwood encouraged Bayne to be more optimistic about the outcome of their struggle to obtain suffrage. He said they must become as educated as possible and subscribe to and start a newspaper which would attest to their common interest in the community, in accordance with Section 6 of Virginia's Bill of Rights. If these things were done, no one could legally deny them their right of suffrage.⁶⁰

On January 15, 1866, despite Underwood's promises, the General Assembly, after considering the question of vagrancy and compulsory labor, chose to decide the question exclusively from the employers' viewpoint. The legislators passed an act

⁵⁹ Norfolk Post, August 1, 1865, p. 2, December 2, 1865, p. 2, December 18, 1865, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Norfolk Post, October 2, 1865, p. 1.

which empowered special officers (e.g., overseers of the poor, special county police, corporation police) to bring any blacks found guilty under the vagrancy laws before the Justices of the Peace for trial. If at that time the freedman was found guilty of vagrancy, he was hired out for a term not exceeding three months. If during this period, the vagrant refused to work, the employer was entitled to his services free for one extra month. Also, no employer was obligated to hire the accused vagrant for any length of time. If no employer came forward, the vagrant was used for public services and confined with a ball and chain. In essence, the freedman would be relegated to virtual servitude once again.⁶¹

In addition to the vagrancy law, the General Assembly passed a law regulating labor contracts between blacks and whites. This law stipulated that no contract should engage the services of blacks for more than two months. The law also provided no penalty clause against the laborer should he break the contract. But when this law was linked with the vagrancy laws, the consequences of breaking the contract were severe.⁶²

In an unsuccessful response to the actions by the General Assembly, sixteen of Norfolk's black leaders wrote a letter to the editors of the Norfolk Post that was published on January 22, 1866. In the letter, these leaders sought to address the problems of black criminals, paupers, and murderers infesting

⁶¹ McKittrick, pp. 16-19.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 18-19.

the city and causing problems for all its citizens. Among those signing the letter were black ministers such as the Reverends John M. Brown, Thomas Henson, Lewis Tucker, William Lewis, and W.E.S. Peck, and black business leaders such as Thomas Paige, John Jordan, Jacob Riddicks, William Keeling, Joseph T. Wilson, and Thomas Bayne. As a demonstration of their commitment to maintaining peace as good citizens, these leaders publicly denounced these criminals and called upon the civil authorities to arrest them. To assist city officials in ridding Norfolk of these unwanted migrants, the black citizens called upon the civil authorities to grant them their rights as citizens and the right to testify in court. They concluded their letter with the plea, "Let us bury [the black Codes and slavery] Both together--and cultivate the blossoms of the tree of Peace and good will towards all men."⁶³

While Virginia and Norfolk struggled to restore the antebellum status quo, Andrew Johnson struggled with its restoration on the national front. Congressional leaders such as Thaddeus Stevens, Charles Sumner, William Fessenden, and Henry Wilson believed that "inasmuch as the Southern States had rebelled and had failed to maintain their cause, they were then subject to the same treatment as any other people in a

⁶³ Norfolk Post, January 22, 1866, p. 3. The black ministers were from the following churches: A.M.E. Church (Bute Street), Catharine Street Baptist Church, Bute Street Baptist Church, Protestant Methodist Church, and M.E. Church (James Street). Other black leaders who signed the letter included Jubiter White, George C. Cook, Edward T. Williams, John Jackson, and George W. Dawley.

conquered territory."⁶⁴ The views of these leaders were in direct conflict with the Reconstruction plans of Lincoln and Johnson because the Congressional Republican leaders believed that these states had actually cut their ties with the Union. Johnson and Lincoln believed, on the other hand, that secession was impossible. Thus, those states were still a part of the Union.⁶⁵

By the fall, a period of relative peace and calm was almost at an end. On October 12, 1865, Virginia held the state and Congressional elections in which there was widespread participation. The state legislature was "authorized to amend the suffrage article of the Constitution,"⁶⁶ many former secessionists were elected to both Congress and the General Assembly. Not surprisingly, the General Assembly made it their first order of business to repeal the anti-Confederate suffrage restrictions imposed by the 1864 constitution.⁶⁷

During this period many whites pursued a policy of "defiant optimism" and called for government action with regard to the freedmen in the State. They urged that freedmen be required to prove whether they could behave responsibly as free men; and if they refused to obtain employment, then the

⁶⁴ Woodson, The Negro in Our History, pp. 241-242.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 242.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

county governments should treat any and all able-bodied freedmen as vagrants. Few legislators considered the plight of the black man during this period. They did not consider that the paltry wages offered by the planters were not enough to encourage blacks to enter into or remain in labor contracts. Nor did they consider that the planters already had preconceived notions that blacks would not work unless compelled. The planters tended to use the excuse of poverty due to the ravages of war for the paltry wages offered the freedmen.⁶⁸

In his work on race relations in the urban South, Howard Rabinowitz discussed how newly freed blacks drifted into the cities unprepared for the new environment. Certainly this was true of Norfolk as thousands of scantily-clad and hungry freedmen poured into a city unprepared to feed or employ them. Rabinowitz pointed out that since southern whites were unaccustomed to blacks being anything but subservient, tensions and frequent outbreaks of violence resulted. For Norfolk, at least, the years 1865 and 1866 supported Rabinowitz's assertion.⁶⁹

The war brought changes in the composition of Norfolk's population. There was a temporary influx of black immigrants into the area during the time of the war. Shortly after the war, these immigrants were confronted with returning rebel

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 15-16, 106; Perman, p. 28.

⁶⁹ Rabinowitz, p. x.

soldiers, and the result was a pressing need for more food, supplies, schools, teachers, and protection by the Bureau and Union Army. The black community in Norfolk was now composed of three distinct groups--the indigenous freedmen, the migrant freedmen, and the free blacks, while the white community was composed of two factions--the former rebels and the Unionists. Two naturally hostile groups--bitter Confederates and newly freed blacks--inevitably clashed. Many of the returning whites were angered by the increased population of blacks and their new-found political and social independence. They were also angry over the problems created by the war's destruction, the occupation of the Union Army and Freedmen's Bureau, and the creation of the test oath.⁷⁰

George Rable listed four categories of racial violence utilized by the rebels during the early years of Reconstruction: spontaneous brawls, attacks by one group on isolated members of another, a full-scale assault of one race on another, and random assaults and stabbings. All were frequent violent themes during this period.⁷¹ In Norfolk, these incidents of racial violence were usually perpetrated by the whites against the blacks and sparked by the presence of black troops, a political rally, or a parade marking a

⁷⁰ In Norfolk, the black community increased to over 3,000 by the end of the war in 1865. Dabney, pp. 361-362; Theodore Wilson, p. 91.

⁷¹ George C. Rable, But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), p. 22.

significant political event that favored blacks.

William Keeling, a prominent black citizen, commented on the deterioration of race relations in Norfolk immediately following the war. Keeling said that there was a very bad feeling towards blacks in the city, "more so now than before the surrender of the Confederate army." He added that even justice through the courts was an almost impossible achievement. For a black to get a fair trial in Norfolk, according to Keeling, was a trick "yet to be tried." Keeling said that blacks would be in serious trouble if they had to look to the civil courts for protection and justice.⁷²

In the city of Norfolk with a total population of 14,260 in 1860, 4,330 were classified as colored. By 1870, the total population had risen to 19,228, with 8,766 classified as colored.⁷³ Quite as one might have expected, the majority of the whites were extremely uneasy when the newly enfranchised and numerically large groups of blacks began to assert their rights as citizens of the United States and of the local community. Partly as a refusal to acknowledge the black population's new constitutional status, Norfolk's civil authorities repeatedly violated black people's rights as citizens. Blacks were frequently brought before the Mayor's

⁷² "Riot," p. 29.

⁷³ John Hammond Moore, "The Norfolk Riot: 16 April 1866," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 90 (April 1982), p. 155; U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, p. 281.

Court without any incriminating evidence or counsel because many white lawyers refused to represent them. Laws were passed to discipline and discriminate against blacks for the purpose of preventing them from participating in the various levels of the legal process. Consequently, the Freedmen's Bureau was forced continually to intervene on behalf of the freedmen in the courts, a situation which led to the government accepting black testimony in cases involving blacks and whites.⁷⁴ Finally, the white community's inability to adapt to the blacks' new status and their resentment at having lost the war culminated in a series of riots in 1865 and 1866.

Initially, the cause of the disturbances and the subsequent return to military rule in Norfolk was blamed on discharged Union soldiers both black and white. At the end of the war, three-fourths of the white Union troops were disbanded while most of the black troops, almost 100,000, remained in the army. This number was equal to the number of white troops currently in service. The reason for this proportional disparity was that many black troops were former plantation hands and had no one in civilian life to whom to return or to help them begin life anew. Dismayed by the disproportion of blacks in the volunteer service of the U.S. army, Secretary Stanton ordered that 23,000 of the 63,373

⁷⁴ "Riot," p. 10; Rabinowitz, pp. 31, 33.

black privates be issued discharge orders.⁷⁵ This proportional disparity undoubtedly created some problems between Norfolk's black and white Union servicemen in the years 1865 and 1866. The more serious problems, however, were created by the returned rebel soldiers and the anti-black sentiment among some of Norfolk's ex-secessionist white leaders.

Two Norfolk newspapers reported attacks or clashes occurring daily between black and white soldiers in 1865. Strangely, they noted that none of Norfolk's white citizens were involved in any of the disturbances. The intent seemingly was to discredit the Union army and to instill fear in the minds of blacks that they were not safe under Union occupation. In the summer of 1865, the Norfolk Post reported that Thomas Watkins was attacked and stabbed in the arms and shoulders on the corner of Main and Ninth streets by two white Union soldiers who attempted to rob him. In a later incident, the Norfolk Virginian reported that a dispute occurred between black and white soldiers about 2:00 p.m., December 17, 1865, on Broad and Water streets. "A volley was fired by the Anglo-Saxons, and a negro soldier was wounded in the region of the abdomen. The prompt action of the military authority soon restored order which now 'reigns in Warsaw.' The affair grew out of a difficulty between a white and black soldier which

⁷⁵ Norfolk Post, July 29, 1865, p. 2; New York Times, August 28, 1865, p. 4 and March 26, 1866, p. 4.

drew the friends of each into the general melee . . . These soldiers [black soldiers] were sent to 'Old Point' in a tug boat, at 4 1/2 P.M., whence they are to be sent to Baltimore."⁷⁶

Norfolk was not faced with one violent disruption after the other. Periods of calm sometimes lasted for several weeks. Occasionally, violence gave way to grand celebrations. Every year after 1863 blacks of Norfolk continued to celebrate January first with great pageantry and fanfare, to the chagrin of most whites. The Norfolk Virginian, born on November 21, 1865, and committed to the beliefs that military rule and test oaths were incompatible with liberty and that incapacity of blacks to participate equally in a republican form of government was proven, reported the community's 1866 Emancipation Day celebration.⁷⁷ According to the Norfolk Virginian and the Norfolk Post, the celebration had a large turnout which proceeded quite well with the usual orderly procession. Beginning at Bell Church, on the corner of Catharine and Bute streets, the entourage proceeded through the principal streets of the city. The celebrants were joined

⁷⁶ Published by two ex-Confederates, the Norfolk Virginian was established as a newspaper at the end of the war in 1865, Salt Water, pp. 6-7. Norfolk Virginian, December 18, 1865, p. 3. Thomas Watkins was described as an orderly and inoffensive man who lived on Governor street in Norfolk. Although the policeman, Healey, heard his cries and came to his rescue, he was unable to apprehend the soldiers. Norfolk Post, July 17, 1865, p. 1 and July 29, 1865, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Salt Water, pp. 3, 10.

at military headquarters by two companies of the 20th New York escort preceded by the regimental band, which headed the procession. All those participating wore "their best Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes, and white gloves. The marshals were on horseback with scarves, after the mode and manner of the white man."⁷⁸ The procession concluded at the Bute Street Baptist Church where an oration was delivered by Dr. Solomon Hodges, a local minister. Not surprisingly, the Norfolk Post emphasized Dr. Hodges' speech in which he encouraged blacks not to indulge in idleness or depravity, but honesty and productivity.⁷⁹

Afterwards, the celebration continued to Market Square whereupon the Portsmouth societies departed to the ferry wharf en route to their homes. The procession was composed of members from various black social and political clubs in Norfolk, formed since their emancipation: the Glee Club, Odd Fellows, Pilgrims, Monitor Club, Independent Society, Hebrew Union, Zion's Sons, Sons of Adam, Mechanics Bible Society, and the Humble Sons of God. The invited guests and clergy followed in numerous carriages, while the rear of the procession was brought up by the black citizenry.⁸⁰

Despite these intermittent periods of calm, Norfolk was hard-pressed to shoulder the burden of hundreds of indigents

⁷⁸ Norfolk Virginian, January 2, 1866, p. 3.

⁷⁹ Norfolk Post, January 2, 1866, p. 3.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; Norfolk Virginian, January 2, 1866, p. 3.

who filled the streets. The sight of large numbers of indigent and freed blacks aroused fears that their presence would pose imminent danger to the white people of the city. The Norfolk Post recounted an incident that occurred at the conclusion of the New Year's celebration in 1866. According to the report, a fight occurred at 4:00 p.m. between a black and white man on Church street, ending in the black man being cut by a knife. As the black man ran down the street alarming his neighbors, the white man was attacked by the blacks who responded to the wounded man's cries. The white man ran through William Stephen's yard, whereupon the crowd, thinking he sought refuge in Stephen's house, pelted it with rocks. Although a passing soldier tried to calm the situation, he too was attacked and then shot by this rampaging mob which dispersed by the time the provost marshals arrived.⁸¹

In a January 23, 1866, report filled with optimism, Captain William Austin, Assistant Superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau in Norfolk, explained to Orlando Brown that the restoration of jurisdiction in criminal cases to the civil authorities was beneficial to the black community. Despite the repeated conflicts throughout the city between blacks and whites, Austin reported that the return of jurisdiction over criminal cases to the civil authorities served to ease tensions by bringing blacks before the acknowledged authorities and forcing whites to recognize their rights as

⁸¹ Norfolk Post, January 2, 1866, p. 3.

citizens. Austin said that the testimony of blacks was admitted, and black defendants were usually represented by good counsel. Trials were fair, except in cases when whites were involved.⁸²

Despite Austin's sanguine report, February, March, and April 1866 proved to be particularly riotous months in Norfolk. Mayhem and disorder ruled. White antagonism was at its height, whipped up by newspapers such as the blatantly racist Day Book that was overtly sympathetic to the ex-rebels. The Day Book accused blacks and "mean whites" of stirring up trouble among former slaves for "their own purposes." One such incident was described in the Day Book, which reported that white youngsters, prompted by older boys, pelted black gentlemen with rocks during the arrival of Costello's circus on March 13, 1866. In the face of these provocations William H. Barry, a white citizen and clerk of the U.S. District Court, exonerated the black community of any wrongdoing, noting that blacks continued to react respectfully, despite the disgraceful behavior of the white youngsters.⁸³

The Norfolk Post, however, represented a more paternalistic, patronizing attitude in efforts to control blacks. In March, two articles reported on the educational and religious achievements of Norfolk's black community. One

⁸² **Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BFRAL, M1048, roll 59, pp. 1231-1232.**

⁸³ "The Norfolk Riot," p. 156; "Riot," p. 13.

article discussed the recent exhibition held at the Bute Street Methodist Church for the benefit of the black schools. The paper reported that the exhibition was well attended by both races and included a musical interlude beautifully performed by the First Colored Cavalry band, touching speeches made by the teachers, songs sung by the students, and addresses made by prominent citizens. The second article discussed the laying of a church cornerstone ceremony, well-attended by the Norfolk and Portsmouth societies of black Masons and the Bible Society of Norfolk.⁸⁴

No disturbance, however, rivaled the April riot in 1866, which pitted blacks against the ex-Confederates. So extreme was the Norfolk riot on April 16, 1866, that it received national attention. It was the result of a parade held by the black citizens celebrating the Congressional passage of the Civil Rights Bill. Earlier, President Johnson had vetoed the bill on the grounds that it violated the Tenth Amendment. On April 10, Congress overrode the veto. The Reverend John M. Brown was sent to Richmond as Norfolk's delegate to the first statewide meeting of Virginia's blacks to decide on a day all Virginia's black communities would hold a celebration. Monday, April 16 was chosen, and the president of the meeting requested that "all returned black soldiers appear in the

⁸⁴ Chambers, pp. 140-141; Norfolk Post, March 21, 1866, p. 3 and March 28, 1866, p. 3.

procession with their uniforms and guns."⁸⁵ The purpose of this bold display was probably an illustrative justification of the black community's demand for full and equal rights as citizens of the United States, by unquestionably exemplifying their sacrifices made during the recent war.

Clearly, Norfolk's black community was organized. Although the leadership traditionally emanated from the church, men of other occupations also took leadership positions. James E. Peck, Lewis Tucker, and Thomas Henson formed the clerical leadership coalition, while men like James Bryan, a freedmen's school teacher, William Jordan, a barber, Samuel Pollock, a shoemaker, Thomas Bayne, a dentist and politician, and William Keeling, a storekeeper, filled the ranks of Norfolk's black leadership. Still other leaders were Thomas F. Paige, a hotel and baggage company owner, Jubiter White, Joseph T. Wilson, a former soldier and historian, George Cook, Edward Williams, George Dawley, John Jordan, and John Jackson. It was from these men that the parades, celebrations, voting registrations, and community societies were organized.⁸⁶

Of all the racial disturbances in Norfolk, the April 16,

⁸⁵ "Riot," p. 39.

⁸⁶ Brown was pastor of the St. Chapel A.M.E. Church on Bute street, Henson of the Catherine Street Baptist Church, Tucker of the Bute Street Baptist Church, Peck of the Methodist Episcopal Church on James street, and Lewis of the Protestant Methodist Church. **Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69**, BRFal, M1048, roll 67, pp. 369-370; Norfolk Post, January 22, 1866, p. 3.

1866, riot was the most violent. Previous accounts of the riot, based primarily on the biased accounts from the Norfolk Post and Norfolk Virginian newspapers, so skewed the facts of the case that a reinvestigation of the riot is essential. Even John H. Moore's 1982 historical discussion⁸⁷ is not sufficient because of his heavy emphasis on the testimonies of the white citizens and Union soldiers. Instead, an evaluation and retelling of the incidents involved in the riot, with an emphasis on the testimonies of the black witnesses from the Senate's May 1866 inquiry are required.

Early on the morning of Monday, April 16, two to three hundred Norfolk and Portsmouth participants formed at Market Square with a dozen or more returned soldiers leading the procession. Two banners displaying the names of black political organizations, "Sons of Honor" and "Monitor Club," were carried by the participants. After the procession marched around the city, Joseph T. Wilson was to officiate at the ceremonies as its President of the Day on the speaker's stand, opening the celebration with prayer and a hymn. Others, such as Edward Williams, who was to read the Bill of Rights, and the Reverend John Brown and T.L.K. Baker were also scheduled to speak.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ John H. Moore published the first historical paper on the 1866 riot: "The Norfolk Riot, 16 April 1866," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 90 (April 1982).

⁸⁸ T.L.K. Baker was a white Unionist who supported the enfranchisement of the black citizens and worked as a liaison between the Republican party and Norfolk's black community.

The commander of Norfolk and Portsmouth, stationed on Granby Street in Norfolk, was Brevet Major F. W. Stanhope of the 12th U.S. Infantry. Major Stanhope placed the troops on alert because of his concern about possible outbreaks of violence during the parade. In the days prior to the celebration, notices appeared in the Norfolk newspapers citing the reorganization of different rebel companies and informing many when their meetings would be held. Replete with subtlety, the advertisements noted that the meetings were for those interested in the welfare of Virginia. Almost as a forewarning of things to come and the planning involved, isolated incidents occurred which seemed designed to provoke the blacks to react. As the blacks proceeded down Bute and Dock streets passing the house of Hall Carpenter, some whites awaited the procession from behind Carpenter's high fence with bricks, bottles, and rocks. Although two people were struck, the procession continued.⁸⁹

The Norfolk Day Book discussed in minute and biased detail repeated racial conflicts during the weeks preceding the April riot of 1866. Mayor Thomas Tabb and local white ministers called for action against the black community and blamed former white Union soldiers, who did not return home

"The Norfolk Riot," pp. 157-158; "Riot," pp. 20, 32, 34, and 38.

⁸⁹ "The Norfolk Riot," pp. 157-158; "Riot," pp. 11, 20, 34, and 48.

after the war, with causing trouble in Norfolk.⁹⁰

In response to the call for an inquiry into the riot, Lt. General Ulysses S. Grant, commander of the U.S. Armies, ordered that a board of officers be convened on April 30, 1866, to investigate the recent riots in Norfolk and to hear testimony. On May 2, 1866, the Army convened a board of inquiry into the riot at Norfolk's customs house. The Board of Inquiry consisted of three officers who heard the testimony of sixty-eight subpoenaed witnesses. Three days later at the trial, court testimonies revealed a surprising number of whites who did not support the views of the local newspapers and who deplored the actions of many whites whom they saw as causing conflicts through their actions or attitudes towards blacks.⁹¹

The investigation was conducted in a closed hearing at the Norfolk Customs House. On Monday, April 16, Major Stanhope, the black community in Norfolk held a procession in celebration of the passage of the Civil Rights Bill. Prior to the celebration, Major Stanhope had heard a rumor that a group of whites were planning to interrupt the procession. Stanhope decided to prepare his men in case a disturbance occurred and the mayor called on him to quiet any rioting. To insure that all went well, he accompanied the procession from a

⁹⁰ "The Norfolk Riot," pp. 155-156.

⁹¹ Chambers, p. 161.

distance.⁹²

Stanhope testified that after it began to rain, he went in to change his uniform; but before he could return, an incident occurred as a result of which a white man, Robert Whitehurst, was killed. Upon arriving, Stanhope ordered that all the blacks be detained and the black men with guns examined. Eighteen people, all of them cavalymen, were found with weapons--guns or sabers--which were collected. He urged the crowd to end the day with honor and assured them that he would provide them with protection. The procession continued afterwards, coming to the wharf where they were joined by the Portsmouth delegation. It then returned to the Bute Street Baptist Church whereupon the celebrants dispersed.⁹³

Whitehurst's stepmother, wounded in the riot, told Stanhope, prior to her death, that Robert Whitehurst voiced his desire to stop the procession. She related that a few days prior to the incident, Whitehurst quarreled with some black men gathered around the recently erected speakers' platform. On the day of the procession, Whitehurst renewed his argument with the same men, drawing out his pistol and shooting a man standing nearby. As the man fell, the angered crowd rushed at Whitehurst who fled to his house, located two hundred yards from the stand, still firing his gun. When his stepmother tried to stop him from shooting, the gun discharged

⁹² "Riot," p. 3; Salt Water, p. 17.

⁹³ "Riot," pp. 3-4, 32.

mortally wounding Mrs. Whitehurst.⁹⁴

George Holland, a black citizen and marshal at the celebration, testified that before the Whitehurst incident William Mosely⁹⁵ went to the speaker's stand to prevent the Civil Rights bill from being read. As Mosely made his way to the stand, two black men who were playing around with their guns, created an incident. One fired a blank cartridge at the other who pretended to be shot. Thinking his friend was dead, the other fainted. Upon hearing the shot, Mosely attempted to arrest the man he thought responsible for discharging a weapon. When the accused man asserted his innocence and resisted arrest, Mosely drew a dirk, cutting him three times. A returned soldier then drew his sabre. A scuffle ensued, made worse by Mosely's foul and abusive language. Knowing that his life was in danger, Mosely ran to the house of Robert Whitehurst, an ex-Confederate, who emerged running out of his house firing a pistol. Another unidentified white man also ran out of Whitehurst's house firing a pistol. He ran towards Church Street when a crowd of blacks set out after him. Several parade marshals forced Whitehurst back to his house, whereupon he was shot in the back. As he entered the house,

⁹⁴ Mrs. Whitehurst died at 7:00 p.m. that night. Ibid., pp. 3-4, 45.

⁹⁵ Mosely was a typical white Norfolk policeman who was frequently used as the white community's first line of defense against blacks. Norfolk policemen, like all white policemen of this period, were frequently responsible for clearing the streets of vagrants, lawbreakers, gamblers, and later keeping black voters in check. Rabinowitz, p. 43.

Whitehurst's gun discharged, wounding his stepmother. Holland noted that at no point did the civil authorities officially intervene.⁹⁶

Austin Brown, a black citizen, corroborated Holland's testimony about Mosely's conduct. Brown testified that the riot was provoked by the presence of a drunken off-duty white policeman, William Mosely, who was in the midst of the crowd stirring up trouble with his abusive and provocative language. He said that when the procession initially formed, Mosely stood twenty-five yards away yelling to the crowd that he was there to "put things to rights." Later at the speakers' platform, some men stepped on Mosely's feet after he made several threats. Provoked, Mosely became engaged in a cursing match with the surrounding blacks. He was then beaten severely by the crowd and later placed in protective custody by the army.⁹⁷

A few hours later, the mayor called upon Major Stanhope to render assistance in quelling the disturbance because his police force was unable to do so. Because the mayor "expressed his fear that a great deal of blood would be shed that night," Stanhope placed his troops at the mayor's disposal. At sundown, Stanhope rode past a crowd of whites

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 35; "The Norfolk Riot," p.. 155-158.

⁹⁷ William H. Barry, clerk of the U.S. District Court in Norfolk, testified that most of the night watchmen were ex-rebel soldiers who had little sympathy for blacks or northern whites. "Riot," pp. 13, 31.

dressed in grey, coming out of the engine house as he returned to headquarters. Suddenly, several shots were fired in Stanhope's direction, almost felling him from his horse. He then ordered Company E to apprehend the rioters who had dispersed by the time the troops arrived on the scene. Although troops patrolled the city finding numerous blacks shot or killed, the culprits eluded them throughout the night. Stanhope reasoned that they were not a mob but an organized body who met and dispersed at will.⁹⁸ Stanhope concluded his testimony stating it was his opinion that "on Monday night an attempt was made to make an indiscriminate slaughter of the negroes who were out on the streets, and I have not heard of one negro being on the streets who was not fired upon."⁹⁹

In the days that followed, roving bands of whites committed atrocities against the black community that resulted in the death of two people and the severe beatings of several others. Local newspapers ignited this tense situation by publishing reports that blamed the riot on the army and the black community. The Day Book denied the existence of this marauding band of whites, asserting that it was a figment of Stanhope's imagination. Instead, from April 17 to April 21, the paper repeatedly demonstrated its sympathies with its accusations that the black citizens were assaulting the whites. In an April 17, 1866, article from the Day Book, the

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

editors defensively contended that "civil rights to the negro means martial law to the white man, brought about solely by the ignorance and intemperance of the negro, when urged on by depraved white men who use him as a tool for their evil designs." To quell the increasing incidences of violence, Major Stanhope requested and was granted reinforcements from Washington. Within twenty-four hours after the troops arrived order in Norfolk was restored.¹⁰⁰

Black Norfolk resident William Keeling recalled roving bands of thirty to forty rioters going up and down the streets of Norfolk on the night of April 16 dressed in gray military and civilian clothing. James Gibson, also black, testified to seeing fifty white men firing a dozen or more times at two of the Union troops patrolling the streets. According to Gibson, the crowd consisted of half-grown boys and men wearing jackets, coats, and civilian clothing and carrying revolvers.¹⁰¹

In the interim, Mayor Tabb sent an open letter to the Norfolk Virginian, published on April 18, in which he shifted blame for the riot on to "the armed ruffians at its [the procession's] head." He also said, "I only knew there was to be a negro procession from rumors. I certainly [did] not approve of negro processions, and would prevent such

¹⁰⁰ Day Book, April 17, 1866, p. 2. Day Book as quoted in the Norfolk Virginian, April 20, 1866, p. 3; Chambers, p. 160.

¹⁰¹ "Riot," p. 29.

occurrences if I had the power." Not surprisingly, Mayor Tabb refused to appear before the Board of Officers to answer any questions relating to the riot, thereby casting considerable suspicion on his role in the incident.¹⁰²

The Board uncovered considerable evidence from the testimony of witnesses that the whites in Norfolk had, in fact, planned a retaliatory strike against the black community which involved at least the knowledge of city leaders, and would have succeeded had it not been for the presence of the army. William Lawson, a white engineer at the Naval Hospital in Portsmouth, testified before the Board that he overheard a prominent Norfolk rebel and captain of a fire company say that a thousand people would have been killed the night of April 16 if precautions were not taken by the military, and a large number of returned black soldiers unafraid of whites were not present in Norfolk. J.L. Rathbone, First Lt. of the First Battalion 12th U.S. Infantry, testified that he overheard whites aboard a ferryboat speak openly of their hostility towards blacks and of having started the riot. According to Rathbone, these whites also spoke of their plans to go through Norfolk retaliating against those responsible for Whitehurst's death. William Barry also overheard a local white boasting about his activities during the riot. A newcomer to the area, Barry was appalled by the young man's audacity as he boasted

¹⁰² Norfolk Virginian, April 19, 1866, p. 2; "Riot," p. 65.

of the fun he and other whites had shooting at a black man who later turned out to be Major Stanhope.¹⁰³

In the days after the riot, approximately fifty blacks were arrested. Corporation Court Magistrate and Union man James H. Hall testified to the Board that the white leaders of the city insisted the court not be held. The feeling was that if court were held, it would rule in favor of the black prisoners. After interviewing the prisoners personally on Saturday, April 21, Hall concurred that the prisoners were innocent. On April 19, seven blacks were arraigned and charged with causing the disturbance which resulted in the death of Robert Whitehurst. Among those arrested were William Sales, John Hill, John Wilson, Joseph Mackey, and Edward Long, the parade marshall. Six of the seven were later released because of insufficient evidence. Joseph Mackey, however, was charged and tried with being the leader of the riot. Edward Long, charged with the murder of Robert Whitehurst, was released on \$500 bond because of a "lack of evidence." At Long's trial, on June 8, 1866, the case of the State vs. Edward Long resulted in the jury returning a verdict of guilty of murder in the second degree. Long was sentenced to eighteen years imprisonment. Captain Austin reported that from the evidence, Long appeared innocent, and he was sure

¹⁰³ Lawson was summoned before the Board because he accompanied Mr. Whitehurst home once word came that his wife and son were involved in a shooting. "Riot," p. 7, 46.

that an unprejudiced and impartial jury would have acquitted him. No whites were apprehended, despite the killings of two blacks. In fact, according to Simon Stone, a white Internal Revenue collector, no effort was made by the mayor to disperse the mob or bring any whites to justice, although approximately fifty blacks were arrested on Mayor Tabb's orders. Among those killed was Mark Bennett, a discharged soldier from the Company F Infantry, shot at 9:00 p.m. on Main Street, and Henry Mercer, shot Monday morning. Although the Norfolk Virginian reported the shooting, in typical Norfolk fashion, its editors insisted it had nothing to do with the riot.¹⁰⁴

Even after the end of the more serious disturbances, the black community could not breathe a sigh of relief for several months. Major Stanhope testified on May 3, that although Norfolk was currently quiet, these "white ruffians" were only waiting for a proper time to try again. Edward Williams noted that on May 5, while the Board of Officers were investigating the riot, he feared going out at night, recounting how fellow lodge members had been attacked the night before. Williams reported, with a hint of anger, that three lower-class whites accosted his friends and threatened to kill them. Williams' reminiscences reflected the attitude of many black leaders that the ongoing disturbances in Norfolk were the result of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 10, 13, 16, 25; Norfolk Virginian, April 18, 1866, p. 3 and April 20, 1866, p. 2; Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 59, pp. 62-63.

actions by the lower and lawless classes from both races.¹⁰⁵

On Saturday, May 12, thirteen days after the start of the investigation, the Board of Officers met to consider the evidence and report their findings in a formal written statement. Despite published advertisements in the Old Dominion, the Day Book, and the Virginian requesting that any persons having knowledge of the riot appear before the board to give evidence, no one else came forward except those summoned. Consequently, the Board was forced to render its conclusions based solely upon the testimony of those summoned. The findings of the Board were that two blacks and two whites were killed, and three whites and three blacks were severely wounded as a result of the riots. The Board agreed that had it not been for Major Stanhope's precautions, a more serious riot would have occurred between the "white roughs" and the black population. The Day Book was believed to have assisted the ex-rebels in their planned violence against the blacks by publishing accounts of ex-rebel meetings prior to the incident. The Board also found evidence to implicate the United Service Fire Company, which had served as a Confederate artillery battery at Fort Darling, in the riot, although no charges were officially filed. The Board asserted that the United Service Fire Company intentionally resisted the laws of the United States in perpetrating a planned attack on

¹⁰⁵ "Riot", pp. 6, 32.

Norfolk's black community.¹⁰⁶

It seemed that the April 16 riot was only one of many episodes of murders, floggings, assaults, and arsons committed against the Norfolk's black community during the years 1865-1867. In a dispatch to Richmond, Stanhope commented that although local whites tried to persuade him to disarm blacks, he refused, fearing that the blacks would then be at the mercy of the merciless. At Whitehurst's funeral, Stanhope interceded for a black man watching the ceremony when two white men threatened to kill him. The two white men were taken into custody.¹⁰⁷

The Norfolk Republican reported that the whites' ideas of the rights of blacks was so prejudiced by the old principles of slavery that their fairness in cases could not be relied upon.¹⁰⁸ Several cases reported by local officials in the Freedmen's Bureau validated this assertion. Samuel Elles (black) of Norfolk was allegedly shot by Kett Diggs (white) of Portsmouth. On May 22, 1866, the jury found Diggs innocent and declared that Ellis was shot by some person unknown. The

¹⁰⁶ Chambers, p. 161; "Riot," pp. 47, 59, 64-66. A photograph of the United Service Fire Company can be found in Carroll Walker's Norfolk: A Pictorial History From the "Those Were the Days" Collection, edited by Linda Fates (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Company, 1975), p. 50.

¹⁰⁷ Chambers, pp. 158-164.

¹⁰⁸ The Norfolk Republican was a Union-sponsored newspaper that ran briefly in Norfolk during the post-war years. Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 59, pp. 63, 1392-1393.

following day, Virginius Harvey (white) was tried for assaulting Joseph Jeffrey (black) with a brick and "knocking him senseless." No information survived about the outcome of this trial or of the outcome of several other trials. For example, the Freedmen's Bureau reported that also about this same period, two blacks were clubbed to death by two white night watchmen. The only known penalty for the assault was the dismissal by the Mayor of these watchmen from their jobs. In another case, Tony Baker (black) was shot while on his way to jail. The police testified that Baker was in the process of trying to furnish a prisoner with a file to help him escape.¹⁰⁹

After the riot in April, the year 1866 continued to be a difficult time for blacks in Norfolk. In conjunction with the April 16 riot and the period of violence that followed, General O.O. Howard issued Circular No. 10 ordering all rations to the freedmen discontinued, except to the sick and the orphans, by the first day of October. The need for the Freedmen's Bureau to continue providing for the sick was evident in its October 1866 report. With the Freedmen's and Small Pox Hospitals fully functioning in Norfolk, they received rations for the nine and two patients, respectively, housed at those institutions. A month later, the Freedmen's Hospital doubled its patient load to eighteen, while the Small

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Pox Hospital increased its patient load to eight.¹¹⁰

Freedmen were also having difficulty receiving justice in the courts. Initially, Captain William Austin was blind to any problems of freedmen. By October 1866, it was evident that the high expectations of Austin were misplaced. Bureau official Samuel Chapman Armstrong wrote to Orlando Brown that the civil courts in Norfolk could not be relied upon to render justice to the freedmen. The rule in civil courts was to acquit whites charged with crimes against blacks and to find guilty blacks charged with crimes against whites. This injustice, combined with increased violence against blacks, prompted Brown to take a different stance than before. In 1865, Brown had taken General Howard's lead in a policy of accommodation with the ex-Confederates. In 1866, Brown believed it was the Bureau's responsibility actively to protect the rights of freedmen and freemen.¹¹¹

Eventually, other Bureau officials had to concede the obvious: the hostility of white people toward the freedmen. By 1866, Norfolk's Bureau Superintendent, William Austin, had to admit to Brown the failure of blacks to receive a fair trial when white defendants were involved; although justice was evident in trials involving blacks only. In the fall of

¹¹⁰ American Missionary 10 (October 1866), p. 236; Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 55, pp. 448, 475.

¹¹¹ American Missionary 10 (October 1866), p. 236; Engs, pp. 121-122, 124, 126.

1866, the Freedmen's Courts were reactivated because of the civil courts' refusal to take action in cases of white violence or intimidation against blacks. Although this appeared to be a victory for justice and equality before the law, the Bureau's reactivation involved so few agents that it was too impotent and understaffed to implement the mandates effectively.¹¹²

Suffolk's Assistant Superintendent, J.W. Barnes, described to Austin problems experienced by freedmen in court cases that were similar to problems experienced by Norfolk's freedmen. Although Barnes said that the white officials gave fair trials to freedmen for fear of Bureau intervention, prejudice was still the rule in cases where the suit was against a white man. The rationale given was the general belief among whites that it was "morally impossible for a colored man to swear to the truth." In a February 28, 1867 letter to Brown, Austin concurred with Barnes's evaluation of Suffolk, saying his conclusions were also true of Norfolk and Portsmouth. Austin gave the example of the Hammond case. On February 25, 1867, James C. Jones filed a formal complaint stating that five justices of the Corporation Court refused to allow the testimony of two blacks in the case of the

¹¹² William Austin's letter to Brown clearly illustrated the need for more agents to survey the court trials of freedmen. Although he reported fewer incidents of injustice or partiality, Austin reported no complaints or problems in Norfolk. **Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69**, BFRAL, M1048, roll 59, p. 849, 1231-32; Engs, p. 122, 124-25.

Commonwealth v. William Hammond.¹¹³

In that case, William Hammond, a white man, was charged with larceny. The prosecuting attorney presented three black witnesses to prove that Hammond sold them stolen goods, but the court ruled that their testimony was inadmissible under the Code of Virginia. Jones argued that the Civil Rights bill superseded the State Code and therefore permitted the testimony of blacks. The Court reaffirmed its decision, giving no reason. On February 28, Andrew L. Hill, William Lamb, John Doyle, Conway Whittle, and S. March were arrested under the Civil Rights Act for refusing to admit the evidence of blacks witnesses who Charles Porter, a Republican attorney, needed to introduce as testimony in a larceny case. U.S. Commissioner, B.B. Foster, issued arrest warrants to the five city magistrates, bound them on a \$1500 bond, and ordered them to appear before the U.S. District Court during its next session to answer charges filed against them. Andrew Hill was dismissed after a hearing before the U.S. Commissioner while the other four were sent to trial.¹¹⁴

The whites of Norfolk did not take kindly to the arraignment of five of its most prominent magistrates, one of whom was a former mayor. First Lt. Edward Murphy, 10th

¹¹³ **Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 55, pp. 1278-79, 1392 and roll 59, p. 1394; Burton, p. 107.**

¹¹⁴ **Engs. pp. 122, 124-125; Burton, p. 107; Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 59, p. 1395.**

Regiment and Assistant Superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau, reported to Orlando Brown that in March 1866, the civil authorities prevented him "from making a full and general report of its legal treatment of the freedmen." Murphy reported despairingly that the situation regarding the treatment of freedmen devolved upon the courts ever since the civil authorities took over the trials of the freedmen on March 25, 1867.¹¹⁵

Throughout the remainder of 1867, Murphy continued to report on the treatment of freedmen in the civil courts. By late spring, he noted a change in the treatment of blacks in such courts. According to Murphy, the authorities had begun respecting the rights of the freedmen and were willing to redress their grievances in contrast to their previous actions. No doubt, this was the result of the passage of the Reconstruction Act voiding all existing southern governments with the condition that none would be reconstructed until each state enacted full black suffrage and widescale disfranchisement of ex-Confederate leaders. By August 1867, Murphy reported that the civil authorities justly administered the laws and no complaints were made against them, except in the case of freedman Henry Portlock, who was tried before former Mayor, Judge William Tabb, lately involved in the April 16, 1866, riot. In a January 24, 1867, dispatch, J.W. Barnes,

¹¹⁵ **Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 59, p. 51.**

Assistant Superintendent of Suffolk, commented to Captain Austin of Norfolk that although prejudice continued to exist against the freedmen, when brought to court, freedmen were usually treated fairly because the civil authorities did not want the interference of the Bureau in their courts.¹¹⁶

The December 1866 Freedmen's Bureau report, filed by the new Assistant Superintendent of Norfolk, J.H. Remington, concurred with Edward Murphy's report that the civil authorities justly and fairly administered the laws in cases "in which the interests of the freedmen were involved. Remington did note one case, Cuffee v. Hodges, et. al., adjudicated a few months prior to January 1867 in the Circuit Court which necessitated interference by the military authorities. Based upon the improper rejection of testimony and political prejudice and the permission given the plaintiff to have a new trial before a Circuit Court on a military commission," Major General J.M. Schofield, commander of Military District One, set aside the decision of the court.¹¹⁷

Not surprisingly, white hostility towards blacks in Norfolk coincided with the white treatment of blacks on the state level. The refusal of Virginia's General Assembly to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, despite Governor Pierpont's warnings that this would have severe consequences, together

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 167, 305, 429, 677, 1278; McKittrick, pp. 13-14.

¹¹⁷ **Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 59, p. 1119.**

with the behavior of the South in 1865-66, led to an abandonment of support by the moderate factions in Congress of Presidential Reconstruction and an alliance with the Radical Republicans. With the onset of Radical Reconstruction in March 1867, Congress placed the South under martial law and passed a series of regulations which allowed blacks to enter politics. Under the direct control of Union General J.M. Schofield, commander of Military District Number One, Virginia was ordered to register all males twenty-one and over, regardless of race and not disqualified by the Reconstruction Acts. Forty-seven percent of those registered in Virginia were black. Schofield then was directed to call an election of delegates who would rewrite Virginia's constitution. The election would be held in October 1867, thus providing blacks with their first opportunity to cast their ballots.¹¹⁸

Prior to the Virginia Constitutional Convention election, the Virginia Republican Party called a convention at Richmond. Thomas Bayne¹¹⁹ was one of a group of prominent black and white Republicans invited to the April 1867 state Republican

¹¹⁸ Henry McGuinn and Tinsley Spraggins, "Negro in Politics in Virginia," Journal of Negro Education 26 (Summer 1957), p. 378; Younger and Moore, pp. 41-42.

¹¹⁹ Dr. Thomas Bayne, alias the escaped slave Sam Nixon, was described as the dark-skinned slave of Dr. C.F. Martin, a Norfolk dentist, who trained Bayne as his assistant and often sent him on cases in his place. Bayne eventually escaped to Philadelphia and then moved to New Bedford where he received formal training as a dentist. Bayne's exposure to society, even while in slavery, produced a desire for the political life. Within four years of residency in New Bedford, Bayne was elected to its city council. See Bogger, pp. 252-253.

convention. One hundred and ten of the one hundred and sixty delegates present were black. In preparation for the fight between the Republican and Conservative forces, Richmond's Conservative party newspapers belittled the Convention in its reports, attempting to make it appear that the participants spoke English poorly. Dr. Bayne retaliated by addressing the issue at the Convention. In a patronizing demonstration, Dr. Bayne clearly enunciated and spelled out each word, commenting that no one should misunderstand, and thus misprint, any more speeches.¹²⁰

Another prominent black and native Norfolkian was also selected as a representative to the April 1867 convention in Richmond. Representing Portsmouth was Joseph T. Wilson, a former runaway slave who returned to Norfolk after the war was the first black to edit and publish a black newspaper in Virginia in 1866, The True Southerner.¹²¹ Like Bayne, Wilson was cited by the Richmond Dispatch as a formidable speaker.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 317.

¹²¹ Joseph T. Wilson was born a slave in Norfolk in 1836. Like Thomas Bayne, Wilson ran away and settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Once the war started, Wilson enlisted in the Second Regiment Louisiana Marine Guard, which later became the Seventy-Fourth United States Colored Troops, on September 30, 1862. Upon being discharged, Wilson reenlisted in the famous Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Colored Infantry on December 18, 1863. In 1866, Wilson took over as editor of The True Southerner, a newspaper established by a white Union officer in Hampton in 1865. When a white Norfolk mob smashed his presses, Wilson moved the paper to Petersburg where he renamed it the Union Republican. Wilson also published several other papers and died in Norfolk on September 25, 1891. He was buried at the Hampton National Cemetery. Negro in Virginia, p. 284; The Black Phalanx, pp. 5-6.

His speech at the convention, described by the newspaper as "militant," advocated a human rights platform of confiscation, impeachment, and equality. Wilson ended his speech with a challenging declaration that "'if we don't support [human rights]... we are no better than rebels. Have we not been persecuted all our lives?'"¹²²

On October 22-23, 1867, elections were held for representatives to Virginia's Constitutional Convention in Richmond. Two Republican party delegates were elected by popular vote in Norfolk.¹²³ This was a particularly joyous occasion for Norfolk's blacks because it was the first time they were able to exercise their right to vote, and one of their own, Dr. Thomas Bayne, was one of the two delegates elected. He served on the Committee of the Department of Education. Unlike most of the other delegates elected, Bayne proved effective with his strongly persuasive speeches. Contemporary accounts described the polling places for these elections as being dense with anxious and excited crowds of freedmen, lined up long before the polls were opened. H.W. Burton noted that "from the thorough organization of the negroes, they were enabled to poll almost their entire

¹²² Negro in Virginia, p. 228.

¹²³ Dr. Thomas Bayne, a black candidate, and Henry Bowden, a white candidate, were the two Republican party candidates elected. James Hall, another white Republican candidate, supporter of universal suffrage, and a Union man who was imprisoned during the war for his loyalty, was not elected. Burton, p. 114; Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 67, p. 368.

strength before two o'clock, and their carriages were kept busy, flying hither and thither, wherever a vote was to be picked up; but the whites, on the contrary, exhibited a strange apathy and listlessness, utterly unaccountable."¹²⁴

TABLE 2

1867 VIRGINIA CONSTITUTIONAL ELECTION,
NORFOLK RESULTS¹²⁵

Candidates	Black Vote	White Vote
Thomas Bayne	1,768	9
Henry Bowden	1,810	62
James Hall	38	71
Gilbert Walker	22	1,503
Warren Wing	6	1,471
Total	3,644	3,116

Of the one hundred and five delegates elected to the convention which met on December 3, 1867, twenty-four were black who primarily represented the southeastern and tidewater districts which had heavy concentrations of blacks (in some areas as high as 60%). Most of these black delegates were employed in professional occupations, were literate, and possessed moderate assets. These delegates also tended to vote solidly Republican, and although many were inexperienced, they managed to block the Conservative effort to deny freedmen the right to vote in the new state constitution. They were unsuccessful, however, in getting Thomas Bayne's proposal

¹²⁴ Burton, p. 114; McGuinn and Spraggins, p. 379.

¹²⁵ Burton, p. 114.

requiring integrated schools incorporated in the constitution because their power lay more in block voting than in shaping constitutional measures.¹²⁶

Virginia's new Constitution provided universal manhood suffrage, a uniform tax system, homestead exemption rights, a Bill of Rights regardless of race or color, the establishment of a public school system, and the election of school trustees by popular vote. Not surprisingly, the Constitution was met with tremendous hostility by the ultra-conservatives (formerly Democrats) who helped delay its ratification for fifteen months because of their objection to the disfranchisement clauses and the iron-clad oath.¹²⁷

The Republican victory was short-lived, however, for a split between the black and white Republicans occurred in April 1868 during the Second District U.S. Congressional election. Dr. Bayne hand-picked members of the nominating committee, hoping that he would be nominated.¹²⁸ When Bayne and his supporters were not allowed to address the Suffolk Republican meeting in April 1868, Dr. Bayne denounced his former white allies as traitors. He then chose to run on an independent ticket which resulted in a turbulent campaign and

¹²⁶ McGuinn and Spraggins, p. 379; Richard L. Hume, "The Membership of the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1867-1868: A Study of the Beginnings of Congressional Reconstruction in the Upper South," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 86 (October 1978), pp. 477-478.

¹²⁷ McGuinn and Spraggins, pp. 379-380.

¹²⁸ Bogger, p. 321.

a three-way race between a black radical, a white radical, and a white conservative. Speeches and parades abounded, and Bayne was beaten up. Not surprisingly, the white conservative, David J. Goodwin, won the election because the radical vote was split along racial lines.¹²⁹

The Conservative victory was made sweeter because the ballot also contained a referendum on the Constitution. In voting to remove the test oath and disfranchisement clauses, the Conservatives all but succeeded in restoring voting rights to most whites while eliminating the power of the black vote, especially in Norfolk. The Republicans naively hoped to recoup their severe losses in Virginia's upcoming July 6, 1869, election (an election held in preparation for the ratification of the Constitution). The Republican-supported candidate for Governor, H.H. Wells and his black running-mate, Dr. J.D. Harris, faced off against the Conservative-supported gubernatorial candidate, Gilbert C. Walker and his white running-mate, John F. Lewis. Although the Conservative candidates, Walker and Lewis, won the election, eighteen black Radical Republicans (including Dr. Thomas Bayne of Norfolk) and three black Conservatives, won the election as state delegates.¹³⁰

With the ratification of its Constitution, Virginia re-

¹²⁹ Bogger, p. 323.

¹³⁰ Bogger, p. 323; Burton, p. 127; Negro in Virginia, p. 231.

entered the Union in 1870. Soon thereafter, the Radical Republicans of Norfolk put together a strong ticket for the upcoming May 22, 1870 municipal election. Included on the ticket were two black nominees, Thomas Bayne and Thomas F. Paige, candidates for the Commissioner of Revenue and the Gauger of Liquors offices, respectively, along with six black Constables. All the Republican candidates, with the exception of four whites, were defeated. Afterwards, the ultra-Conservatives stepped-up their long battle to disfranchise blacks from the 1870's until the end of the century, conducting a militant campaign and using various means to exclude blacks from politics.¹³¹

The struggle by blacks to gain their freedom and their rights as citizens of this nation was difficult indeed. Ironically, some of the most aggressive leaders were from a small port city in Virginia: Norfolk. The impact Norfolk's black leaders, such as Dr. Thomas Bayne, had on the role of blacks in government set the example for the nation's entire black community. With the removal of obstructing power from the hands of President Johnson, blacks in the 1870's were better able to prepare themselves educationally, build up their community economically, and protect their rights politically.

¹³¹ McGuinn and Spraggins, p. 380; Burton, p. 134.

A short time since I met an aged man who was lately a slave, whom I asked if he could read. 'No,' he replied, with sadness, and added, 'when I was converted, God handed me down a Bible from heaven, and when I told him that I could not read it, he bade me go and ask the people to read for me the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John; but I found none to read it to me.' I took my Bible and read, while his wrinkled face became radiant with joy, and great drops of sweat stood upon his brow. His responses were native but sincere, and at the close, with clasped hands, he exclaimed, 'Thank God! I have heard it once if no more. Thank God!' and an old man's blessings were poured out upon the humble agent that was thus made 'eyes to the blind.'

AMA Teacher at Norfolk¹

¹ The quote was taken from an anonymous teacher's experiences with an elderly black man filed in a report to the AMA on March 17, 1864. American Missionary 8 (May 1864), p. 127.

CHAPTER 4

"FINISHED, YET JUST BEGUN"² SCHOOL DAYS IN NORFOLK

Events throughout the nation and in Norfolk during the summer of 1865 reflected a calm before the storm. The summer temporarily produced a plentiful supply of jobs for the freedmen, making them less dependent on charity or government assistance to survive, in addition to the jobs created by returning ex-rebels. Parades, fairs, social events, musicals and minstrel shows, and theater stock companies flooded Norfolk's culture-starved populace. The black schools, which had an average attendance of eight hundred students, were in recess, giving a false hope to many whites that they would not reopen. This probably resulted from the belief that Northern missionaries would leave and that their contributions would cease once the war was over. As the fall season began, however, schools recommenced. The Concert Hall school reopened with 39 students, while the Dispensary building schools reopened with 220 students. The noticeable decline in

² Hampton Normal Institute's 1890 class motto. "Student Class Mottoes, 1877, Student Letters, Early Students, Early Classrooms," Courtesy of Hampton University Library, Hampton University Archives, Hampton, Virginia.

student enrollment at these schools was the result of the creation of pay schools conducted by black men and women. Although these teachers were barely a few steps ahead of their students, it was a noteworthy effort on their part demonstrating their desire to take control of their destiny. As the winter months approached, however, many blacks began to suffer greatly from the disappearance of seasonal jobs. Those who could not get jobs as domestic servants lived in tenement houses ranging from neat and roomy to dirty and uncomfortable.³ Consequently, Norfolk saw a movement among blacks searching for employment with some even returning to their former owners "to rent a portion of their farms, having been invited to do so."⁴

Throughout the South, blacks emerged from slavery with a high regard for education and an intense desire to learn how to read and write. Freedmen saw education and literacy as a key to solving their most vexing problems. Educational advancement became their all-consuming passion, and their desire to learn contributed to the reduction of the black's illiteracy nationwide from 70% in 1880 to 57.1% in 1890.⁵

³ Schwartz, p. 114; American Missionary 9 (December 1865), p. 280; American Missionary 9 (August 1865), pp. 169-170.

⁴ American Missionary 10 (January 1866), p. 5.

⁵ The illiteracy rate of blacks continued to decline from 44.5% in 1900, 30.4% in 1910, 22.9% in 1920, to 16.3% in 1930. John W. Davis, "The Negro Land-Grant College," Journal of Negro Education 2 (1933), p. 312.

Nowhere was this passion for education more evident than in Norfolk. James Alvord, Superintendent of Schools for the Freedmen's Bureau, reported that throughout the South, blacks were making a universal effort to educate themselves and to campaign actively for state-supported public education. It was especially in the latter area that Norfolk's blacks garnered considerable hostility from the white southern elite who viewed education for blacks with suspicion and state-supported education as a threat to the societal patterns of their community.⁶

Historically, Norfolk's position regarding the education of blacks had been ambiguous. During the antebellum period, Christ Church, a prominent Protestant Episcopal Church, located on the corner of Freemason and Cumberland streets, with many of the city's leading citizens on its membership rolls, became embroiled in a famous case involving the teaching of free blacks by a white woman.⁷

Reacting to the perceived threat of the growing free black community, the Virginia General Assembly had, in 1849, made it unlawful for whites to assemble free blacks for the purpose of teaching them to read or write. Mrs. Margaret Douglass, a widow and native of Charleston, South Carolina, unaware of the statute, began a school for Norfolk's free

⁶ James Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 4-6.

⁷ Wertenbaker, pp. 135-6.

black children in 1852.⁸

Mrs. Douglass and her fourteen-year-old daughter, Rosa, had moved to Norfolk in 1845, following the traumatic death of her son. Pursuing a career as a seamstress and keeping to herself in a four-room rented house at 1 Barraud Court, Douglass lived a peaceable life in Norfolk for seven years. Sometime in 1852, she had occasion to enter the Main Street barber shop of James Robertson,⁹ a well-known and highly-respected free black. There Douglass also became acquainted with his son who was studiously reading a spelling book. Impressed by the child's intense desire to learn, Douglass asked Robertson if he knew of Christ Church's Sunday School for free blacks. Robertson nodded, adding that "his children did attend that school, but that they did not learn much; as they had no one to assist them in their lessons during the

⁸ The law restricting the teaching of free blacks was from Chapter 198, Section 32 of the Acts of the Virginia General Assembly was passed in August 1849. Margaret Douglass, Educational Laws of Virginia. The Personal Narrative of Mrs. Margaret Douglass, a Southern Woman, who was imprisoned for one month in the Common Jail of Norfolk (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1854), pp. 41, 61. Bogger's dissertation contains a fairly complete account of the Margaret Douglass affair with the exception of a few names and details not pertinent to his study but important in this one.

⁹ Although Mrs. Douglass's account lists the barber's name as Robinson, his correct name, according to William Forrest's 1851 City Directory was James Robertson whose shop was located at 35 West Main Street in Norfolk's downtown district. William S. Forrest, compiler, The Norfolk Directory, For 1851-52 (Norfolk, VA, 1851). Hereafter cited as 1851 Norfolk Directory.

week."¹⁰

Under the leadership of the Reverend George D. Cummins, the lecture room at Christ Church had long been used for the instruction of many of the city's free black children on Sundays. All the children were given primers and other books to read. Many of Christ Church's members, including such prominent white citizens as Walter Taylor, Charles Sharp, and John Williams along with their wives and daughters, served as teachers in the Sunday school. Even members of Judge R.H. Baker's family, were teachers.¹¹

Prior to leaving the barber shop, Douglass offered to allow her daughter Rosa to instruct Robertson's two boys. After a short time, Rosa began instructing the two boys along with their two older sisters. Word soon spread throughout Norfolk's free black community, and Douglass formally (but without advertisement) opened a school for free black children in June 1852. Taught primarily by her daughter because of her fondness for children, the school was located in the back room on the second floor of their house. The Douglasses charged three dollars a quarter for tuition, and although they were bombarded with applications, they admitted only twenty-five students of both sexes. For eleven months, the school continued unhindered by the local authorities who were fully

¹⁰ Margaret Douglass, p. 7.

¹¹ Taylor and Sharp were lawyers; Williams was a lawyer and Clerk of the Court. R.H. Baker was the judge who presided over Mrs. Douglass's trial. Ibid., pp. 8-9, 18, 29.

aware of its existence.¹²

Strangely, it was not the school's existence that aroused the ire of Norfolk's whites; rather, it was Douglass' visible participation in the funeral of one of her young pupils who died of tuberculosis. Shortly after the funeral on May 9, 1853, James Cherry, the City Constable, along with a few policemen, took Douglass and the children to Mayor Simon S. Stubb's Court. Although Douglass was not charged with any crime, she willingly accompanied her students to the Mayor's Court to insure their safety. There Douglass learned that she was in violation of a Virginia statute which carried with it a \$100 fine and a six-month jail term. Eventually, Douglass was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to a month in the city jail, even though the law had not been enforced in Norfolk despite many violations by prominent citizens.¹³

The irony of the Douglass case was that she was neither an abolitionist nor a black rights' advocate. She did nothing more than what all of Norfolk's churches--white and black--were doing: instructing free blacks in reading and writing. The difference, however, was that Douglass took her interest in the children out of the rented house's secluded school room into the streets. When Douglass, a white woman, created a "public disturbance" by attending the funeral of one of her young black pupils, the white community deemed it necessary to

¹² Ibid., pp. 7-8, 11-14.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 13-15, 18-19.

take action. Norfolk's authorities hoped that she would leave the area and thus permit the crime to go unpunished. Douglass did leave to visit her daughter in New York but returned, whereupon she was called before the court on January 10, 1854, and received a stern reprimand along with a one-month jail sentence which she served in 1854.¹⁴

So it was in an historically ambiguous atmosphere that the AMA had operated two black schools on Queen and Holt Streets since October-November 1863. Once established, the Freedmen's Bureau cooperated with the AMA's teachers and missionaries already working in the area, and with city authorities to organize and maintain a system of free schools for black children that would eventually be supported by Norfolk's city government. Freedmen's Bureau Commissioner General O.O. Howard instituted the Bureau's commitment to the education and moral uplift of the freedmen in his first general circular. Howard directed that fullest cooperation and assistance be given to the benevolent societies and local officials in maintaining good schools for freedmen. During its first year of operation, however, the only assistance the Bureau was able to provide was school supervision, books, school furniture, abandoned or confiscated buildings for school use, and transportation of northern teachers to Norfolk. Howard also directed that a freedmen's fund be

¹⁴ According to Douglass, Norfolk's churches not only instructed free blacks, but slaves as well. Ibid., pp. 21, 41-42, 44.

created and used to maintain schools once money became available.¹⁵

In July 1865, the Assistant Bureau Commissioner of each state under Reconstruction was authorized to select one Bureau agent to assume the position of General Superintendent of Schools. In Norfolk, AMA missionary H.C. Percy was placed in this position. His duties included the promotion of freedmen's school efficiency, cooperation among benevolent and missionary societies working within the state, and coordination between those societies and government agencies. Each of these state school superintendents reported directly to John W. Alvord, Freedmen's Bureau School Superintendent. Following the creation of this office, General Howard sought to concentrate his efforts on freedmen's education by eventually closing down the original Bureau divisions involved with the distribution of rations, the supervision of contracts, and the Freedmen's Hospital.¹⁶

As conceived by General Howard, the educational program also included the continued search for willing missionary teachers, especially black southern teachers, who would instruct students in the freedmen's schools. Howard stressed

¹⁵ Marjorie H. Parker, "Some Educational Activities of the Freedmen's Bureau," Journal of Negro Education 23 (Winter 1954), pp. 9-10; Henry S. Rorer, History of Norfolk Public Schools, 1681-1968 (Norfolk: Norfolk Public Library, 1968), p. 16; U.S. Bureau of Education, History of Schools for the Colored Population (N.Y.: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), p. 396.

¹⁶ Parker, p. 10.

that each superintendent should try to get local governments to assume responsibility for educating freedmen on the elementary level so that the missionary and benevolent societies could concentrate their resources and efforts on establishing freedmen schools on the secondary and college level.¹⁷

In the summer of 1865, Major Southard Hoffman, Assistant Adjutant General of the Freedmen's Bureau in Norfolk, submitted a report on black schools to the Bureau Headquarters, District of Eastern Virginia. At the beginning of January 1865, Hoffman reported, all public school houses were repossessed by the city for the use of the white children. Greatly disappointed by the removal of the two school houses which had been confiscated during Norfolk's occupation and reclaimed under President Andrew Johnson's Amnesty Proclamation, Major Hoffman expressed concern that the progress of the students would be hindered. Fortunately, the loss of the school houses did not curb the students' hunger for learning. The black schools which occupied two of those houses were moved to Concert Hall and to Bute Street Methodist Church. The average attendance was 384 students, with 204 students reading out of the Primer, 196 students writing in the Reader, 112 students studying Geography, and 181 learning Mental Arithmetic. So great was freedmen's support for these

¹⁷ General Howard discovered that southern black teachers aroused less white resentment and violence than white northern teachers did. Ibid.

schools that the voluntary contributions made by the students' parents outweighed the current expenses by over three dollars, which for a community just emerging out of slavery was a significant accomplishment. Even the principal of the First District schools commented that "after an experience, as a teacher, of nearly twenty-one years, I can say that these pupils behave as well, are governed as easily, and learn more readily than white children."¹⁸

Missionary teacher Sarah Chase also recorded events in Norfolk after city officials repossessed the two school houses used by the freedmen. According to Miss Chase, the ex-rebels did not stand by idly while the schools were reorganized. Many harassed the students as they went to class or threatened to burn the schools down if they continued to function. The AMA teachers reported that even in the face of economic and social difficulties, most students felt they were better off than when they were slaves. Even those who were slaves of wealthy masters felt they were better off free because the same crust of bread they labored for as slaves, they now earned as free men and women. Their attitudes and declarations were, no doubt, the result of harassment by the

¹⁸ The principal of the Third District schools gave high praise to the night school at Bute Street Methodist Church. It seems that the majority of those attending the evening classes were so devoted to their studies that they came after a long day engaged in exhausting labor. Additionally, the voluntary contributions made by the freedmen amounted to \$95.95 while the expenditures amounted to \$92.78. American Missionary 9 (September 1865), p. 196.

ex-rebels over their present economic status. Despite these attacks and the seizure of the school houses, the educational process and the advancement of the children continued although the black community was at a decided economic and social disadvantage.¹⁹

As events progressed in Norfolk, R.M. Manly, Superintendent of Education for the BRFAAL in the State of Virginia, wrote a letter to the Reverend J. Brinton Smith of the Protestant Episcopal Freedmen's Commission (PEFC), requesting his organization send ten teachers to Norfolk.²⁰ Between 1864 and 1865, numerous charitable organizations cultivated the educational field in Norfolk. Each organization employed ten to twelve teachers under the established district system. In the 1865-66 period, many of those same charitable organizations increased their faculty to twenty full-time teachers albeit without a district system. Although the teachers were experienced, faithful, and capable, and ample provision was made for every student, Manly described the children and their parents as "fickle and capricious." Manly's derisive opinion probably stemmed from

¹⁹ Swint, p. 155; American Missionary 9 (February 1865), p. 196; Record of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, 1865-70, BRFAAL, M1053, roll 15.

²⁰ During its first few years of operation, the P.E.F.C. primarily had been involved in the collection and distribution of clothing and other supplies. After the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau with its emphasis on education, however, the P.E.F.C. turned its attention towards the establishment of schools throughout the South. Parker, pp. 12-13.

his observation of students attending whatever school would provide them the most clothing, food, and supplies. Not surprisingly, exploits of this nature were quite common. So great were their needs that many blacks took advantage of whatever agency would provide them with the basic necessities. Once their needs were met, the desire to become educated and to educate others was so urgent that many barely literate blacks gathered together to teach others how to read and write.²¹

A month and a half later on April 27, 1866, Manly wrote to George Whipple, Corresponding Secretary of the AMA, informing him of the AMA's superior claim in managing black schools in Norfolk. In the letter, Manly told Whipple of his contact with Mrs. James, President of the Pennsylvania Branch of the PEFC and their desire to start a high school for freedmen in Norfolk. As far as Manly was concerned, the AMA would be given the first opportunity to start a high school over any other benevolent organization. The AMA secretary, however, offered to yield to the PEFC's request; but despite their intentions, the PEFC never accomplished its goal of establishing a freedmen's high school in Norfolk. That task

²¹ An example of this abuse was the Reverend Mr. Willing's School, sponsored by the Protestant Episcopal Freedmen's Commission. At the time of the opening of Mr. Willing's school, he was able to entice the students with presents, filling to capacity his school while depleting the other better-qualified and older-established schools. **Record of Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, 1865-70**, BRFAL, M1053, roll 1, pp. 175-76; Anderson, p. 6.

was left to the AMA.²²

The AMA's position in this incident with the PEFC was atypical. Initially, when the other benevolent associations began coming into Norfolk in early 1865, some of the AMA missionaries balked, claiming only those already teaching in Norfolk had a right to open a free school for blacks. So great was the dispute that H.C. Percy took the complaint to Manly, charging that only those groups authorized by General Butler had a right to open free schools in Norfolk. Eventually, the feud was temporarily settled, and other benevolent organizations were allowed to open freedmen's schools which was why the AMA was so conciliatory over the PEFC's efforts to begin a freeman's high school in 1866.²³

Despite the efforts of the other missionary societies, it was the AMA that most consistently sponsored and worked with schools in Norfolk. The Bute Street school, located at St. John A.M.E. Church, was formally established on October 9, 1865. Initially, the teachers, Misses M. Antoinette Hart, D.C. Corwin, and H.C. Fisher, reported that when the school was first reorganized the students were refractory and troublesome, no doubt the result of the turbulent occurrences in Norfolk. With a little discipline, however, the teachers reported that this problem was easily corrected. The teachers also found that the students' parents were so eager to see

²² Ibid., roll 1, p. 203.

²³ Ibid., roll 6, pp. 372, 374.

their children learn that they offered remuneration to any teacher who would provide them with extra lessons. Although a student roster did not accompany the BRFA school superintendent's report, it is highly probable that many of the students who attended the A.M.E. Bute Street school were the children of Norfolk's free black population. In a report filed by the teachers, half of the students attending the school were classified as mulattoes. In fact, the teachers believed that no child of pure African descent attended the Bute Street school, which serves as a testimony to the assertion by Luther P. Jackson that considerable miscegenation occurred in Norfolk.²⁴

In 1865, the schools begun by the AMA were fully graded into primary, intermediate, and advanced departments providing the educational system with greater effectiveness and competency. Miss Jennie Duncan, a black teacher, and Miss Fannie Coan, a white teacher, taught the advanced school at Concert Hall. This school, known as Coan High School and held in a building owned by Joseph T. Wilson, drew considerable complimentary attention from Norfolk's white ministers, the superintendent of schools, the city's newspaper editors, and other prominent citizens. To the visitors' amazement, the students at the Concert Hall school were brought from their

²⁴ Ibid.

simple ABC's to the Fifth Reader in just two years.²⁵

Reporting from the First District on the status of schools in Norfolk, H.C. Percy, the District Superintendent of Education, said the demand for schools was so great that ten were now in operation in late 1865 and early 1866. St. John A.M.E. Church's school on Bute Street had Sarah L. Curtis in charge of the Infant School, Mrs. Fisher and Mrs. D.C. Corwin teaching School No. 1, Miss L.A. Hall instructing School No. 3, School No. 4 run by Mary E. Tales, and M. Antoinette Hart instructing School No. 5. The school at Rope Walk was taught by Charles Mecarney who had an average attendance of 494 students by January 1866.²⁶

Eight teachers taught an average of 393 students (305 in day school and 186 in night school) in another AMA-sponsored school at an unrecorded location. The teachers included Mrs. M. Rodgers, Mrs. Mary Foster, Jennie Duncan, Fannie Coan, S.D. Burnett, Mary Leek, Lizzie Fay, and Mary Babbit. In January 1866, Mrs. Babbitt and Miss Duncan left this site to teach fifty students at the Rope Walk Barracks school.²⁷

The New England Freedmen's Aid Society was responsible for two additional schools in Norfolk which opened in January

²⁵ The AMA paid Joseph T. Wilson thirty-three dollars a month in rent for the use of his building as a school. Ibid.; American Missionary 15 (September 1870), p. 198.

²⁶ **Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, 1865-70**, BRFal, M1053, roll 12.

²⁷ Ibid.

1866. The Catharine Street school was taught by Misses E.P. and H.R. Smith and had an average attendance of ninety-one in its day school and thirty-four attending its night school. The Talbot Street school, taught by Misses Fannie E. Ellis, Sarah Clark, and M.C. Axtell, opened with an average attendance of 141 students in its day school and fifty-six attending its night school. The Friend's Society of New York added a fifth school to the list of benevolent society-sponsored schools in Norfolk. This private school began as an experiment, designed to test the expediency and practicality of supporting a private school taught by blacks. Opening in February 1866 for only four months and taught by Miss Martha Skinner and Mr. Kees, the school had an average attendance of twenty students.²⁸

The five remaining schools begun during this period were private schools located in small, poorly-ventilated school rooms. Each charged fifty to seventy-five cents a month for tuition. Miss Seah L. Mackay taught forty-four students at the 14 James Street school; Mrs. Georgianna Cook had twenty students enrolled at the 13 Fox Street school; Miss Sarah A. Stith administered a school with twenty-one students at 11 and

²⁸ Charles A. Raymond, Inspector of Schools for the Bureau's First District, described the majority of Norfolk's private school black teachers as educationally ignorant and rash, with the exception of Miss Skinner who was a graduate of New Haven High School. Raymond also found the private schools to be located in lofts over kitchens, in the back buildings, and in other poorly ventilated and miserably furnished buildings. Ibid., rolls 12-13.

13 Williams Lane; Miss Emma T. Williams's Queen Street school had thirty students; and Misses E. Willey and Eliza Harris ran the 44 James Street school with twenty-five students. Freedmen's Bureau Assistant Superintendent William Austin remarked that many of these schools started in various locations throughout the city without his knowledge. Austin found that some of these self-supporting schools were run by freedmen who, shortly after becoming literate, opened a private school, usually assisted by "old white residents for obvious reasons."²⁹ Austin probably believed that whites supported these schools taught by barely-literate freedmen as a way of controlling blacks and giving the impression that they were helping to uplift the black community.

In the wake of the confiscation of the two school houses, the black children and their teachers increasingly felt the inadequacy of their new accommodations because of the vast numbers of students enrolling daily. Miss Ada W. Smith, as well as other teachers, repeatedly pressed Manly with the need for the Bureau to erect a school house for the black children. Manly informed Miss Smith that as soon as he received the reports from the Virginia school districts he would see. As things looked, however, he feared there would not be enough money to build that school house. Encouraging her patience in

²⁹ As happened frequently in Norfolk, three of the teachers at the private schools, Misses Stith, Williams, and Willey, did not return after June 1866; their schools shut down or merged with others still in operation. Ibid., roll 6, pp. 821-22, and roll 12.

this matter, Manly ended his correspondence by reminding Miss Smith that, despite the need, Norfolk's schools were currently more comfortably situated than most freedmen schools in Richmond and Petersburg.³⁰

So it was in the area of education that the Bureau achieved its greatest success. Establishing or supervising a variety of schools--such as day, night, and industrial schools--the Bureau cooperated closely with the AMA in Norfolk. The average cost of maintaining the AMA schools for blacks was \$4,000 per year. The total expense in Norfolk from 1862 to 1865 was \$30,000, with \$1,000 of that amount being paid by the black community, an astronomical amount of money for a recently-emancipated and impoverished people. Even so, the financial burden on the AMA was quite heavy. Government aid from the Bureau was decreasing yearly, with only a few confiscated buildings being provided over the last two years.³¹

Even with these accomplishments, not all Bureau officials were sympathetic to the freedmen's plight or had their best interests in mind. Missionary and teacher Sarah Chase wrote that black affairs in Norfolk shortly after the war were miserably conducted by the Freedmen's Bureau, although she noted slight improvements with the appointment of her

³⁰ Ibid., roll 1, p. 320.

³¹ John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction After the Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 38; American Missionary 15 (September 1871), p. 198.

compassionate friend, Colonel Orlando Brown, as Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau for Virginia. Miss Chase expressed concern and sorrow at the return of the ex-Confederates because it was inevitable that vengeance would be visited upon the defenseless freedmen.³²

Sarah Chase was also concerned that many blacks who purchased confiscated property without receiving deeds would be defrauded at the return of the rebels in the atmosphere created by an unsympathetic President. She wrote that blacks were frequently robbed in Norfolk, detailing two incidents in which black men were assaulted and robbed by white men in the presence of city police or Union soldiers who refused to pursue the offenders. According to Miss Chase, robbery was the least of the freedmen's worries. Murder of freedmen by vengeful whites was common. In fact, blacks were so fearful of being murdered or robbed on the streets of Norfolk that many stayed home, refusing to venture far from their doorsteps.³³

Indeed, Norfolk's blacks had much to be concerned about, especially in light of a June 1865 newspaper article which proclaimed:

The cry of returned rebel soldiers to Norfolk is, 'The day of bayonets are passed!' Many are heard to say, 'We'll

³² Taken from a May 25, 1865 letter by Sarah Chase to family members in New England. Swint, p. 159.

³³ Ibid., pp. 159-160.

kill every nigger, or drive 'em all out
of town.³⁴

Despite the whites' animosity, school superintendent H.C. Percy, reported that Norfolk's black leaders did everything they could to demonstrate their good will and desire to make themselves non-threatening to the white community. One way was to prove they could be contributing, educated members of society.³⁵

The month of December 1865 produced a series of unexpected, temporary changes in white sentiment towards the freedmen and the AMA, primarily because of the conciliatory and non-threatening attitude of most in the black community. Prominent whites interested in the education movement visited the schools and mission homes. Although many whites still believed that blacks would be happier in slavery, large numbers of middle-class whites accepted conditions as they were, acknowledging that education was the best alternative given the circumstances. In hindsight, however, these changes were only the calm before the storm.³⁶

Despite the temporary reprieve from white violence in late 1865, the black community's peace was soon disrupted by a new set of attacks beginning in February and March of 1866. Black men and women were robbed, beaten, and occasionally

³⁴ Ibid, p. 165.

³⁵ American Missionary 10 (January 1866), p. 4.

³⁶ American Missionary 10 (January 1866), p. 4.

murdered by native whites and white Union troops. Even the black schools were defenseless against these vengeful attacks. A month prior to the famous April 16, 1866, riot in Norfolk, one of the black school houses under black teacher Miss Jennie Duncan, was burned to the ground. Despondent over such a senseless act, Miss Duncan felt her spirits lift the following day when Robert, one of her students, said "'Well, Miss Duncan, if they did burn our school house, they can't burn what we have got in our heads, can they?'"³⁷

Ironically, it was in the aftermath of this tremendous white animosity and violence towards Norfolk's blacks that an intense religious interest among the members of all the black churches swept through the city. Norfolk's AMA school superintendent wrote that a spiritual revival began sometime in May 1866 which affected school attendance. Percy wrote that "many of our school children are entertaining a hope in Christ; many more are seriously thinking of their soul's interest. For a week we were obliged to close our advanced school, on account of the intense feeling among the pupils."³⁸ Indeed, two AMA teachers wrote to George Whipple on June 9, 1866, confirming Percy's report and informing him of the state

³⁷ Robert, who wanted to be a preacher, was almost ten years old in March 1866. Despite his struggles with learning to read (it took him six months to learn the alphabet), he has successfully matriculated to the most advanced class in the school in the two years it has been in operation. "Letters to Armstrong/Frissell," p. 58.

³⁸ American Missionary 10 (July 1866), p. 148.

of affairs in Norfolk's AMA-sponsored schools. According to the teachers, the intensity of the spiritual revival among the children precluded any lessons they wished to teach. A religious revival had begun two weeks earlier in a small, out-of-the-way black church and spread to all of Norfolk's black churches. That Monday in school, after seeing a tremendous move of the Spirit among the people in church, the children began showing signs of being touched by that great move of God's spirit. It began quite innocently. Two instructors were teaching a lesson about a little boy broken down by exposure who was being comforted just before he died. Soon after reading the story, many of the students began sobbing and crying out for the Lord to save them. The outpouring of emotion was such that the teachers decided to have a prayer meeting right there in class. The following day they tried to conduct regular classes, but the religious fervor among the children was so tremendous that they decided they should suspend school for a few days to allow them to go to the revival services currently in session at one of the local churches. Not until a week later were classes able to return to their normal schedule.³⁹

In the wake of white animosity and violence against black freedmen throughout the South, the Freedmen's Bureau confirmed and enlarged its legal base in the provision of education for freedmen in July 1866 with the passage of the Second

³⁹ American Missionary 10 (July 1866), pp. 149-50.

Freedmen's Bureau Bill. Perhaps as a reaction to the unleashing of white hostility in many of the South's major cities, Congress broadened the Bureau's ability to cooperate with benevolent societies and increased its operating budget, thus enabling the Bureau to increase its financial and service assistance to the freedmen's schools and their teachers. For the 1866-67 fiscal year, Congress appropriated an operating budget of \$521,000 for Bureau educational activities. Additional income was to be derived from the sale or leasing of confiscated property still held by the Bureau.⁴⁰

On July 16, 1866, all district superintendents were ordered to ascertain possible locations of schools, the state of public opinion about freedmen's schools, how much local friends of the school would donate, whether new buildings or teachers would be required, and whether the new buildings would be free or require rent. As the children returned to their schools for the fall session, beginning in October 1866, only four freedmen's public schools reopened in Norfolk. Designed to accommodate twelve hundred students, the AMA-sponsored Bute Street A.M.E. Church school employed three white teachers; two black teachers had charge of the freedmen-sponsored Catharine Street Church school; two black teachers

⁴⁰ Between 1867 and 1870, the Bureau's funding was increased, enabling it to allot \$243,753.22 to the AMA for its educational work among freedmen throughout the South. In turn, the AMA allocated much of this allotment to the establishment of secondary and teacher-training institutions. Parker, pp. 10-12.

taught at the freedmen-sponsored James Street school; and three white teachers taught at the PEFC-sponsored Calvert Street school. H.C. Percy remarked that all the schools, with the exception of the Cotton Factory building on James Street were being used free of charge. Percy also received assurances from some of Norfolk's black leaders⁴¹ that they would pay one-third of the school's expenses while fifty cents a month in tuition, charged to those who could pay, would help meet the school's operating costs.⁴²

As the Freedmen's Bureau's powers were enlarged to better harmonize and coordinate efforts made by benevolent societies establishing schools throughout the South, white resentment towards those schools increased. Throughout 1866, the typical white Norfolkian attitude towards the city's black schools can be summarized in a satirical editorial published on July 2, 1866, in the Norfolk Virginian. The editors described their "sad news" at seeing the closing of the black schools for the summer and said their only hope was that those schools would never return. The editors defended their attitude towards the

⁴¹ Among the leaders were William Keeling, John H. Goodam, J. Reddick, and the Reverends D. Henderson, G.T. Watkins, William Lewis, and Lewis Tucker.

⁴² The PEFC-sponsored school was located in the largest building, and therefore enrolled the largest number of freedmen. Although two hundred enrolled at the school's opening in October 1866, that number quickly increased to three hundred by November which necessitated the addition of two black faculty members. Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, 1865-70, BRFAL, M1053, roll 12 and roll 14.

schools by alleging that the whites of the city had submitted to the indignity of black schools without murmur or complaint. In actuality, many of Norfolk's whites did everything they could to discourage the schools and the black community's involvement with them. Part of the reason whites were so opposed to black schools was that education curtailed the use of child labor and created among blacks a dissatisfaction with their "lot" in life. Norfolk's whites realized, however, that some kind of education for blacks was needed; they were simply convinced that freedmen's education should be in the hands of southern, rather than northern, whites.⁴³

Once southern whites realized that the educational progress of blacks was inevitable, a number of them began advocating conditional suffrage and public education. The condition was, of course, that the education and suffrage of the black community be controlled and manipulated to favor the maintenance of the status quo. By 1867, Norfolk's development perfectly reflected this trend in southern thought. Because black teachers, religious and secular leaders, and school officials insisted that education would allow freedmen to assume responsibilities as citizens and assist them in voting more responsibly in the new social order, whites hoped to gain control of and manipulate this voting block for their own

⁴³ This editorial was reprinted in the American Missionary 11 (July 1867), p. 152; Anderson, pp. 23, 28; Parker, pp. 11, 16.

purposes.⁴⁴

In contrast to the 1866 attitudes of Norfolk's whites towards black schools, the American Missionary reprinted an editorial from the Norfolk Journal dated June 1, 1867. In the article, the editors recounted their visit along with other prominent white citizens to the school on Fenchurch Street by invitation of Major J.H. Remington, Sub-Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau. Although reluctant to go, they were very pleasantly satisfied by what they saw and astonished by the intelligence of the pupils. The editors also noted that the courteous and kind female teachers showed great pride in their students. So impressed were the visiting white dignitaries that the editorial concluded with an admonition to all whites of the city that "more encouragement must be given by our Councils to our public schools, to prevent our white children from being outstripped in the race for intelligence by their sable competitors."⁴⁵

Norfolk's blacks continued to develop politically, culturally, and educationally, despite the political and social restraints placed on them by the former secessionists. Between 1866 and 1867, the Freedmen's Bureau was inundated with requests from blacks insisting an "educational clause" be written into their labor contracts which would require planters to provide schools for them and their children. The

⁴⁴ Parker, p. 17.

⁴⁵ American Missionary 11 (July 1867), pp. 151-152.

planters agreed, but only on the condition that the teachers were black. This they did believing that a black teacher would be inferior to a white teacher (and out of fear of the radicalism of northern white teachers) and thus create an inferior school. Fortunately for the blacks in and around Norfolk, quite the opposite was true as the advanced missionary schools concentrated all their efforts on graduating blacks capable of instructing and training others in academic and vocational careers. In addition, by 1868 a school instituted for the purpose of training blacks in teaching and vocational education was founded by the Freedmen's Bureau in Hampton.⁴⁶

On March 20, 1867, one of the advanced freedmen's schools at the Institute building on Fenchurch Street taught by AMA teachers Miss Fay and Miss Duncan held a graduation exercise. The exercise was interspersed with gymnastic exhibitions, recitations, singing, math, and declamation performances. Each of the students was congratulated for his or her phenomenal achievement in a mere three years of educational training, and school superintendent H.C. Percy awarded prizes to the four best written compositions in the school.⁴⁷

The problem faced by Norfolk's black schools in 1867 was not so much white hostility and violence as it was the rivalry between benevolent societies for students and funding.

⁴⁶ Anderson, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁷ American Missionary 11 (May 1867), p. 110.

Rivalry between the benevolent societies continued to plague Norfolk's educational program periodically until the city incorporated the schools into its public school system. On June 1, 1867, AMA Corresponding Secretary George Whipple reminded the State Superintendent that the AMA had frequently moved aside when other groups came in with promises to do more than they. In every instance, however, those groups failed and thus hurt the cause of education for the freedmen. Whipple cited examples of groups, such as the Episcopal Commission, which appeared to be more concerned with building up their church membership than promoting the cause of education. And while most of their teachers were highly qualified, their education was steeped in the Episcopal doctrine. Reminding R.M. Manly of the shortcomings of the other groups and the consistency demonstrated by the AMA, Whipple reiterated the AMA's commitment to high school and elementary education of blacks in Norfolk. This Whipple did, no doubt, to strengthen the AMA's position in the education of Norfolk's freedmen and to gain sole support from the Freedmen's Bureau in that undertaking.⁴⁸

Thus, in June 1867, the first Norfolk public school system for blacks, primarily supported financially by the AMA, began with four day schools (with 10 teachers and 520 pupils) and one night school (with 3 teachers and 180 pupils). The

⁴⁸ **Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, 1865-70, BRFAL, M1053, roll 7, pp. 202-203.**

teachers included several young black men who had only recently become literate. Day school ran from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., while night school ran from 7:45 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. every weekday evening except Wednesday. H.C. Percy was again designated School Superintendent, and the four day schools were located at the Bute Street A.M.E. Church, on Calvert Street, at the U.S. Dispensary on Fenchurch Street, and at the Rope Walk located near the Gas Works.⁴⁹

The lack of teachers added to the problems faced by missionary societies in their effort to educate southern freedmen. Many of the schools remained closed after the summer holiday in 1867 because of the failure of teachers to return South and the curtailment of funds. Those schools that remained open did so because of the continued contributions of Norfolk's black citizens and were well-attended by children and adults.⁵⁰

In the midst of these difficulties, encouragement to the black community came in the form of William Wilson Lamb, former editor of the Daily Southern Argus and a long-time advocate of public education for blacks and whites. Lamb became Norfolk's school superintendent from 1867 to 1872. Soon after he assumed office, the Norfolk Journal followed Lamb's lead (beginning on March 5, 1867) with a series of

⁴⁹ Rorer, p. 17.

⁵⁰ **Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69**, BRFAL, M1048, roll 58, p. 1053; roll 48, pp. 113-14.

editorials encouraging the city to provide public schools for blacks. Unlike Lamb, however, the Norfolk Journal's motives in calling for public schools were suspect primarily because they coincided with widespread rumors that privately-supported schools would soon be opened in Norfolk for blacks. Although these rumors proved to be true and Norfolk's white leaders continued to be suspicious and hostile towards organizations begun by northern whites, the city did not take the advice of Lamb or the Norfolk Journal because its treasury was almost depleted.⁵¹

Throughout the nation, severe cutbacks in donations and appropriations became the rule, rather than the exception, as whites tired of the fight for black progress and yearned for a return to normalcy. AMA contributors, though commendable in their efforts and accomplishments in feeding, sheltering, clothing, educating, and evangelizing freedmen, eventually tired as well. In 1868, the shortage of funds reached a critical stage. As a result, a meeting was held on January 30, 1868, in response to the pressing need to decide whether Norfolk's blacks would be willing to take the necessary measures to raise funds in support of the AMA-sponsored schools. The school's new superintendent, J.C. Haskell, was present at the enthusiastic meeting held at the A.M.E. Church on Bute Street along with the Reverends Lewis, Tucker, and

⁵¹ William Wilson Lamb's father, Colonel William Lamb (1835-1909), served as Norfolk's mayor who turned the city over to its Union occupiers in 1862. Rorer, pp. 16-17.

C.S. Williams, and community leaders Joseph T. Wilson and H.C. Percy; Major J.H. Remington presided. The Reverend Mr. Lewis remarked that had the black community known their financial assistance was needed, they would have provided monies sooner.

Haskell wrote to his superiors that he was truly surprised by the unanimous support and cooperation given the AMA-governed schools from the black community. In response to decisions made at the meeting, twelve men (three from each of the city's four wards) were selected to compose a soliciting committee, with the city's black ministers serving as additional members, in raising funds for the schools.⁵²

Operating with extensive support from the black community, four black schools partially supported by benevolent societies continued to function in December 1868. Included among the four were three schools partially sponsored by the AMA: the Calvert Street school conducted by Misses M.K. Colburn, Mary Kildare, and E.N. Turtchell with an enrollment of 191 students; the Bute Street school directed by Misses H.M. Boss and A.H. Wood with eighty-eight students; and the Cove Street school conducted by Misses Margaret Rodgers, N.L. Chase, and C.C. Chappell with 180 day and 179 night students. The fourth school was partially-supported by the PEFC. The James Street school, administered by a black

⁵² American Missionary 12 (April 1868), p. 79.

teacher, Miss S.L. Brown, had eighty students.⁵³

One other school, fully sponsored by freedmen and administered by F.S. Newton and F. Williams, was not established until February 1869. This high turnover of freedmen schools in Norfolk was exacerbated by the lack of support from the city. Superintendent Haskell observed that "the sentiment would be better if the city would only make the appropriation and act like human beings."⁵⁴

On January 8, 1869, Manly wrote to inform Miss Ada Smith that cuts in the budget necessitated that the Bute Street school be dropped from the rent roll. With the changing of school superintendents, word was slow in getting to Manly that no school had been conducted there since last summer, although rent money continued to be paid. By the end of that year, there were nine black schools, with one teacher per school.⁵⁵

While Norfolk's blacks and the Freedmen's Bureau continued to push for publicly-funded schools, delegates to the constitutional convention tried to incorporate that measure in the state's new constitution. On April 7, 1868, Dr. Thomas Bayne introduced a resolution for the establishment of free and integrated public schools which required tax-

⁵³ The Bute Street school was held in a building owned by Joseph T. Wilson (black), while the Cove Street school's building was owned by Samuel Cutherell (white). **Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, 1865-70**, BRFAL, M1053, roll 12.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., roll 1, vol. 2, p. 51.

supported educational facilities. The majority of black delegates were convinced that without mixed schools their educational privileges would be severely hampered. But despite Bayne's famous oratorical skills, the proposal was overwhelmingly defeated because, according to Richmond's black delegate Lewis Lindsey, it only "honored pledges already made to the freedmen" by white northern Republicans, but did not consider the alarm among whites which would almost certainly follow.⁵⁶ Unlike Bayne, Lindsey and other blacks opposed to integrated schools believed that in 1868, white Virginians were not ready to accept the idea of integrated schools nor was the state financially prepared to establish a tax-based public school system. The Convention did adopt, however, the original education article which left the issue of segregated versus integrated schools in the hands of local officials.⁵⁷

On July 30, 1868, R.M. Manly wrote to AMA secretary George Whipple, informing him of General Orlando Brown's trip to meet with Norfolk's officials concerning the condition of its schools for blacks. Norfolk officials assured Brown that \$5,000 to \$8,000 would be appropriated for the black schools as long as the AMA supplied the teachers and oversaw the work. The civil authorities also assured Brown that the only

⁵⁶ Bayne's proposal was defeated by 42 southern whites, 14 northern whites, 1 unclassified white, and 10 blacks. Hume, p. 468.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 469; Edgar W. Knight, Reconstruction and Education in Virginia, reprint from South Atlantic Quarterly 15 (January-April 1916), pp. 8, 13.

interference on their part would be to aid the AMA. Less than a month later, however, the Norfolk City Council went back on its pledge to cooperate with the AMA and to assist in the advancement of its schools for blacks. Almost as an acknowledgement of the failure of the war to make any substantial changes, Manly admonished the AMA to "'put not your trust in rebels . . . Not a week passes--scarcely a day but a negro is shot--and nobody is to blame.'"⁵⁸

In a letter marked "Personal and Strictly Private," J.H. Remington, Norfolk's Bureau Superintendent, wrote to R.M. Manly that the only way he could account for the actions of the Common and Select Councils regarding the school matter was to cite the fact that several members on the Council were

shaky and afraid to commit themselves until after the Presidential election. This is the way in which I should explain the words 'not expedient--at present,' used in Mr. Daniel's resolution. Some of the members, especially business men, are very much afraid of exciting the wrath of the secession element, as the newspapers immediately attack any business[man] who comes out as a Republican and advise the patrons to withdraw patronage from him. A very fierce attack of this kind was made against Murdock Howell a member of the Select Council a few days ago.⁵⁹

Joseph T. Wilson and other blacks, however, refused to accept the Councils' decision without protest. On November 3,

⁵⁸ **Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, 1865-70, BRFAL, M1053, roll 1, p. 457.**

⁵⁹ **Ibid., roll 8, pp. 135-136.**

1868, they petitioned the Common Council for an appropriation supporting schools for black children. It took a year short of a day for the City Council's Finance Committee's report to be adopted and an ordinance passed establishing black public schools in Norfolk. The city further appointed seven citizens (five appointed by the Common Council and two by the Select Council) as commissioners of education for black children,⁶⁰ with the same authority as education commissioners for white children. The only exception would be that the entrance fee for black children would be set at one dollar whereas for white children it was set at four dollars. The Council further ordered the seven commissioners to select one member from their body as superintendent, with a salary of twenty-five dollars a month. Additionally, a total of \$4,000 was appropriated by the Councils to be divided into twelve monthly installments.⁶¹

When Norfolk's freedmen's schools reopened supposedly with city-funding in October 1869, school officials were met with a large assemblage of pupils anxious to learn. By

⁶⁰ By 1870, the black school commissioners became an elected body. November 2, 1870 was the date of their first election. The candidates, all of whom were distinguished and prominent black citizens of Norfolk, were John D. Epps, W.H. Brooks, George Dawley, Thomas Henson, and Dr. Thomas Bayne. George Dawley and W.H. Brooks were the two men chosen by the black community in Norfolk as their first school commissioners. Norfolk, VA., Norfolk City Council, Records of the Common Council, vol. 10 (1868-73), p. 133. Hereafter cited as Records of the Common Council.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 39, 100, 115.

January-February 1870, the school funding question was still being delayed in Council. Norfolk's new freedmen's school superintendent, M. L'Hommediu, said white sentiment toward black schools was as changeable as the weather. And although city officials were now more willing to support black schools than they were three years earlier, because of outside pressure the Council had yet officially to decide the issue.⁶²

The Virginia Constitution of 1869 contained the first mandate providing public schools for blacks under a uniform system. Formulated during the 1867-68 Constitutional Convention, the 1869 Constitution allowed each locality to determine whether the schools would be integrated. In 1870, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Reverend W.H. Ruffner, submitted his plan for public education, providing for segregated schools throughout Virginia. While white public opinion regarding the education of blacks had not changed from earlier years, opposition to Ruffner's plan centered on the provision for the equal access of blacks to public education rather than on the provision for tax-supported schools. Despite some opposition, Ruffner's plan became law on July 11, 1870, although his provision for equal access of blacks to public education did not. Ruffner, however, continued his efforts to garner support for an equalization of education for blacks even though his efforts

⁶² Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, 1865-70, BRFal, M1053, roll 10, pp. 400, 821-22.

were unsuccessful. In his 1871 and 1872 annual reports, Ruffner asserted that a strong correlation existed between education and economic development. Ruffner concluded his report by insisting that the state could not afford to neglect educating blacks, especially in the areas of manual training, domestic science, and industrial arts. It is unfortunate that Ruffner's admonitions to the state regarding the education of blacks went unheeded for many years.⁶³

On January 10, 1870, in conjunction with part of Ruffner's plan, the Select Council of Norfolk finally concurred with the Common Council to establish public education for blacks. Four thousand dollars was appropriated for the black schools of Norfolk, putting them on not quite equal and certainly segregated footing with the white schools. And although established much like the white schools of the city, Norfolk's public school for blacks were taught exclusively by black teachers, most of whom were graduates of Hampton Institute.⁶⁴

Not until April 5, 1871, did the Councils finally follow through on their promises by establishing a black public

⁶³ Cornelius Heatwole, A History of Education in Virginia (New York: Macmillan, 1916), pp. 362-364; Knight, p. 17.

⁶⁴ American Missionary 15 (September 1871), p. 199. On October 4, 1870, the Colored School Commissioner petitioned for an additional \$2,000 appropriation and asked that \$1,000 from a previous appropriation be paid. On January 3, 1871, the Council granted a \$16,000 appropriation, \$400 being deducted for sundries. Norfolk, VA, City Ordinances (September 1869-December 1877), pp. 65, 195, 200.

school in each of the city's four Wards. The only major change with the establishment of four black schools was the elimination of a school commission and superintendent for the black schools. The City Councils declared that Norfolk's public schools would be governed by a single commission and superintendent, which for the black community, was a blessing as well as a curse. The establishment of one superintendent and one group of commissioners for the City of Norfolk meant a possible equalization in regulations, guidelines, and buildings. The downside of this was the high probability that the superintendent and school commissioners would all be white, whereas the previous system allowed black representation on the commission.⁶⁵

The 1871 bill also meant the continuance of a disproportionate number of black pupils assigned to black teachers. Despite these overcrowded conditions in classrooms, the lack of funds and limited facilities still meant that many of the eager young pupils had to be placed on a waiting list because there was not enough room for them in the school houses. In addition, immediately after the city-wide school commission's establishment, disproportionate funding began, which meant greater overcrowding and longer waiting lists. A petition from the school commissioners requesting \$960 for white public schools and \$390 for black public schools was

⁶⁵ Norfolk, Virginia, City Ordinances (September 1869-December 1877), pp. 240, 243.

granted by the Common Council on April 5, 1871. So strong was white opposition to equality for blacks, that resistance to equal facilities became an established pattern in Norfolk. On January 7, 1873, probably in response to political pressure from Congress and prominent blacks in Norfolk, the Council appointed a Select Committee member to examine the location and condition of the black public schools and their system of grading.⁶⁶

Inequality between the black and white schools continued to be the guiding force in Norfolk throughout the period following Radical Reconstruction. Despite the political activity of many blacks, disproportionate funding continued until federally-ordered busing for the purposes of integrating the schools occurred in 1970. In 1875, 1,501 school children were enrolled in Norfolk's Public Schools out of a school-age population of 6,244 (sixteen percent were white and fourteen percent were black). Of the white school age children, 984 attended school while only 517 of the black school age children attended school. Those blacks who did not attend school were not enrolled because of the unavailability of space or the need of their families for them to work. For those blacks who did attend school, the desperate need for a permanent and adequate school house continued, despite the

⁶⁶ Brinston Collins, director, "Norfolk State College, Church Street--Huntersville II--Wood Street Research Project," (Norfolk: Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority, 1978), p. 84; Records of the Common Council, vol. 10, pp. 243, 414; Knight, p. 21.

promises of the city councils.⁶⁷

By 1876-77, only two black public schools were operating in Norfolk, whereas the four white schools continued operation in the buildings returned to the ex-rebels after President Johnson's Amnesty Proclamation. The Bute Street school, conducted in a dilapidated and inadequate rented building, had Miss M.E. Melvin as its grammar school teacher and Richard A. Tucker as its rector. Unfortunately, the North Street school, with Robert Bagnall serving as its white rector, was substantially no better than the Bute Street school even though it was housed in a structure built soon after the Civil War. With a shaky foundation, bad timber, and a seating capacity of only three hundred, the North Street school also proved inadequate to the task. Conducting North Street's grammar school was Miss Laura E. Davis, a Hampton Institute graduate; Misses S.F. Poole and M. Keeling taught the primary students, Misses L.B. Lewis and M.J. Riddick the intermediate classes. Crammed into these two buildings was an average monthly enrollment of 488. Located in the four white schools was an average monthly enrollment of 985. While black and white overcrowding appeared equally serious, it must be noted that the buildings used by the black schools were not designed for use as schools, nor were they able to accommodate all the

⁶⁷ Norfolk, VA, Message of John S. Tucker, Mayor of the City of Norfolk, VA, To the Select and Common Councils Together With Municipal Reports for the Six Months Ending June 30th, 1877 (Norfolk: T.O. Wise, 1877), p. 46. Hereafter cited as Mayor Tucker's Message.

black children who wanted to attend.⁶⁸

In 1877, Norfolk's public schools and freedmen were threatened by yet another powerful force: the diversion of school funds. So great was this problem that in 1878 and 1879, many schools throughout Virginia were temporarily suspended and the teachers unpaid because a great portion of the school funds was diverted to other needs. Supporters of public schools were successful, however, in getting the Hekel Bill passed on March 3, 1879. This act constitutionally secured school funds from diversion by state legislators eager to eliminate the state's debt.⁶⁹

While General Howard's vision of a locally-sponsored elementary school program for blacks slowly became a reality in Norfolk, the Bureau began concentrating its efforts on the establishment of secondary schools and colleges. The Virginia Constitutional Convention's refusal to adopt a provision which would have instituted integrated schools necessitated a new direction of educational training for young blacks. With the assistance of the Bureau between 1867 and 1868, the AMA founded eight major teacher-training schools in the South to provide black teachers for the segregated freedmen's schools. Ironically, the idea of a teacher-training school for blacks

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 67, 73.

⁶⁹ The reason the public school's funds were so quickly chosen for diversion by state legislators was Virginia's traditional resistance to the idea of public schools. Knight, pp. 24, 28, 31.

in the Tidewater area was first proposed by missionaries and teachers in 1865. Although the idea was strongly supported by C.B. Wilder, Freedmen's Bureau official, and H.C. Percy, Freedmen's Bureau and AMA official, it was not until 1868 that the funds became available, transforming the idea into a reality.⁷⁰

Hampton Agricultural and Normal Institute, founded by the AMA and aided by contributions from the Freedmen's Bureau, was headed by General Samuel Armstrong. In April 1868 Hampton opened its doors with five teachers and fifteen students. Although denounced by a few local freedmen and long-time missionaries to the area as insufficient to the needs of blacks and their vision of equality, the Institute pressed forward and prospered. Armstrong inaugurated his plan of making Hampton Institute "a white school for black students."⁷¹ Permeated with the white paternalistic attitudes of the day, Armstrong's vision of Hampton Institute was as a vocational training center for blacks, operated and taught by whites, who decided how and what blacks would learn. Shortly after its opening, Armstrong solidified control of the Institute by dismissing three veteran missionary teachers who objected to Armstrong's focus for the Institute. In 1870, Hampton expended almost \$100,000, most of which came from the generous donations from the Bureau and the AMA, in permanent

⁷⁰ Engs, p. 142; Parker, p. 14.

⁷¹ Engs, p. 147.

improvements. In 1872, Armstrong enlisted the aid of black legislators and funds from Virginia's Morrill Land Grant Act to make Hampton Institute independent from the AMA.⁷²

As a vocational training school, Hampton Normal Institute had different requirements from those of other black teacher-training colleges. For example, Hampton did not grant a Bachelor of Arts degree, nor did the school require completion of high school or a four-year curriculum. Instead, the school was designed to reach a student body primarily consisting of elementary school graduates who tended to be older and more economically disadvantaged than those attending regular colleges.⁷³

Armstrong believed that blacks, in their current state of ignorance, emancipation, and enfranchisement were a danger to themselves and to white society. As principal of Hampton from 1865 until his death in 1898, Armstrong supported removing blacks from southern politics as the first step in "properly reconstructing the South." His goal was therefore to educate blacks for the purpose of preserving existing societal views and uplifting the black race. For Armstrong, Hampton's goal was to "prepare self-respecting leaders with the proper 'moral force' and with the willingness to concentrate on teaching agriculture rather than on politics."⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid., pp. 147-148; Parker, pp. 14-15.

⁷³ Anderson, pp. 34-35.

⁷⁴ Engs, p. 144; Anderson, pp. 36-37.

Throughout the 1870's and 1880's, Hampton Institute graduated many students who became teachers in the Norfolk Public School system. George W. Taylor, Norfolk's Superintendent of Schools from 1887 to 1890, complimented Armstrong on those Hampton graduates currently working in the Norfolk Public Schools. Among these thoroughly capable teachers were George Taylor (1871 graduate), Mary Melvin (1874 graduate), Joseph Towe (1875 graduate), Georgie Gray (1876 graduate), Margaret Keeling (1877 graduate), Delia Burnham (1881 graduate), Adeline Williams (1883 graduate), and ten others who graduated or taught during the years between 1871 and 1890 [for a listing and brief description of all Hampton graduates who taught in Norfolk during these years, see Appendix 1].⁷⁵

Noteworthy among the Hampton graduates who taught in Norfolk was Mrs. Laura E. Davis Titus, of the class of 1876. Born in Norfolk County, Mrs. Titus returned to Norfolk in 1877 and for twelve years taught over eight hundred students. Reminiscing about the progress and development of Norfolk's black public schools, Mrs. Titus recalled that in 1886 school superintendent James Barron Hope secured \$10,000 from the City Councils for the purchase of a good building for the black students. Situated in the center of a lot and containing ten

⁷⁵ A listing of these students are found throughout Samuel C. Armstrong's book Twenty-Two Years' Work of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute of Hampton, Virginia: Records of Negro and Indian Graduate and Ex-Students (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton Normal School Press, 1893), p. 305.

large, easily accessible, and airy rooms, the school had a seating capacity of eighty per room, although Mrs. Titus recalled packing as many as one thousand students into the building. The teachers, according to Mrs. Titus, were always well-equipped for the work at hand, no doubt the result of the deep interest many trustees had in the welfare of the black schools.⁷⁶

According to Mrs. Titus, most of the black teachers who came to Norfolk were graduates of either Hampton Institute or Norfolk Mission College and had to pass a rigid examination prior to entering their profession as instructors. Mrs. Titus also attacked the stigma attached to public schools by recalling that many of Norfolk's black public school graduates went on to matriculate at the Lawrenceville, Hampton, Richmond, and Petersburg colleges.⁷⁷

The moral life of the pupils in Norfolk was always of prime concern to the black faculty. Parents sacrificially gave to insure that their children become educated and productive citizens. Consequently, great care and attention was given to associating the child with Sunday school and

⁷⁶ Mrs. Titus was the secretary at First Baptist Church on Bute Street while her father was one of Bute Street Baptist Church's deacons (Deacon Davis). Mrs. Titus was heavily involved in community affairs, such as the Y.W.C.A. for black women in Norfolk and the Lekies Home for the Aged. In 1882, Mrs. Titus resided at 186 Cumberland Street in Norfolk. The Southern Workman 27 (February 1898), p. 28 and 40 (January 1936), p. 21.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

religious instruction. The neat and tidy appearance of the student was simply an outgrowth of the time and attention lavished on the students to develop a good moral character.⁷⁸

As an alumna of Hampton Institute, Mrs. Titus was also involved in writing pupil recommendations for entrance into Hampton. In an early recommendation addressed to General Armstrong, dated August 29, 1882, Mrs. Titus tepidly sent applications for Ida Simpson and Ida Nicholas, who she said were two "good working girls [who] may do pretty well."⁷⁹ Obviously, Mrs. Titus was not overwhelmed by some of Norfolk's applicants who were probably not up to her standards of excellence. Based upon the letters of Mrs. Titus and others, hard work, self-discipline, and excellence were the guiding tenets of Hampton's graduates. In a letter to her almatmater dated August 10, 1885, an obviously impressed Mrs. Titus wrote an entirely different letter on behalf of Eva Hill. Mrs. Titus was quite delighted with Miss Hill whom she found to be "a very nice person in every respect, particularly well behaved and lady-like... I am sure she will comply with all rules and regulations, of the school. And no doubt you will find her different in her ways from those of other young

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ This and other letters were found in a folder entitled, "Laura E. Davis Titus," [Hampton Graduate] Courtesy of Hampton University Library, Hampton University Archives (Hampton, Virginia).

misses from Norfolk."⁸⁰

Hampton's achievements as a teacher-training institute did not go unnoticed by R.R. Farr, the state's Superintendent of Public Instruction from 1882 to 1886. In his 1882-83 report, Farr praised Hampton Normal Institute for graduating teachers that far-outranked all others in the state of Virginia and suggested to the General Assembly that similar opportunities for whites be considered. In its scant fourteen years of operation, Hampton had produced 174 black teachers for schools in Virginia's ninety-three counties and cities, including Norfolk.⁸¹

At the time of Farr's report, the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute for Colored Persons at Petersburg, Virginia was just beginning, adding to Virginia's growing number of normal schools erected for the purpose of training black teachers. The existence of what came to be known as Virginia State College furnished Norfolk's blacks with another teacher-training institute to attend. Between 1883 and 1906, Norfolk's public school graduates, comprised only an average of three percent of the total population at Virginia Normal Institute. Nevertheless, some of Norfolk's leading black

⁸⁰ Miss Hill lived with her mother, Mrs. Josephine Artisst, at 1115 Brewer Street in Norfolk. Mrs. Titus also mentioned to General Armstrong that Miss Hill wanted to pay half the tuition and work out the remainder. Ibid.

⁸¹ James L. Blair Buck, The Development of Public Schools in Virginia, 1607-1952 (Richmond: Commonwealth of Virginia State Board of Education, 1952), p. 94.

citizens, such as the Reverend Lewis Tucker (who sent three of his children), R.H. Pollard, and Henry Johnson, sent their children to attend the Institute.⁸²

A year following the founding of the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute at Petersburg, Professor William Grove from Pittsburgh paid a visit to Norfolk with the hope of establishing a secondary school for blacks. Sent to Norfolk by the United Presbyterians of Pittsburgh, who had apparently heard of the black children's plight in Norfolk, Professor Grove was directed to talk with Mr. Willie Jackson, the city's well-known barber whose shop was a community center for those youth aspiring to more knowledge and education. Professor Grove was then sent to talk with Mrs. William Keeling⁸³ whose influence would help persuade others to patronize the school that would be supported by the Presbyterians.⁸⁴

Once news of Professor Grove's visit spread throughout Norfolk, opposition arose from some black and numerous white

⁸² Ibid, pp. 94-95; Student Register at Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute, 1883-1906 Papers, Special Collections, University Archives, Johnston Memorial Library (Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia).

⁸³ Mrs. Keeling was influential in Norfolk because she was the daughter and daughter-in-law of two of First Baptist Church on Bute Street's charter members (Catharine Keeling and Elizabeth Ruffin). Information taken from a speech given by Dr. John R. Custis (son of John R. Custis and Esther Keeling Custis, 1895 and 1897 graduates of Norfolk Mission College). "Norfolk Mission College--Custis, John R. Dr.; Griffin, James C. Rev.; Pittard, Pen-Lile Box," Courtesy of Norfolk State University Archives (Norfolk, Virginia).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

citizens. The former expressed fear that the Presbyterian faculty would cause the Baptist and Methodist students to leave their respective churches and join the Presbyterian church. Norfolk's blacks also feared this would be another in a long series of temporary make-shift schools with more emphasis on religion or politics than on education. The whites, however, opposed the school because they did not want blacks to have more education than they, nor did they want the intrusion of more "Yankee do-gooders" among Norfolk's blacks. Despite opposition and with the support of many of Norfolk's leading black citizens, Norfolk Mission College was established with its first class graduating in 1888.⁸⁵

Erected in 1886, Norfolk Mission College was a three-story, eight school room, mansard-roofed building located on Princess Ann Avenue and built at the cost of \$20,000. The Board of Freedmen's Missions of the United Presbyterian Church carefully chose the location of Norfolk Mission College because over 3,000 black children, two-thirds of whom did not attend any school, had homes within a four-mile radius of the school. It was not surprising then, that the entering class in 1884-85 included ninety-six day and sixty-four evening students whose typical school day was from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., with evening classes from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Norfolk Mission College also employed an integrated faculty whose emphasis on obedience, educational excellence, and piety

⁸⁵ Ibid.

produced high quality graduates, many of whom went on to become teachers in Norfolk's Public School system [see Appendix 2 for a listing of Norfolk Mission College graduates].⁸⁶

The last privately-funded church school founded in Norfolk during this period was St. Joseph's Catholic school. Although little information about its early years survives, it is known that sometime in the 1880's Bishop Keane became concerned that many of Norfolk's black Catholics were not receiving any education. Deciding to do something, Bishop Keane, along with Father O'Keefe, pastor of St. Joseph's Church, procured approval for the school and employed Miss McLaughlin to start it. Established in 1889, the original school was situated in a "'tumble-down shanty' on Brewer Street" and staffed by "three Franciscan nuns from Baltimore and a visiting priest from Richmond."⁸⁷

With all the preparation black teachers acquired from Hampton and Petersburg Normal Institutes, their talents were not fully utilized until the Readjusters, ushered into state political offices beginning in 1881, helped establish a more

⁸⁶ "Norfolk Mission College Scrapbooks," Courtesy of Norfolk State University Archives, Norfolk, Virginia; Printed speech by Dr. Tommy Lee Bogger, taken from 100th Anniversary Program for Norfolk Mission College Alumni, (Norfolk, Virginia, May 28, 1983), pp. 5-6; "Norfolk Mission College--Catalogues and Bulletins, 1899-1914," Courtesy of Norfolk State University Archives (Norfolk, Virginia).

⁸⁷ "Catholic school was pride of early black community," Norfolk Compass, February 10/11, 1988, p. 14.

equal public school system in Norfolk. With the assumption of power by the Readjusters led by William Mahone, monies were finally pumped into public education. This new political party's emergence in Virginia split the white vote and allowed the much-sought-after black voters to hold positions of power and influence for the first time in Norfolk's history. During the 1883-84 school year, blacks were able to have the dilapidated Bute Street rented school house replaced with a less-dilapidated rented building on Queen Street. The board of school commissioners, who were now more favorably disposed to building a new school house for the black children, strongly recommended \$12,000 be appropriated for that purpose. With a total black school population of 615⁸⁸ and many more who could not enroll in school because of buildings' limited capacity, school superintendent Richard G. Banks believed this request was fair. Unfortunately, the city councils had not yet felt the effects of the Readjuster Party's influence.⁸⁹

With the founding of Norfolk Mission College, Norfolk's

⁸⁸ The total white school population in 1883-84 was 1,383. The number of whites studying in the higher branches of school was 140 as compared with 73 blacks. Norfolk, Virginia, Mayors Message of William Lamb, Mayor of the City of Norfolk, Virginia, to the Select and Common Councils together with Municipal Reports for the Twelve Months Ending June 30, 1884 (Norfolk: T.O. Wise, 1884), pp. 176-77.

⁸⁹ Ibid. The Reverend Richard Spiller and other black citizens petitioned the board of school commissioners that additional facilities be provided for the black children of Norfolk. Thus, the \$12,000 recommendation by the board was the result of that petition. Norfolk, Virginia, Records of the Select Council, vol. 5 (1879-1884), p. 228.

whites discovered that its establishment financially unburdened the city of a thousand black children. In his 1884-85 report, however, Mayor Lamb strongly admonished the city for not providing better schools for blacks (whose total school age population numbered 3,019, as compared to 3,676 for the white school age population). The blacks had only two schools while the white children had five. Not until the 1885-86 school year did the city councils fulfill a long-delayed promise to build a public school house for the city's black children. Following in the tradition set by Lamb, Superintendent Richard G. Banks⁹⁰ once again echoed the recommendation made by the school board commissioners that \$12,000 be appropriated for the erection of a school house for blacks. Banks convinced the city councils that by spending \$12,000 to build the Cumberland Street school, as opposed to paying rent on a building badly in need of repairs, the city would save six hundred dollars yearly in rental and repair costs. Banks' other recommendation that improvements be made on the recently but poorly-built North Street school was also adopted. As it was, only \$10,000 was needed to build the new school. The remaining \$2,000 was used for the expansion and improvement of the white schools.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Banks became Mayor of Norfolk from 1888-90; afterwards he settled into the job of U.S. Customs collector for the port of Norfolk. Rorer, pp. 19-20.

⁹¹ An extra \$2,000 of its original \$10,000 appropriation recommendation was suggested. Ibid.; Norfolk, Virginia, Mayor's Message of William Lamb, Mayor of the City of Norfolk,

In February 1887 the school board granted a request from the Knights of Labor for three hundred dollars to open two night schools for blacks at the Queen Street school. After numerous delays, monies for the two night schools were approved through February 1889, after Richard Tucker appealed to the Councils for a \$150 appropriation.⁹²

Richard G. Banks continued to advocate the improvement of black school's even after he became Mayor, and George W. Taylor assumed his old position as school superintendent from 1887 to 1890. Noting the state of affairs in Norfolk's public schools, Banks reported that with the exception of the recently-built Cumberland Street school, no permanent improvements had been made in the black schools in years. Additionally, the black children were in desperate need of furniture and supplies because most of what they had was old, outdated, or non-existent. With a total black school population of 1,272, ten black teachers and one school house were not enough to meet the needs of the black community. This deficiency was especially evident in light of the provisions made for the white community, where twenty-one

Virginia to the Select and Common Councils, together with Municipal Reports for the Twelve Months ending June 30, 1885 (Norfolk: T.O. Wise, 1885), p. 135; Norfolk, Virginia, Mayor's Message of Barton Myers, Mayor of the City of Norfolk, Virginia to the Select and Common Councils. together with Municipal Reports for the Twelve Months ending June 30, 1886 (Norfolk: T.O. Wise, 1886), pp. 19, 155.

⁹² Rorer, pp. 21, 23; Norfolk Landmark, February 10, 1889, p. 1 and February 20, 1889, p. 1.

white teachers instructed 1,588 students in six school houses. In answer to the calls by blacks, sympathetic whites, and the pressure placed on the leaders by black Readjuster councilmen, the city councils approved the erection of a black brick school house in the Brambleton Ward that was to be first-class in every way and furnished with every modern convenience.⁹³

The difficult journey blacks have had in educating their children has been previously recounted by many historians. Unfortunately, Norfolk was no exception. Since 1863, the missionary-supported schools had been in existence in Norfolk. Hostile to the idea of education for the black masses, especially education under the guidance of northerners, Norfolk's whites feared these schools would create dissatisfaction among the black populace with their "lot." With the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau, the schools for blacks fell under the Bureau's auspices and evolved into a permanent system of free schools. H.C. Percy, an AMA missionary and Freedmen's Bureau official, became the superintendent of the black school system in 1865.

By 1866, white governmental leaders realized that

⁹³ Even in 1890, Norfolk had not provided adequate furniture for the black schools. An article in the Norfolk Landmark reported adoption of a resolution by the city councils that only repairs to desks at the Cumberland Street school was approved. Norfolk Landmark, March 12, 1890, p. 1 and July 22, 1890, p. 1; Rorer, p. 21; Norfolk, Virginia, Mayor's Message of R.G. Banks, Mayor of the City of Norfolk, Virginia to the Select and Common Councils together with Municipal Reports for the year ending June 30, 1888 (Norfolk: T.O. Wise, 1888), pp. 127, 129.

education for blacks was inevitable. With the political downfall of President Johnson and the takeover of the Radical Republicans, Norfolk's whites consented to "conditional" public education (that condition being the control and manipulation of a system by local whites whose educational program favored maintenance of the status quo). Norfolk's white leaders also insisted that all teachers in the freedmen's schools be black, which was agreeable to blacks because it provided middle-class jobs for their people and promised a learning environment devoid of any overt racism.

It was not until June 1, 1867, that Norfolk incorporated the black schools into its public educational system. But even then the city did not commit itself financially to support those schools. Thus, the AMA, the Freedmen's Bureau, and the black citizenry bore the financial burden of support. As northerners tired of their charity contributions, the black community became the black school system's primary supporter by 1868. The result was the closure of many black schools. Faced with this untenable situation, General Brown stepped in as Virginia's Bureau Superintendent to convince city officials of their need to fund the black schools. Norfolk's officials agreed to appropriate \$5,000 to \$8,000 in July 1868, on the condition that the AMA continue supplying the teachers and directly overseeing the system. Unfortunately, while the AMA continued supplying teachers and supervision, the city failed in its obligations to supply the funds. Only after repeated

petitioning and agitation by black leaders, like Joseph T. Wilson, did the city partly fulfill its obligations with a \$4,000 appropriation almost three years later.

Once the city took over the financial and supervisory responsibility for the schools, it maintained a segregated and financially unequal system. Although the system of segregation provided jobs for black teachers, black children were crammed into two dilapidated buildings which had limited capacity, and thus left many unable to attend school; meanwhile, the white children were being instructed in four spacious school houses.

In 1875, 1,501 children were enrolled in Norfolk's public school system. Of that number, only 517 were black. In 1885, the city still had two rented dilapidated buildings being used as school houses for blacks, while the white children were housed in five schools. By 1888, 1,272 black children were enrolled in those two buildings under the supervision of ten black teachers. In that same year, 1,588 white children were enrolled in six school houses which were supervised by twenty-one white teachers.

Finding a practical place in this society was difficult for many blacks in Norfolk who were promised much by the events during and after the war. The opening of Hampton Institute in 1868 made life more tolerable because it provided a local college for black youth. In fact, Hampton Institute became almost exclusively responsible for training Norfolk's

black teachers until the founding of Norfolk Mission College in 1883. Together, these colleges were responsible for training young blacks who returned to their community to assist their brethren in becoming literate and receiving an education.

"The Spirit Voice
or, Liberty Call to the Disfranchised"

Come! rouse ye brothers, rouse! a peal now breaks
From lowest island to our gallant lakes:
'Tis summoning you, who long in bonds have lain,
To stand up manful on the battle plain,
Each as a warrior, with his armor bright,
Prepared to battle in a bloodless fight...

Come! rouse ye brothers, rouse! nor let the voice
That shouting, calls you onward to rejoice,
Be heard in vain! but with ennobled souls,
Let all whom now an unjust law controls,
Press on in strength of mind, in purpose bent,
To live by right; to swell the free tones sent
On Southern airs, from this, your native State,
A glorious promise for the captive's fate.
Then up! and vow no more to sleep, till freed
From partial bondage to a life indeed.

Charles L. Reason¹

¹ The excerpt was published in 1887, Benjamin Brawley, ed., Early Negro American Writers, pp. 251, 257-258, 260.

CHAPTER 5

LIFE AND DEATH IN NORFOLK'S BLACK COMMUNITY, 1861-1884

The account of black Norfolk's history from 1861 to 1884 is illustrative of a period during which the people set out with hope and jubilee, experienced many disappointments and fears, and ended with the abandonment of anticipated equality. Census records of 1860 and 1870 best represent the demographic change, expansion, and increasing diversification of the black community. Supplemented with the city directories of the 1870's and 1880's, and the burial records of the city's first black cemetery, a picture begins to form of the life and death cycles of a community recently formed out of the ashes of slavery and second-class citizenship. Rising from the hardships of the past, Norfolk's black population was born into a world where having a sense of "community" was the only haven in a racially divided society.

At the onset of the Civil War, life in the black community was generally harsh. Ira Berlin maintains that life for the urban freeman was difficult, compared to life for the slave, who was usually cared for, to some degree, by his or her master. As a group, free blacks lived in poorer

neighborhoods on the city's outskirts or in low-lying areas around rivers and railroad yards. By all the first-hand accounts, this was certainly true for Norfolk's free blacks. In Norfolk, a free black family's home was described as either a two-apartment hovel, shack, shanty, or den situated in the center or near the outskirts of the city. Housing for free blacks was generally poor because white landlords preferred to rent to whites first or not to blacks at all. Usually, however, no unitary segregated housing pattern developed in the antebellum years, in part because of the absence of urban transportation that would have allowed people to get to their place of employment easily. The other reason for the absence of a unitary segregated housing pattern was fear among whites. Most streets and sometimes tenements were integrated because whites desired to keep an eye on blacks, since slaves often lived with or frequented the residences of free blacks.²

Norfolk, like most southern cities, had an abundance of black women--free and slave--who outnumbered black men, while the reverse was true for the white population. This helps to explain the post-war prevalence of women in Norfolk. Richard Wade explains this imbalance among blacks as the result of the general failure in the South to industrialize intensively. The scarcity of industries not based on agriculture resulted in the demand for urban domestics as opposed to urban factory

² Berlin, pp. 252-53; Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 75; Curry p. 49.

workers. This excess of black females also created a social familiarity between them and the large white male population. This familiarity may also partly explain why during the years emancipation was limited to a favored few, there were more women emancipated than men. Since women were less of a threat, brought a lower price on the slave market, and were more apt to win the sympathy and affection of their masters than men, a greater proportion were emancipated in the 1800's.³

Using the U.S. Census of 1860 for Norfolk, Luther P. Jackson noted that among the 189 free black heads of families, one hundred were women. In addition, Jackson argued that many free black women lived with or supplemented their income by concubinage with white men. Jackson drew this assumption from the numerous black women who were listed with no employment or who had families but no visible means of support. Mary Kelsey Peake was a good example of such an arrangement. Born in 1823, she was the offspring of a free mulatto woman and an Englishman. When she became old enough to understand the morally unhealthy situation in which she was living, even though she and her mother were generously provided for by her father, Mary was sent to live with her aunt in Alexandria.⁴

Correspondents from the New York Tribune reported in

³ Berlin, pp. 151-52; Wade, pp. 23-24.

⁴ Luther P. Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 1830-1860, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1967), p. 93; Lockwood, p. 5.

March 1864 that the mulatto daughter of Brigadier General Huger and the mulatto son of Brigadier General Withers resided in Norfolk. The journalists also noted that they saw many other fair-haired and blue-eyed slave children just as white as any other European-American child. They requested that

some good Copperhead organ would explain these discrepancies, and particularly explain the remarkable fact that a 'nigger,' while he is a slave, can travel in steamboats and railroad cars, not only without molestation, but can be hail fellow well met with the very upper crust of white men; but that the same 'nigger,' an hour afterward (with emancipation papers in his pocket) is a nasty, stinking creature, to be objected to, insulted, and kicked out.⁵

The relative increase in the population of free blacks as compared to whites created considerable anxiety for many whites (because they were numerically challenged by an increasing black population). This anxiety increased with the politicizing of the black community in the post-war through the Readjuster years [see Table 3].⁶

⁵ As reported in the New Regime, March 21, 1864, p. 2. For information about the New Regime, a Civil War and Union-sponsored Norfolk newspaper, see Chapter 1.

⁶ Wade, p. 327.

TABLE 3

POPULATION OF NORFOLK, 1820-1880⁷

Year	Total	White	Free Black	Slave
1820	8,478	4,618	599	3,261
1830	9,814	5,130	928	3,756
1840	10,920	6,185	1,026	3,709
1850	14,620	9,075	956	4,295
1860	14,620	10,290	1,046	3,284
1870	19, 229	10,462	8,766	-----
1880	21,966	11,898	10,068	-----

The printed 1860 Census listed Norfolk with a total population of 14,620. Of that number, 10,290 were white, 3,284 were slaves, and 1,046 were categorized as free blacks. Approximately twenty-four percent were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four, with the average age being twenty-four. In descending order, 18.3% were between the ages of seven and twelve, while 12.5% were between ages thirty-one and forty. An examination of the 1860 Population Schedules for the city, however, reveals only 979 free blacks. This discrepancy is not uncommon in census population records because the census taker did a house to house survey,

⁷ Wade, p. 327; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States: 1870, vol. 1, The Statistics of the Population of the United States, p. 281. Hereafter cited as Ninth 1870 Census. U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880, vol. 1, The Statistics of the Population of the United States, p. 404. Hereafter cited as Tenth 1880 Census.

frequently skipping homes if the people were not there. Also, names and other pertinent information were sometimes omitted through neglect, laziness, or drunkenness, or copied incorrectly to the final Population Schedules Census.⁸

TABLE 4

1860 CENSUS STATISTICS FOR THE CITY OF NORFOLK⁹

Whites			Slaves			Free Blacks		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
4,870	5,420	10,29	1,331	1,953	3,284	358	678	1,046

From the population schedules of 1860 for free blacks, 67% were classified as black while 33% were classified as mulatto. Of the free blacks, 65% were female and 35% were male. Of the free mulattoes, 66% were female and 34% were male. A third of the free black population was younger than twenty years of age. Of those twenty and above, 91% (62% were black and 29% were mulatto) were classified as illiterate. Forty-six percent of those who were literate were between the ages of eighteen and thirty, followed by 23% between thirty-

⁸ U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Population of the U.S. in 1860: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, p. 519. Hereafter cited as Eighth 1860 Census; Ronald Jackson & Associates, Virginia 1860 Census Index (North Salt Lake, Utah: Accelerated Indexing Systems International, 1988), p. 5; U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Population Schedules, Microfilm, Roll 328, Virginia. Hereafter cited as Population 1860.

⁹ Eighth 1860 Census, p. 519.

one and forty years of age. Understandably, a significant drop in the number of literate free blacks occurred in the over-forty category because of the inaccessibility of reading materials and schools for blacks. Also, a greater number of literate blacks lived in all-black housing.¹⁰

Ninety-nine percent of Norfolk's free blacks were native to Virginia, although not necessarily to Norfolk, while 0.8% were from North Carolina and St. Domingo. Fifty-nine percent of the free blacks were listed with no occupation, although two-thirds of that number were children. This still leaves, however, one-third unemployed adult free blacks. It is mere speculation as to how these unemployed adult free blacks survived. Some may have been like Mary Peake's mother, "kept women." Others may have had spouses who were slaves or other free blacks who simply worked elsewhere to earn a living for them and their families. Unfortunately, surviving records only hint at possibilities without confirming or denying speculations. Of those free blacks with listed occupations, the largest percentage were females employed in domestic-related jobs (14.7% were listed as washerwomen while 10% were listed as domestic servants). The employed black free men were primarily laborers (4%), although thirteen were listed as draymen, six as sailors, and six as boatmen.¹¹

Free blacks lived in a total of 222 households (with

¹⁰ Population 1860.

¹¹ Ibid.

blacks heading 189 of those households). Thirty-eight percent lived two blacks per household, followed closely by one black per household.¹² Only 10% of the free blacks lived with whites. Of those, 64% were black, 36% were mulatto, 13.6% were male, and 86.4% were female. The remaining 872 free blacks lived in houses with other blacks (with the exception of four who lived in a boarding house).¹³ Of those, 67% were black, 32.8% were mulatto, 34.3% were male, and 65.7% were female. What these figures depict is a city in which as many free blacks lived with whites as with other blacks, while a slightly higher percentage of free mulattoes lived with whites than lived in an all-black environment. These figures also show that although free black males were vastly outnumbered by free black females, the majority lived in all-black housing. Unfortunately, the location and housing patterns of slaves is not depicted in the census records, although from George Tucker's marriage records, it is highly probable that numerous male slaves were living with and married to free black women.¹⁴

¹² In 1860, 19.4% lived three per household. Ibid.

¹³ Those who lived in the boarding house were all literate females from North Carolina whose average age was 72.5. Ibid.

¹⁴ See George Tucker's book for a listing of marriage records for Norfolk's blacks; Ibid.

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE OF FREE BLACK INDIVIDUALS PER HOUSEHOLD (1860)¹⁵

1 person	35.6%
2 people	37.8%
3 people	19.4%
4 people	4.1%
5 people	3.2%

Traditionally, historians have noted that the scourges of the free black community were unemployment and a high mortality rate. The 1860 Census verifies the high mortality of free blacks in Norfolk. With the median age of free blacks at twenty-four, 243 blacks were found to be between the ages of eighteen to thirty. And even though the ages ranged from infancy to one hundred and eight years,¹⁶ 76.8% were less than forty years old. With only a few negligible differences, the mortality rates were similar among the free black females and free mulatto females. A comparison between males and females, however, depicts a telling image of the free black community. For free black males, the highest percentage was age ten (7.9%) followed by age six (6.1%). For free mulatto males, the highest percentage was age seven (5.7%) followed by age twenty-eight (4.7%). Compared with free black females (whose highest percentage was age thirty (6%) followed by age

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ The oldest free black was a mulatto female. Ibid.

eighteen (4%), and free mulatto females (whose highest total percentage (7%) was age forty and age fifty), it is obvious that in 1860 free black women were primarily in their adult years while free black men were primarily children, the offspring of free black women.¹⁷

TABLE 6

AGE GROUPS OF FREE BLACKS BY SEX (1860)¹⁸

Age Group	Females		Males		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	
1 (1-12 yrs.)	176	27.4	174	51.8	350
2 (13-19 yrs.)	86	13.6	45	13.4	131
3 (20-40 yrs.)	251	39.1	76	22.6	327
4 (41-60 yrs.)	85	13.2	34	10.1	119
5 (61 and over)	43	6.7	7	2.1	50

A quick review of the preceding Age Group Tables responds to numerous unanswered questions and speculative conclusions about Norfolk's free black community. The numbers of free black males and free black females in Age Group 1 are very similar, in number, but the percentage (27.4% females and 51.8% males) are dissimilar. The highest number of females was in Age Group 3 (39.1%) while the highest number of males was in Age Group 1. Unexplainably, something happened to free black males and females between the ages of thirteen and

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

nineteen. It is possible that much of this decrease is the result of disease or geographic mobility. As the population moved into Age Group 3, a significant increase occurred, especially among females which may have been due to emancipation by slaveowners. Black females were more likely to be emancipated than black males.¹⁹

TABLE 7
AGE GROUPS OF FREE BLACKS BY COLOR (1860)²⁰

Age Group	Mulattoes	Blacks	Total
	No.	No.	No.
1 (1-12 yrs.)	107	126	350
2 (13-19 yrs.)	49	82	131
3 (20-40 yrs.)	119	208	327
4 (41-60 yrs.)	33	86	119
5 (61 and above)	7	17	50

A comparison using Claudia Goldin's study of the age groups of Norfolk's slaves in 1860 contradicts the contention of Richard Wade and Ira Berlin that free blacks had a significantly higher mortality rate than did slaves. Goldin found that the majority of slaves in Norfolk were between the ages of ten and twenty-three, while a large percentage were between the ages of thirty-six and fifty-four [see Table 8].

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Such was also the case for free blacks [see Table 7] although in slightly differently age categories. The similarity in mortality rates between Norfolk's free blacks and slaves must be related more to the generally poor environment of the city in which all blacks lived than to the living conditions of primarily free blacks.²¹

TABLE 8
AGE GROUPS OF SLAVES BY SEX (1860)²²

Age Group	% Male	% Female
0-9 years	25	17
10-23 years	34	33
24-35 years	17	17
36-54 years	18	20
54 and above	6	13

Restrictive city ordinances also made life difficult for Norfolk's free blacks, typically lumping them together with slaves. Many free blacks lacked the money required for proper medical care or were not allowed admittance into white hospitals. It was small wonder that they suffered the highest mortality rate of any urban group. An advertisement in the 1851 City Directory informing the public of an Infirmary for slaves in a house near Calvert's Lane is exemplary of the care provided Norfolk's slaves but denied to free blacks. This

²¹ Goldin, p. 56.

²² Population 1860.

Infirmary, like those in many other southern cities, was to assist non-resident slaveowners whose slaves were hired in the city. A listing of the cost of treatment--medical, obstetrical, and surgical--was given at one dollar per day, five dollars per week, and eighteen dollars per month. Slaveowners were also informed that nurses and medical students were constantly in the house to care for the sick. The only diseases not treated were those of a contagious nature--e.g., measles and small pox--because of the danger of creating an epidemic.²³

Accounts of Norfolk by William Forrest, Thomas Wertebaker, and William Ainsley bear out Berlin's general thesis on the condition of antebellum urban blacks in Norfolk. This condition helped determine the black community's circumstances during and immediately following the Civil War. Forrest related that many families of slaves hired out their own time and lived together in a rented house or room. Wertebaker made references to the crowded tenements on Catharine Street where blacks and poor whites lived. And Ainsley analyzed the directories to tabulate the residential patterns of the city in 1851. According to his findings, blacks resided primarily in the northern half of the city in an area bounded by the cemeteries and the Almshouse on the north, and by Catharine (Bank), Amelia (Boush), and Charlotte streets. The predominance of blacks in these areas still did

²³ Wade, p. 141; 1851 City Directory, p. 17.

not denote that Norfolk had residential segregation. While a few streets or blocks were solidly black, throughout the area whites occupied nearby dwellings or shared tenement houses with blacks. Blacks also lived with whites in houses in other parts of the city. Basically, however, blacks were restricted to the lanes and back alleys of Norfolk. With the exception of the restriction to lanes and back alleys, the residential pattern cited by Ainsley persisted throughout the 1870's and 1880's.²⁴

The occupations of free blacks have been divided into categories to give a clearer understanding of the economic status of free blacks. The vast majority of employed free blacks were involved in domestic-related occupations. Surprisingly, however, a relatively large number of free blacks were skilled and semi-skilled (over one-half of the skilled free blacks were literate). Claudia Goldin's study reveals that Norfolk also had a high percentage of skilled slaves, which made the presence of numerous skilled free blacks an unexpected and unusual discovery. Out of twenty-two male slaves over the age of fifteen with listed occupations, eight were laborers and two were domestic servants. The

²⁴ Forrest, p. 419; Wertenbaker, p. 129; William F. Ainsley, "Changing Land Use in Downtown Norfolk, Virginia: 1680-1930," Ph.D. Dissertation, U.N.C. at Chapel Hill, 1976, pp. 101-102; Wade, p. 277; Population 1860; United States, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Population Schedules, Roll 418, Virginia. Hereafter cited as Population 1870; Norfolk and Portsmouth City Directory for 1885 (Norfolk, VA: Chataigne, 1885). Hereafter cited as 1885 City Directory.

remainder were carriage drivers, caulkers, firemen, oystermen, ship carpenters, cooks, draymen, barbers, cartmen, butchers, mariners, and blacksmiths. Not surprising, however, were the large numbers of free blacks involved in water-related occupations [see Table 9 for a breakdown of occupation categories].²⁵

TABLE 9

OCCUPATION CATEGORIES OF FREE BLACKS, 1860²⁶

Occup.	Total No.	Male No.	Female No.	Literate No.	Black No.	Mulatto No.
Profes.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Semi-Pro.	1	1	0	1	0	1
Small Business	4	2	2	1	2	2
Skilled	39	25	14	22	20	19
Semi-Skilled	20	13	7	5	11	9
Unskilled	43	40	3	11	32	10
Water-related	24	24	0	11	17	7
Domestic	270	28	242	95	181	89

In the 1870 Census, 8,766 blacks lived in the city of

²⁵ Population 1860; Goldin, p. 45.

²⁶ Population 1860.

Norfolk, forming 45% of a total population of 19,229.²⁷ Thirty-two percent of the black males and nine percent of the black females were listed as heads of households, showing a tremendous increase in the presence of males in the black family. The living conditions of blacks did slightly deteriorate in 1870. The occasional sixteen-person households were replaced with households that contained up to twenty-three individuals. However, patterns similar to those established ten years earlier did continue: namely, the predominance of a two-adult and two-child household, and a low life expectancy. The average age of blacks in 1870 was still extremely low, 25.42 years; but despite these problems, the black community thrived, especially in the city's Fourth and Second Wards, with one person reaching the age of one hundred and fourteen [see Table 10].²⁸

In 1870, blacks were still overwhelmingly unskilled. Eighty-six percent of the black males were unskilled while eighty-seven percent of the black females were unskilled domestics. These figures do not, however, diminish the importance of the slow professionalization of the black community. The increased diversification of occupations among

²⁷ The Population Schedules, however, recorded only 8,752, a small discrepancy that may have been the result of computational error.

²⁸ Blacks comprised a total of 1,216 households and whites comprised 1,728. Of this, black households and the black population was concentrated in the Fourth and Second Wards where small and overcrowded tenements were the rule. Ninth 1870 Census, p. 281; Population 1870.

black men occurred in 1870, while only a slight alteration in occupations occurred for women. Table 11 illustrates how the demographic changes, resulting from the war, affected the occupational pattern of Norfolk's blacks.

TABLE 10
PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS PER HOUSEHOLD (1870)²⁹

No. per household	Adults %
1	3.1
2	17
3	9.8
4	14
5	10
6	9.7

After the war, eighteen people were listed as professionals. Of that number, eleven were school teachers (eight of whom were women). Norfolk also had one black dentist, five black ordained ministers, and one black lawyer. Because all the women professionals were school teachers, they tended to be on average younger than men (age twenty-six for women and age forty for men). In addition, 11% owned real and 11% owned personal estate.³⁰

²⁹ Population 1870.

³⁰ George Cook was a lawyer, Thomas Bayne was a dentist, and James Hall, Peter Shepherd, Americus Singleton, America Woodhouse, and Lewis Tucker were ministers. Ibid.

TABLE 11

OCCUPATION CATEGORIES OF BLACKS (1870)³¹

Occup.	Total No.	Male No.	Female No.	Literate No.	Black No.	Mulatto No.
Profes.	18	10	8	17	13	5
Semi-Profes.	5	5	0	5	4	1
Small Busi.	77	73	4	36	63	14
Skilled	352	240	112	120	265	86
Semi-Skilled	286	252	34	46	258	30
Un-skilled	1340	1146	194	158	1262	78
Water-related	210	209	1	45	191	18
Domes.	3011	786	2225	401	2568	443

Five men in 1870 were classified as semi-professionals with an average age of forty-eight. Their occupations ranged from sexton, undertaker, and customs inspector to Freedmen's Bank workers. Only one individual, Joseph T. Wilson who was a thirty-two year old mulatto customs inspector, owned real and personal estate worth \$4,500.³² There were also seventy-seven small black businessmen and women who emerged in 1870.

³¹ Significant was the diversification in occupations among the men as opposed to the women. Even in 1860, there was more diversity in choices for black free men than women. Ibid.

³² Daniel Riddick was the city's 63-year-old black undertaker who lived in Ward Four, while John Jordan and John Bonfanti were the Freedman Bank workers. Ibid.

Although only 5% were women, all of them were literate while only 44% of the men were literate. Thirteen percent of the small businessmen owned real estate while 14% owned personal estate. The majority were bakers, and it was in this category that the second highest percentage of mulattoes were employed (19%).³³

It was in the skilled and semi-skilled occupations that blacks had made their greatest gains by 1870. Many in these categories owned property or were the community leaders. Six percent of the 352 skilled blacks in 1870 owned property. Sixty-eight percent of the skilled black workers were male and 32% were female. And although only 29% were classified as mulattoes, this category had the highest concentration of mulattoes of any occupational group. The women were seamstresses and dressmakers, while the men were house carpenters, shoemakers, and barbers. Three percent of the semi-skilled workers owned property and 15% were mulattoes (the third largest mulatto occupational concentration). Compared to skilled workers, the majority of semi-skilled workers were considerably older, the average ranging in age between forty-one and fifty.³⁴

There were 210 men and one woman listed as watermen. This category included jobs such as sailor, oysterman, fisherman, boatman, and cook on a schooner. The overwhelming

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

majority in this category were black men, with only a small minority being mulattoes. Not surprisingly, the majority were illiterate. The sizeable minority (22%) of literate watermen, however, denotes a broader exposure to other peoples which allowed some to pick up reading and writing skills, as opposed to the semi-skilled workers who were limited to meeting only those people living in the city proper.³⁵

As was the case in the 1860 Census, the overwhelming majority of Norfolk's blacks were unskilled and domestic workers. Forty-four percent were male while 56% were female. Of course, within the unskilled category, the predominance of males is evident with 86% listed as primarily laborers while the females made up the remaining 14% with occupations that ranged from prostitute³⁶ to the more general one of "works out." In the domestic-related category women dominate (74%) with their primary jobs being domestic servant, keeping house, and washerwoman. For men, the primary jobs included domestic servant, waiter, and porter.³⁷

As in 1860, the majority of blacks were still domestic servants and laborers. With a few important exceptions, the majority of blacks remained unskilled and illiterate. There was a rising class of younger blacks, however, who would

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Surprisingly, eight black women listed their occupation as prostitute, along with numerous white women, all of whom lived in or near the same tenement house. Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

become more educated and more prosperous as the educational institutions touched them and the economic power of the community increased. Table 12 illustrates the occupational distribution of blacks in 1870.³⁸

TABLE 12

FREQUENCY OF OCCUPATIONS OF ADULT BLACKS (1870)³⁹

Male	%	Female	%
Laborers	40	Domestic Servant	33
No Occupation	5	Keeps House	21
Drayman	3.4	Washerwoman	20
Domestic Servant	2.9	No Occupation	13
Waterman	2.7	Works Out	6

Only five years after the end of slavery, it is not surprising that the vast majority of blacks were still illiterate. Just as in 1860, however, a greater percentage of literate blacks lived in all-black housing, resided in Ward Two (the largest black ward in the city), and were between the ages of twelve and forty, with age thirty having the highest percentage of literacy. Eighty percent of the literates were classified as black while 19% were mulatto. The literacy rate for males and females was almost equal (women only 4% higher than men). Interestingly, 97% of the literates did not own real estate, although thirty black literates did, ranging in

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

value from \$146 to \$9,000.⁴⁰

A significant difference between 1860 and 1870 was the presence of blacks in the Almshouse. Fifty-six blacks were listed as living in the Almshouse in 1870. This number fluctuated considerably, as many blacks who lived in the Almshouse died. In fact, the physician of the Almshouse reported that blacks who were sick or diseased were in desperate straits, especially with the closure of the Freedmen's Hospital, because the Almshouse had then to be used as a poor house and a city hospital for blacks. So severe was the problem that Mayor John Tucker's 1877 message to the city councils included a plea for additional quarters for the blacks in the Almshouse, particularly because of the overcrowded conditions and the total unfitness of the rooms for human habitation.⁴¹

In 1870, 1,189 blacks lived with whites. Their most common occupation was domestic service, followed by laborer (a large percentage of blacks living with whites were also listed with no occupation). Seventy-two percent of the people were female, 28% were male, and 92% were classified as black while only 8% were classified as mulatto. The average age was twenty-eight although they ranged in age from infants to 105 years. It should not be assumed that all blacks who lived with whites did so in a subservient position. There was one

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.; Mayor Tucker's Message, 1877, p. 70.

black listed as living with whites who also owned property: Jerome B. Capps, Norfolk's largest black property-owner. Of the blacks who lived in hotels, 88% were men, 96% were classified as black, 39% were employed as laborers, and the majority lived in hotels located in Ward Three. Additionally, 48% were between the ages of twenty-one and thirty.⁴²

In 1870 the largest percentage of Norfolk's blacks were between the ages of twenty and forty. Twenty-eight percent, however, were twelve and under. This high percentage of children had a tremendous influence on the black community because it required that a great percentage of its resources be committed to the support of underaged and unemployed people. It also accounts for the black community's high unemployment rate.⁴³

TABLE 13
AGE GROUPS IN 1870⁴⁴

Age Group	Total
1 (1-12 yrs.)	28%
2 (13-19 yrs.)	12%
3 (20-40 yrs.)	43%
4 (41-60 yrs.)	13%
5 (61 and above)	4%

⁴² Population 1870.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

According to Chataigne's Directory of Norfolk and Portsmouth, the population in Norfolk in 1883-84 was 26,188. Of that number, 13,777 were white and 12,411 were black. Although the directory did not provide a breakdown of age groups, it did record a listing of blacks and whites aged twenty-one and above. In the directory, the population figures continued to demonstrate a high persistence of underaged blacks in Norfolk [see Table 14].⁴⁵

Even though in the 1880's the black community tended to be composed of large numbers of young people under twenty-one, indications were that unemployment declined among blacks in the early 1880's. The increase in employment among blacks can be attributed to the formation of a black leadership which unified the community to pool their financial resources to assist one another in providing jobs, education, and monetary assistance wherever needed. An example of Norfolk's black leadership's effect on the economic development of the community can be seen in the financial success of Thomas Paige who established a Confectioners' business in the 1870's, which he later turned over to his wife, and in the early 1880's opened Paige's Hotel and a baggage company which employed a number of city blacks.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Chataigne's Directory of Norfolk and Portsmouth, 1883-84 (Norfolk, VA: Chataigne, 1884).

⁴⁶ Ibid.; Norfolk and Portsmouth City Directory for 1874 (Norfolk, VA: Journal Job Office, 1874). Hereafter cited as 1874 City Directory. 1885 City Directory.

TABLE 14
POPULATION OF NORFOLK, 1883-84⁴⁷

Ward	WF	WM	BF	BM	Over 21 (W)	Over 21 (B)
First	2602	2490	1118	1012	3098	1331
Second	1484	1555	821	655	1982	1046
Third	2349	1978	1532	1262	2429	1674
Fourth	673	646	3163	2848	716	3559
Totals	7108	6669	6634	577	8215	7610

As the black community continued to expand demographically, so did its voting power. Its growth meant an increase in the black voting class. The political changes during the period allowed for the newly enfranchised black community to effect political changes and to influence municipal policies, especially in the black dominated the Fourth Ward.⁴⁸

With the added political strength came the desire of Norfolk's black leadership to have the city provide its black citizens with the same facilities equal to those extended to whites. Beginning in the 1880's, black city councilmen began addressing the failure of the city to provide its black citizens with a government-funded burial ground. Even when the city allocated land at the north end of Cumberland Street and on the south side of Smith's Creek for the burial of its

⁴⁷ Chataigne's Directory of Norfolk and Portsmouth, 1883-84.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

white citizens in 1825, blacks were still left without a formal burial site. The few records recounting the early history of Norfolk suggests that blacks continued the age-old practice of burying their dead in back yards, vacant lots, or sundry places in or nearby the city, and in a lot designated "Negroes Burying Ground." Not until 1827 did the Common Council authorize the burying of blacks in Potter's Field, an area located immediately outside the borough limits and set aside for paupers. Even so, blacks continued to be buried in multiple locations. A map illustrating the historical development of Norfolk pinpoints the only recorded existence of a "Negroes Burying Ground" located between Liberty, Scott, Hawke and Cumberland streets. Other records suggest that this area was used by numerous blacks, including Church burial committees, to inter city residents.⁴⁹ A photograph revealing artifacts uncovered while developing the Cumberland street area suggests that this was indeed an important burial ground for Norfolk's blacks who continued the African tradition of

⁴⁹ The earliest recording of this graveyard was George Nicholson's 1802 map of Norfolk. George Nicholson, surveyor, "Map of Norfolk, 1802," Bureau of Surveys, Norfolk, Virginia, 1802. See also Grover Franklin, compiler, "Reader's Guide to the Borough and City of Norfolk, Virginia Before December 31, 1899," Bureau of Surveys, Norfolk, Virginia, 1982. A history of First Baptist Church on Bute Street records the existence of burial societies prior to the existence of Calvary or West Point cemeteries. History and Archives Committee, eds., A Documentary History of First Baptist Church Bute Street, Norfolk, Virginia, 1800-1988 (Virginia Beach, VA: Hill's Printing Company, 1988), p. 3. Hereafter cited as First Baptist Church.

burying their dead with personal items.⁵⁰

The Civil War and the presence of northern soldiers and missionaries changed Norfolk's traditional policy of exclusion to one of segregation. In keeping with these changes, the city of Norfolk authorized and established another Potter's Field in 1873 (briefly known as Calvary Cemetery in 1877 and located west of Elmwood Cemetery), for the burial of black residents. As blacks gained more power in the 1880's, black City Councilman James E. Fuller petitioned the Council to change the name of that cemetery to West Point, with a section set aside for the construction of a monument honoring black Civil War veterans and as a resting ground for those black veterans.⁵¹

While the city provided extraordinarily well for its white citizens in death as well as in life, the city's blacks were accorded the same kind of treatment in death that they received in life. For two hundred years, blacks did not have

⁵⁰ The photograph of Cumberland street's uncovering of these items can be found in the Sergeant Room of Kirn Memorial Library. Cheryl Copper discusses this photograph and its accompanying significance in her thesis, "A Heritage in Stone: The History of Norfolk's Burial Grounds and Customs 17th to 19th Century," (M.A. Thesis, Old Dominion University, 1991). John Blassingame mentions the African funeral rites custom of African-Americans which included burial of the deceased with his or her last articles used, broken pitchers and colored glass, patchwork quilts, and carved wooden figures, in The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South, rev. and enl., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972, 1979), pp. 44-45.

⁵¹ Berlin, pp. 316-17, 322; "Billy Yank Still at Post Over Negro Veterans," Virginian-Pilot (March 21, 1965), p. 1.

a decent, public-instituted burial ground for their loved ones. This oversight reflected the city's hostile disposition toward the black community. Poor and badly-maintained street drainage systems contributed to the high rate of respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses among blacks. According to the Freedmen's Bureau reports, 172 blacks (with an almost equal division between male and female) died between January and June 1865. Twenty-nine percent of the fatalities were the result of respiratory diseases. Twice as high as the white death rate, this high mortality among blacks, especially in Ward Four, continued even to the turn of the century. In 1884, Mayor Lamb lamented that the high mortality rate existed because a majority of blacks in the city lived and died without receiving proper medical attention. The failure of the city to provide a black hospital no doubt contributed to the high death rate.⁵²

Not until 1873 did the city make arrangements for the ever-increasing fatalities among its black citizenry. The Common and Select Councils passed an ordinance on May 9 and June 3, 1873, respectively, authorizing that the "land belonging to the City of Norfolk lying north of the north

⁵² Mayor Tucker's Message, 1877, p. 70; Norfolk, Virginia, Mayor's Message of John S. Tucker, Mayor of the City of Norfolk, Virginia to the Select and Common Councils together with Municipal Reports for the year ending June 30, 1879 (Norfolk, VA: T.O. Wise, City Printer, 1879), p. 53. Hereafter cited as Mayor Tucker's Message, 1879. Mayor Lamb's Message, 1884, p. 154; Weekly Reports of Deaths and Interments (January 1864-June 1865), BRFAL, vol. 120/259, File No. 2307, Record Group 393.

section of the wall of Elmwood Cemetery, shall be set apart and appropriated as the burial ground of the colored citizens of the city, and shall be known as Calvary Cemetery."⁵³ This ordinance was most probably the result of agitation by prominent black leaders for Norfolk's government to provide the black community with a city-vested burial ground as it did for the white community.⁵⁴

The Joint Committee of the Councils on Cemeteries was further authorized to appoint biennially a black city resident as keeper of Calvary Cemetery and to use the monies gained from the sale of lots to enclose, embellish, and improve the land. Improvement of the land was essential because much of it was located next to Smith's Creek, a swampy area unfit for use as a burial ground because of the high water level. Despite this authorization, nothing was done about the land improvement or the cemetery keeper appointment. Situations

⁵³ Norfolk, VA., The Ordinances of the City of Norfolk, To Which is Appended the Charter of the City (Norfolk: Landmark Book and Job Office, 1875), p. 18. Hereafter cited as The Ordinances of the City, 1875. Although the original location of Calvary was north of Elmwood Cemetery's north wall, an 1880 map showed Calvary surrounding Elmwood. Later maps of Elmwood and West Point Cemeteries show that by 1885, this northern area had been absorbed by Elmwood. The remainder of the land was designated as West Point and located west of Elmwood's wall. W.H. Taylor, compiler, "Norfolk County, Farmingdale," Bureau of Surveys, Norfolk, Virginia, 1915.

⁵⁴ Norfolk, VA., The Ordinances of the City of Norfolk and Acts of Assembly of Virginia Relating to the City Government, with an Appendix (Norfolk: Landmark Steam Printing House, 1885), p. 33. Hereafter cited as The Ordinances of the City, 1885. For a clearer understanding of Calvary Cemetery's location, see "Gray's New Map of Norfolk: Norfolk County Virginia," Bureau of Surveys, Norfolk, Virginia, 1877.

such as the failure of Norfolk to provide an adequate cemetery for its black citizens demonstrated the need for black leaders.⁵⁵

Foreseeing that another cemetery for blacks would be needed in the near future, on April 7, 1874, the Alms House Committee proposed that the Council and Norfolk's black citizens accept J.M. Harrison's proposition that a ten acre lot on Princess Anne Road be purchased for a "Colored Cemetery" at a cost of \$2,700.00, to be funded by corporate bonds. The black leaders, however, presented an adverse report; they favored instead a tract of land on the Cottage Toll Bridge Road located on the Old Fair Ground. As a result of their objection, Council leaders rejected the Harrison proposition. However, the Council did adopt the November 16, 1874, Alms House's proposal that 25 acres of Thomas Ballentine's land be accepted as a burial place for Norfolk's black residents. Ten acres of that land were already cleared and ready for use; and it was located within 900 feet of Princess Anne Road (joining the old Parish roads of Norfolk County) and within a mile and a quarter of the Norfolk city limits. The Select Council acceded to the Common Council's adoption on December 8, 1874, and the price was set at

⁵⁵ Throughout the 1880's, black city councilmen worked diligently and successfully to procure equal facilities for their constituents in Norfolk. Not until after the election of Councilman James E. Fuller was the Council pressured into carrying out its directives in 1885. The Ordinances of the City, 1885, p. 19; Norfolk, VA., City Ordinances (Sept. 1869 to Dec, 1877), p. 152; "Billy Yank," p. 1.

\$2500.00, to be paid using city corporate bonds or \$80.00 per acre in cash. On March 14, 1876, the City Council finally authorized payment of \$2500.00 for fifty-three acres of land from Thomas Ballentine through his proxy Thomas Baltimore, payable July 1, 1876.⁵⁶

On January 9, 1877, the Select and Common Councils made the Alms House Committee's proposal official by providing that the recently purchased Ballentine land be set apart as a burial ground for the black citizens of the city and strangers, and known as Calvary Cemetery. The Joint Committee of the Councils on Cemeteries had control and management over the interments, improvements, and embellishments of the grounds, as well as control over the keeper of the grounds. The purchase of this land and its designation as Calvary Cemetery resulted in the Council rescinding all former resolutions and actions relating to the naming of Potter's Field as Calvary Cemetery after 1877.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ The population increase of Norfolk's black community and the smallness in size of Calvary Cemetery did necessitate the City Council passing an ordinance on April 7 and 14, 1896, that no further lots or graves be sold in West Point cemetery because the unsold portion had been reduced to a small area. Records of Common Council, vol. 11, pp. 69, 125, 248, 257; Norfolk, VA., Ordinances of the City of Norfolk, Passed Subsequent to the Revised Edition of 1875, and Prior to July 1st, 1877, Together with Laws of the State, Concerning the City, Not Embraced in Said Edition (Norfolk: Thomas O. Wise, 1877), pp. 18-19; Norfolk, VA., Ordinances of the City of Norfolk (Norfolk: Burke and Gregory, 1902), p. 120.

⁵⁷ The Ordinances of the City, 1875, p. 20; The Ordinances of the City, 1885, p. 32; Records of Common Council, vol. 11, p. 125.

As the city expanded in the 1880's and 1890's, the Council authorized the building and shelling of roads leading out from the city into Norfolk County areas that would soon be annexed by Norfolk. On November 9, 1882, the Cemetery Committee recommended that \$300 be appropriated from the cemetery budget for the shelling of the main road leading from Princess Anne Road to the gate of Calvary Cemetery.⁵⁸ This appropriation may have resulted from the work of Councilman James E. Fuller,⁵⁹ the longest-serving black (in the nineteenth century) elected to Norfolk's Common Council. Fuller served on the Common Council from 1881 to 1889.⁶⁰

In 1885, the City Councils authorized the changing of the cemetery's name from Potter's Field to West Point Cemetery on the suggestion of Councilman Fuller. The new name was practical because West Point Cemetery was located along the western side of Elmwood Cemetery's wall and more dignified because Potter's Field suggested that only paupers were buried in those lots. Fuller also pressured the City Councils to authorize the building of alleys, cross alleys, and suitable

⁵⁸ Records of the Common Council, pp. 48-49.

⁵⁹ According to a 1965 interview with his daughter Constance, James Fuller appealed to the City Council that the land be filled in and that burial lots be made available as family burial plots for Norfolk's black citizens. "Billy Yank," pp. 1.

⁶⁰ A perusal through 15 volumes of Norfolk, VA., Mayor's Message, 1876-1890 (Norfolk: T.O. Wise, City Printer, 1877-91), provides an accurate detailing of Norfolk's elected officials.

lots in West Point to be consistent with the design of Norfolk's other cemeteries.⁶¹

It was also to Fuller's credit that his motion designating a section of West Point to be dedicated as a special place of burial for black Union veterans was adopted by the Common Council on March 30, 1886, and referred to the Cemetery Committee. This motion authorized "Section No. 20 on plot of West Point Cemetery be donated to the Directors of the Union Veterans Hall Association for the burial of the members of the Grand Army of the Republic."⁶² The base of the monument, dedicated to all black soldiers and sailors who served in the Civil War, was erected, after numerous fund-raising activities, on May 31, 1906. Even after Fuller's death in 1909, fund-raising continued until the monument's completion in 1920, with a statue of a black Union private, with a Civil War regulation rifle, topping the monument's shaft. Almost one hundred black Civil War veterans were buried in graves surrounding the monument, including James Fuller, who was buried at the foot of West Point's great sycamore tree.⁶³

Despite these activities and improvements in the overall

⁶¹ The Ordinances of the City, 1885, pp. 32-33; "Billy Yank," p. 1.

⁶² This motion was approved by the Select Council on April 13, 1886. The Ordinances of the City, 1885, pp. 32-33.

⁶³ Records of the Common Council, vol. 13, p. 515. James Fuller was an active member of the Grand Army of the Republic. "Billy Yank," pp. 1-2.

lot of blacks in Norfolk, the mortality rate was high and numerous blacks died of illnesses as a result of their impoverished condition. A statistical analysis of West Point Cemetery's records over the period from 1878 to 1920 reveals that out of 865 recorded deaths, the medium age of death was twenty-seven, (the age of the descendants ranged in age from infancy to age ninety-nine). Surprisingly, only slightly more males (46.9%) than females (44%) died, with 9% who went unclassified because they died in infancy.⁶⁴

Of those who were buried at West Point, 31% died of lung diseases, 12% from infant's diseases, 11% each from heart disorders and parasitic infections, 9% from gastrointestinal disorders, 7% from brain disorders, and 6.8% from diet deficiencies. In addition, 3.5% died from accidents, 3.2% from miscellaneous illnesses, 2.2% from children's diseases, 1.7 from carcinomas, 1% from childbirth disorders, and 0.6% from illnesses resulting from joint and extremity disorders. It is obvious from this listing of categories that the majority of deceased blacks suffered from undernourishment, exposure, and improper medical care. Most of the lung diseases were tuberculosis (what the records called phthisis pulmonalis and consumption) and pneumonia. Many of the infants' diseases included cholera, while the parasitic

⁶⁴ Norfolk, Virginia. West Point Cemetery Records, 1878-1920.

infections included malaria and typhoid fever.⁶⁵

Coinciding with the types of diseases that led to death in the black community was the location in which most deaths were recorded. It appears that many of the deaths occurred on Cumberland, Queen, and Liberty streets. It is unclear, since these records were of those actually buried in purchased lots, whether those areas were indicative of high mortality rates because of poverty and poor living conditions or of areas containing wealthier blacks. In any case, a number of blacks who were buried at West Point Cemetery during the years in question, died in the Fourth Ward and along the Cumberland, Queen and Liberty street areas.⁶⁶

Paralleling the changes in life and death in the black community is the community's rise from abject poverty in the 1860's to economic productivity in the 1870's and 1880's. Probing the life of the community--how it progressed, diversified, and flourished--reveals much about the indomitable spirit of a people who made remarkable gains, especially for a group recently emancipated from slavery. Certainly the peculiar character of urban slavery helped in preparing blacks for economic and social independence. The presence of a relatively large and well-established free black community also had a tremendous impact. Equally revealing is an examination of how a people deal with death. To blacks of

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Norfolk, how a loved one was interred was almost as important as how a loved one lived. When the suffering of a relative had ceased, the community had organizations to bury their dead as decently as possible.

"On Liberty and Slavery"

Alas! and am I born for this,
To wear this slavish chain?
Deprived of all created bliss,
Through hardship, toil, and pain!
...

Oh, Liberty! though golden prize,
So often sought by blood -
We crave thy sacred sun to rise,
The gift of nature's God!

Bid Slavery hide her haggard face,
And barbarism fly:
I scorn to see the sad disgrace
In which enslaved I lie.

Dear Liberty! upon thy breast,
I languish to respire;
And like the swan unto her nest,
I'd to thy smiles retire.

Oh, blest asylum - heavenly balm!
Unto thy boughs I flee -
And in thy shades the storm shall calm,
With songs of Liberty!

George Moses Horton¹

¹ George Moses Horton was born a slave in Northampton County, North Carolina, in 1797. Almost entirely self-taught, Horton wrote several collections of poems. The selected excerpt was taken from one of his poems published in 1829, Benjamin Brawley, ed. Early Negro American Writers, pp. 114-115.

CHAPTER 6

FREEDOM'S COMMUNITY--ECONOMY AND SOCIETY IN THE 1870'S AND 1880'S

The end of the war did not catch the black community unprepared for freedom or unaware of the pressing needs of thousands of destitute freedmen who had migrated to the city since 1861. Aside from showing a tremendous desire to educate their children, black leaders worked to organize the community to provide for the needs of the people. Black self-help groups, such as the Odd Fellows and the Masons, performed welfare and social functions. Other benevolent societies, many of which were church-affiliated, provided members with sick benefits and burial fees. Thus, as many blacks became educated, worked hard, accumulated money, and started businesses, services to the black community increased as segregation and exclusion of blacks continued to be the policy of the whites.²

Blacks were always cognizant of the need to look primarily to their own community for assistance. During slavery, runaways looked to free blacks to help them escape or

² Rabinowitz, pp. 140-141, 143; The Negro in Virginia, p. 293.

to harbor them for a night. The 1870 Census recorded numerous children living with families having different last names. Because no orphan asylum was provided for blacks, orphans looked to black churches, benevolent societies, and private homes to support them until permanently placed with a family. Also during slavery, blacks could only meet together in their own churches under white supervision (or with white pastors) because of white fear of slave insurrection. Immediately after the war, blacks established their own churches free of white supervision or replaced their white pastors with black ministers. As a result, black churches became the center of black urban life with an even more expanded role than before; they served as places of worship, schools, entertainment centers, meeting houses, and lecture halls.³

Historically, four evangelical black churches had been functioning in Norfolk since 1851. Even though by law each church had to have a white pastor, the presence of black churches in the community provided a vehicle for a cadre of free blacks to take on responsible leadership roles such as deacons, elders, Sunday school teachers, and trustees. So in Norfolk, blacks primarily found church homes within the Baptist and Methodist denominations.⁴

³ Rabinowitz, pp. 198-199.

⁴ In 1851, First Baptist Church was pastored by the Reverend Richard Allen; Second Baptist Church was pastored by the Reverend Robert Gordon; Third Baptist Church was pastored by the Reverend John L. Diggs; and St. John's Methodist Episcopal Church was pastored by the Reverend F.J. Mitchell.

The Methodist Episcopal denomination, which emerged in the late eighteenth century, was popular with blacks because of its evangelical style. The M.E. church made its appearance in Norfolk on Cumberland Street in 1793. Methodists were responsible for solemnizing numerous marriages between black couples--free and bond. William Fuller and Nancy Moss were one such couple married by the Reverend William Compton, a local white Methodist minister. And like Christ Church, the M.E. Church probably assisted in the instruction of blacks throughout the city.⁵

In 1840, the Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) Church established a mission church for black slaves.⁶ So rapidly did the black congregation grow at Cumberland Street that a separate meeting place was obtained at the old soap factory near East Main Street. On October 5, 1848, five white trustees purchased property for \$450 and held it in trust for the black M.E. congregation since most were slaves. Established in their own building and with their own pastor

1851 Norfolk Directory, p. 37; Leonard Sweet, ed., The Evangelical Tradition in America (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), pp. 89, 182.

⁵ According to the surviving records, the Methodist Church performed more marriages between blacks than did the Catholic Church. Wertenbaker, p. 136; Margaret Douglass, p. 9; George H. Tucker, compiler, Abstracts from Norfolk City Marriage Bonds (1797-1850) and Other Genealogical Data (Norfolk, Virginia: William H. Delaney, 1934), p. 77.

⁶ This mission formally separated from the M.E. Church in 1863, becoming St. John African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. "St. John A.M.E. Church, Norfolk, Virginia--119th Anniversary, 1863-1982," Pamphlet, Norfolk, Virginia, 1982.

who, in keeping with the law, was white, the black congregation flourished. Despite the limitations of a white pastor and trustees, blacks were allowed to carry responsibility as stewards and class leaders, thus giving them experience for leadership in the future.⁷

The Baptists also flourished among blacks--free and bond--because of that denomination's acceptance of them as members. Almost from the beginning of the denomination in the United States, black Baptists were licensed to preach and black deacons were selected to look after the black members. And like most other Baptist congregations, Court Street Baptist Church in Portsmouth was composed of men and women of many races and socio-economic classes.⁸ Even its pastors were from varying socio-economic levels, and not all of them were white.⁹

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Lewis G. Jordan, Negro Baptist History U.S.A. (Nashville, TN: Sunday School Publishing Board, 1930), p. 214; Garnett Ryland, The Baptists of Virginia, 1699-1929 (Richmond: Baptist Board of Missions and Education, 1955), pp. 155, 281. Ryland also addresses the developing policies of the Baptist Church with regard to slavery and to the post-war freedmen.

⁹ Robert Semple, A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia, revised and extended by G.W. Beale (Richmond: Pitt and Dickinson, 1810; 1894), pp. 457-458. Jacob Bishop was a black preacher, originally from Northampton County, VA, whose freedom was purchased by the brethren at the Court Street Baptist Church in Portsmouth. In 1792, Bishop became the Church's pastor. Later, Bishop purchased his wife and eldest son's freedom and was so respected by his congregation that he was sent as a delegate to the Portsmouth Baptist Association meetings. Bishop's tenure as pastor lasted until 1800, when the fires of evangelicalism were

Weary of the journey across the Elizabeth River, the growing Norfolk membership realized that the weekly trips were becoming impractical. Two white elders, David Biggs and Thomas Etheridge, requested and obtained letters of dismissal so as to be able to start a similar interracial and inter-class Baptist church in Norfolk in the spring of 1800. On July 13, 1800, First Baptist Church on Bute Street was established. For the first five years of its existence, however, the small interracial congregation worshipped in a hall on Cumberland Street. Between 1805 and 1830, the growing congregation moved to the Old Borough Church (later called St. Paul's Episcopal Church). Unfortunately, the congregation of this newly established church went the way of the nation's Baptist denomination by 1816. Twenty-five white members withdrew and formed Cumberland Street Baptist Church because of the liberal political views expressed by their pastor, the Reverend James Mitchell.¹⁰

The departure by many of First Baptist Church's whites members proved beneficial for the black community because it afforded greater opportunities for blacks to assume church leadership roles. The church also was fortunate to have as

doused with the ice of racialism and spiritual destitution. Ryland, p. 156.

¹⁰ Tradition actually held that a white army officer did not like the idea of his wife worshipping with blacks and so put up a large part of the money towards building the separate and predominately white Cumberland Street Baptist Church. Norfolk Landmark, March 6, 1911; Norfolk Journal and Guide, October 27, 1962; First Baptist Church, pp. 1-2.

its pastor the Reverend James Mitchell, a liberal Englishman who encouraged the active participation of blacks as trustees, clerks, elders, and deacons. Black freemen, such as Samuel Lewis, Moses Jordan, David Carey, Thomas Ruffin, and Aaron Rogers, took formal leadership roles in the years following the first white exodus.¹¹

From 1830 to 1859, the mostly-female and predominantly black congregation worshipped in a donated old warehouse located near the corner of Catharine and Freemason streets. The warehouse was later moved to a spacious Bute Street lot purchased for \$250 by its ten free black and four white trustees. Not long after its establishment in a permanent structure, First Baptist Church became an important institution in the social and cultural life of Norfolk's black community. First Baptist Church afforded opportunities for its members to meet and socialize through Sunday services (dressing in their best "Sunday-go-to-meeting" clothes), funerals, weddings, and revival meetings.¹² Other church

¹¹ Black freemen were chosen as the formal leaders of First Baptist because of their ability to purchase property and conduct business without fear that the property or legal transactions would be lost or nullified. First Baptist Church, pp. 2-3.

¹² In 1854, the Southern Argus published a letter from a white visitor who was quite impressed with one of First Baptist Church's revivals. He wrote that between one thousand and twelve hundred blacks assembled at a meeting presided over by a white minister who left after giving a short sermon. Ibid., pp. 3-4. The Southern Argus began in 1848 (and lasted until 1861) and was the mouthpiece of the Democratic Party in Norfolk. Advocating slavery as a divinely-appointed institution, its editors advocated secession. Gertrude

activities, such as the literacy program and burial and charity societies flourished.¹³

First Baptist Church also had a tremendous impact on the family life of free blacks. Free blacks Charles Roberts and Mary Wilson were married by George Green, Pastor Elect, at First Baptist Church on June 18, 1863. A week later, James Tines and Elizabeth Fuller were also married by Pastor Green as were Tillius Lamount and Saraphine Gibbon (on July 19). Both Roberts and Tines were listed as oystermen, while Lamount was listed as a bricklayer. With the exception of Lamount, all the parties listed both parents. These examples from the City Marriage Registers are not only a testimony to the sanctity of holy matrimony in the black community but to the ability of the husband to provide for his wife and to the stability of free black families.¹⁴

The Catholic Church also played a significant role within the black community. Although a black Catholic parish did not

Elizabeth Baker, "The Diary of William Lamb, Aug. 18, 1859-May 21, 1860" (M.A. Thesis, College of William and Mary, 1960), pp. viii, xl.

¹³ The old warehouse was formerly a storage house for salt, which was why church records referred to it as "The Old Salt Box." First Baptist Church, pp. 2-4. Perhaps as a testimony to the success of organizations like the literacy program, the councilmen of Norfolk, on July 31, 1835, instructed the postmaster to withhold delivery of the Emancipator and other abolitionist newspapers to free blacks and slaves. Wertebaker, p. 197.

¹⁴ Norfolk, Virginia, Register of Marriages, Corporation Court of the City of Norfolk, (December 7, 1853-April 29, 1879).

make its appearance in Norfolk until 1889, the Catholic Church apparently opened its doors to blacks at the turn of the eighteenth century.¹⁵ Norfolk's Catholic Church, located at the corner of Chapel and Holt streets, was recorded as having solemnized marriages between blacks. Father Michael DeLacy documented the marriages of several blacks, free and bond. For example, in 1812, Father DeLacy recorded the marriages of two couples--Gabriel Achille and Henrietta (status unknown), and Mills Nicholas and Nancy Johnson (free blacks). Again in April 1813, DeLacy recorded a marriage between two blacks of unknown status, John Bernard and Justine. In 1816, DeLacy was replaced by the Reverend James Lucas who continued uniting free blacks and slaves in holy matrimony although no bonds for the marriages were recorded in the files at the Corporation Court.¹⁶

These years were not easy for free blacks in Norfolk or for members of First Baptist Church. Willis A. Hodges, a free black from Norfolk County, recorded in his autobiography that following the Nat Turner revolt in August 1831, the revival of interest and participation in the American Colonization Society was particularly evident in the borough of Norfolk.

¹⁵ St. Joseph's parish was the first black Catholic Church established in September 1889. Located originally at 635 Brewer Street, the parish was soon moved to Queen Street because of the increasing number of new members. Walker, Norfolk: A Tricentennial Pictorial History, p. 120; Wertenbaker, pp. 136-7.

¹⁶ Tucker, Marriage Bonds, pp. 50, 53-54.

In addition, Hodges noted that many free blacks lost their property, were forced to emigrate, were terrorized by whites who went from house to house brutalizing and destroying, had their freedom challenged in court, and were sold into slavery if they were not able to pay their jail fees.¹⁷

Exacerbating problems was Pastor Mitchell's marriage by a Catholic priest to a free black woman, Lucy, on February 16, 1839.¹⁸ Intense white disapproval and fear of reprisals among blacks created a schism in First Baptist which resulted in the Portsmouth Baptist Association withdrawing recognition from the Bute Street Church, the formation of a First Baptist Church (which would later be called Bank Street Baptist Church),¹⁹ and the final departure of First Baptist's remaining white members. The Mitchell marriage also resulted in the temporary ouster of First Baptist from the Portsmouth Baptist Association in 1840, although it continued functioning

¹⁷ Williard Gatewood, ed., Free Man of Color: The Autobiography of Willis Augustus Hodges (Springfield, MA: I. Garland Penn, 1891; reprint, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), pp. xxi, 25-26.

¹⁸ Although marriages between blacks were frequently performed by Catholic priests, no doubt this one was performed because no other minister in Norfolk would do so.

¹⁹ The group of free blacks who withdrew from First Baptist Church purchased their own church building on the corner of Charlotte and Catharine Streets in 1840. The church was renamed when Catharine Street's name was changed to Bank Street. Marjorie L. Lee, The Centennial Anniversary of Queen Street Baptist Church and the 35th Anniversary of the Pastor Dr. J. Jasper Freeman (Norfolk: Published by Queen Street Baptist Church, 1984), p. 26.

until reinstated after Mitchell's death in 1849.²⁰

Although Norfolk's black churches survived only under the pastoral leadership of white ministers, they were not immune to attacks from whites who apparently felt threatened by the cohesiveness, however tenuous, these churches brought to the black community. The Hawk Street Baptist Church (also known as the Third Baptist Church) was destroyed by arsonists in 1855. A short time later on Christmas Eve, First Baptist's new edifice was torched by arsonists, although not destroyed. Undaunted, First Baptist repaired the damage and in February 1859 dedicated the newly-built brick edifice in a special service.²¹

When the city was occupied in 1862, black preachers were enlisted to take the place of rebel sympathizers in the black churches. First Baptist Church was already primed to provide black leadership because of the work of a free mulatto church clerk, Lewis Tucker. Between 1857 and 1862, Tucker was enlisted to lead church services for its white pastor, C. Goodall, who left shortly after the arrival of Union forces. In June 1863 Tucker became the first black to be ordained a minister in the city of Norfolk and was given charge of Bute Street Baptist Church. Almost immediately, Tucker began working with the northern missionaries sent to Norfolk to help meet the spiritual, moral, educational, and material needs of

²⁰ First Baptist Church, pp. 5-6.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

the black community. In 1865, Tucker worked with those involved in the organization of the Norfolk Union Association of Baptist churches held at the Bank Street Church in Norfolk.²²

Another significant moment for the black community came on June 28, 1863, when St. John M.E. Church, whose congregation numbered 800, voted to become a part of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. Thanks to the work of its black trustees²³ St. John officially was accepted as a member of the A.M.E. church by the Baltimore Conference on October 13, 1863; the conference sent the Reverend A.W. Wayman to Norfolk to receive the church in membership. After obtaining a pass to go to Norfolk, Wayman was met by Peter Shepherd (who later became an itinerant preacher and member of the Virginia Annual A.M.E. Conference) and 800 of its church members. Upon returning to Norfolk in November, Wayman brought the Reverend John M. Brown,²⁴ who was to serve as St.

²² Lewis Tucker was a very light-skinned and literate free black who was born in the Berkley section of Norfolk County on March 11, 1822. At age nineteen, Tucker joined First Baptist and by 1848, had become church clerk. During the pastorship of Mitchell, Tucker was frequently called upon to substitute as the preacher. A photograph of Tucker can be found on page 187 in the church's printed history. Ibid., pp. 6-9.

²³ St. John A.M.E. Church's trustees included notable black leaders--Jacob Tynes, Peter Shepherd, and John H. Jordan. "St. John A.M.E. Church Norfolk, Virginia."

²⁴ John M. Brown, a black graduate of Oberlin College in Ohio, was chosen because he was a good disciplinarian and a sound theologian. Charles Spencer Smith, A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church; Being a Volume Supplemental to A History of the African Methodist Episcopal

John's first regular pastor. Following the example set by First Baptist, the congregation of St. John worked to solidify its existence between 1865 and 1868, with the purchase of a lot and the erection of a permanent structure. During that period, it was primarily St. John that worked to provide housing for the black schools sponsored by the AMA and the Freedmen's Bureau.²⁵

By the 1880's, First Calvary, Queen Street, and Jerusalem Baptist Churches were formed from the Bank Street mother church. The split from the Bank Street Baptist Church began innocently. On December 20, 1880, the Reverend Richard Spiller started a Sunday school, the result of a great spiritual revival that came out of his church.²⁶ This congregation was able to purchase a mission house on the corner of Church and Nicholson Streets. As the congregation grew, discontent over color (lighter-skinned blacks sat near the front of the church, while darker-skinned blacks sat in the back) and the separate interests in the two congregations forced a split in the church, with the darker colored blacks

Church, By Daniel Alexander Payne (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Church, 1922; N.Y.: Johnson reprint Corporation, 1968), pp. 53-55.

²⁵ "St. John A.M.E. Church Norfolk, Virginia."

²⁶ Aside from his work in Norfolk, Richard Spiller was also involved in national Baptist organizations such as the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society which held several conventions, one of which was held on November 24-26, 1880 in Montgomery, Alabama. Other black Baptist and A.M.E. churches were involved in this organization as well as the Bank Street Church. Jordan, pp. 165, 170.

forming First Calvary Church in 1883. The church continued and prospered under the Revered Madison Lewis in the years that followed.²⁷

In 1884, Richard Spiller and some of Bank Street Church's congregation left the church and formed the Queen Street Baptist Church that originally held its services in the Masonic Hall at the corner of Willoughby and Jefferson Streets. In a few months, the small congregation purchased a \$3,000 lot on Queen Street and within six weeks had erected a small building for \$5,000. Spiller, known for his "ringing voice, wit and humor," continued as its pastor until 1890. St. Joseph's Catholic Church was established for blacks in the post-war period as well [for a complete listing of black churches from 1861 to 1884, see Appendix 3].²⁸

Although numerous branches formed from the same tree, the black churches in Norfolk were very much united in their quest for their community's equality, education, and advancement. It is not surprising then, that the majority of Norfolk's black leaders were also ordained ministers. William Lewis, pastor of Norfolk Colored Methodist Protestant Church and the Reverend Edward Williams, also of the Methodist Episcopal Church, showed proof of their ordination in the Corporation

²⁷ "First Calvary Baptist Church Norfolk, Virginia, 1880-1980," Pamphlet, Courtesy of Norfolk State University Archives (Norfolk, Virginia), 1980; Alexander Caesar, interview held during private meeting, Norfolk, Virginia, December 17, 1987.

²⁸ Marjorie L. Lee, pp. 26, 36; The Negro in Virginia, p. 254.

Court on June 27, 1866, and July 3, 1866, respectively. James Tynes, pastor of St. John A.M.E. Church, and the Reverends Amos Wilson and Peter Shepherd, also at St. John, produced proofs of their ordination on June 27, 1866, and July 3, 1866. First Baptist Church's Thomas Henson and Robert Whitehead produced proofs of their ordination on July 28, 1866. Even Dr. Thomas Bayne became a minister, producing proof of his ordination with the M.E. Church on March 13, 1867.²⁹

The assistance of missionary organizations and the Freedmen's Bureau galvanized the black community to begin pooling its meager resources to help one another in the months following the war's end. H.C. Percy remarked that no matter how poor the membership, in all the black churches there were several societies organized to care for the sick and needy. Some examples were the Good Samaritans, the Sons of Adam, the Humble Sons of God, the Daughters of St. Luke, and the Bible Stars. Union Captain William Austin verified the extraordinary efforts made by the black community, many of whom were themselves extremely poor, to care for the needy.

²⁹ The Negro in Virginia, p. 254; Norfolk, Virginia, Order Book, No. 1, Corporation Court of the City of Norfolk, May 23, 1866 to October 12, 1867, pp. 19, 32, 50, 286. It seems that it was not uncommon for black physicians to assume high positions in their churches, social clubs, political organizations, or to act as a liaison with the white community. Certainly the career of Thomas Bayne serves as a prime example of the requirements often placed on highly educated members of the black community. Todd Savitt, "Entering A White Profession: Black Physicians in the New South, 1880-1920," Bulletin History of Medicine 61 (Winter 1987), p. 516.

In a January 23, 1867, letter to General Brown, Austin described the black community's founding of the Humane Society whose sole purpose was the relief of the poor and suffering. So successful was this organization that the city used it as an excuse for not making better provision for the support of the poor.³⁰

The Sons of Liberty was a benevolent society originally organized by a group of black Portsmouth men in 1865. Its purpose was to combine fellowship with mutual financial, political, and social assistance. A number of secret lodges also emerged in the years following the war. Basically patterned after white groups, these lodges with their secret rituals provided contributions to schools, hospitals, homes for the aged, indigent families, and temperance societies [for a complete listing of the black organizations during the period 1861-1884, see Appendix 4].³¹

Some of the most prominent black churches and their members became involved in the formation of self-help and community organizations. The temperance society, however, was

³⁰ American Missionary 10 (September 1866), p. 195; Press Copies of Letters Sent, March 1865-January 1867, BRFAL, vol. 1, File No. 4150, Record Group 105, p. 248.

³¹ A few of the black secret lodges included the Union Veteran Hall Association, the Odd Fellows, and the Hebrew Union. Norfolk and Portsmouth City Directory for 1885, (Norfolk, VA: J.H. Chataigne, 1885); Sarah S. Hughes, "Social Organization in the Black Community," Readings in Black and White: Lower Tidewater Virginia, edited by Jane H. Kobelski (Portsmouth, VA: Portsmouth Public Library, 1982), pp. 39-40.

the most difficult to get started, in part because the black community had so many groups that few were interested in beginning a new one. The other reason may have been the influence of prominent blacks who owned taverns or were retail liquor dealers. In any case, a school temperance society, called the Lincoln Temperance Society, was established in November 1867, under the auspices of the superintendent and teachers of the AMA. With its 600 members, the organization helped to disseminate the values of the AMA and General O.O. Howard.³²

The Grand United Order of Tents, reputed to be a secret organization for the Underground Railroad during the antebellum period, emerged in 1867 and thus became the oldest women's lodge in Virginia. It, too, was organized by Norfolk's black women to offer benefits for the sick and aged and maintained a home for its aged members. Thus, black social organizations provided a means for community service, financial security, socialization, and personal development. These organizations became the basis of communal activities, nourishing the community with a sense of racial pride and self-sufficiency which would help fortify the community against the antagonism and hostility of the returning ex-rebels.³³

³² **Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 48, pp. 114, 412-13.**

³³ The Negro in Virginia, p. 295; Sarah Hughes, p. 39.

Also in the months following the Civil War, missionaries were on hand to assist the numerous husbandless women coming into Norfolk with their children in search of food and clothing. Many black men were taken away in the months preceding the end of the war. As one woman recounted, "The rebs took him acrost the lines and I have not seen him since."³⁴ Those families that were fortunate enough to have a roof over their heads were crammed eight or nine people to one room paying five dollars a month. It was not unheard of to have an old woman living in a corner of the room and supporting herself working two to three half days a week. Fortunately, some members of the military were sympathetic to the plight of the blacks. Captain A.S. Flagg, described as an earnest worker and friend to the black people, wrote to the benevolent societies in the North that although the war was over, they should continue sending clothing for the next year or two to relieve the extreme suffering among the blacks in the Norfolk area.³⁵

As the black community grew and developed, so did the professional classes. Dr. C.H. Taylor arrived in Norfolk sometime between 1870 and 1874 when he was listed in the Norfolk and Portsmouth City Directory for 1874 as a physician whose office was located over Marketsquare. Four semi-professionals were also added to the list of the growing black

³⁴ American Missionary 10 (July 1866), p. 162.

³⁵ American Missionary 10 (July 1866), pp. 162-163.

middle-class, and eighty-eight small businessmen operated in offices on Queen Street and Marketsquare. In fact, 221 blacks were listed with office addresses primarily in the downtown area of Norfolk in the 1874 City Directory. There was also an increase in single and mobile blacks who came to Norfolk seeking employment as teachers, domestic servants, barbers, porters, house carpenters, and laborers. Most of these newcomers found residence in the Fourth Ward in the numerous boarding houses that sprang up during Norfolk's Reconstruction years.³⁶

With the end of the war, the black community became more organized. Former runaway slaves such as Joseph T. Wilson and Dr. Thomas Bayne, and former slaves who were freed at the conclusion of the war were among the black leaders. Some of these men were slaves who fled to the North, became educated, and served in the Union army or in political offices before returning to Norfolk in 1865. Richard G.L. Paige, a former slave born in the city of Norfolk, was an unusual example of a success story. Paige was the offspring of a white woman of high social standing and a male slave. Because of his background, Paige was sent to Boston where he was trained as a machinist. Returning to Norfolk after the war, Paige later graduated from Howard University's Law School in 1879, established a prosperous law practice in Norfolk, and acquired

³⁶ Norfolk and Portsmouth City Directory of 1874 (Norfolk, VA: Journal Job Office, 1874).

considerable real estate holdings throughout the city.³⁷

Comparisons between the 1860 and 1870 census records, and between the census records and the 1874 City Directory disclosed only three men among Norfolk's post-war black leaders who were present in Norfolk in 1860: the Reverend Lewis Tucker of First Baptist Church, the mulatto hack driver William Lewis who owned \$400 in personal estate, and the barber John Jordan. These men, as well as free black business leaders like James Robertson (a well-known and well-respected black barber whose shop was patronized by men like Mayor William Lamb), became spokesmen for the black community. They helped to galvanize the community politically and to institute black workers' associations and unions in response to exclusionary policies of white unions.³⁸

In anticipation of some of the problems that would befall the newly emancipated blacks, in the fall of 1864, General Benjamin F. Butler established a Military Savings Bank in Norfolk to help freedmen prepare for the responsibilities of freedom once the war was over. Under the auspices of Butler, bank business was basically confined to the black soldiers and their families who deposited their bounties, pay, and

³⁷ Jackson, Negro Office Holders in Virginia, pp. 32-33.

³⁸ Population 1860; Population 1870; 1874 City Directory; Rabinowitz, pp. 70, 84; The Negro in Virginia, pp. 137, 284.

savings.³⁹ Several months later Congress also saw the need to assist freedmen prepare for freedom and created the Freedman's Bank on March 3, 1865. On June 3, 1865, with funds from the Military Savings Bank (which served as the nucleus) totalling \$7,956.38, Norfolk's bank was incorporated and became the nation's first branch of the Freedman's Bank. Norfolk's Freedman's Bank was organized at No. 47 Bank Street and later moved to No. 116 Main Street.⁴⁰

A month after the bank's formation, Bureau officials were ordered to assist blacks throughout the South to collect pensions, army pay, and bounty claims. On August 1, 1865, these funds were transferred to the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company's main office in Washington, D.C. In hindsight, this monetary transference would prove disastrous for Norfolk's blacks because a large proportion of their savings would disappear through embezzlement and fraud.⁴¹

³⁹ On March 3, 1865, the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company was chartered out of John W. Alvord's concern, a minister and abolitionist, that the black freedmen and soldiers have an institution which would help them properly handle and safely keep the large sums of money they received from their army enlistment and bounty monies. Carl Osthaus, Freedmen, Philanthropy, and Fraud: A History of the Freedman's Savings Bank (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), pp. 1-2.

⁴⁰ Joseph T. Wilson's The Black Phalanx, maintained that \$8,000 in unclaimed bounties belonging to dead black Union soldiers was placed in the bank in Norfolk which, in addition to other deposited monies, formed the nucleus for the Freedman's Bank, p. 141.

⁴¹ Williams, History of the Negro Race, vol. 2, pp. 403, 408; The Southern Workman 1 (March 1872), p. 10. Operating hours of the Freedman's Bank was from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday

Congress would not allow the Freedman's Bank to be established as a depository for black soldiers' bounty funds. Consequently, John W. Alvord did the next best thing. He arranged for the cashiers of each branch to work closely with the Freedmen's Bureau agents (or arranged that the cashiers were also the local disbursing officers) to channel their money into the Bank. In fact, the Reverend John Brown of St. John A.M.E. Church arranged matters so that the Bank would receive a substantial amount of the military service monies received by local black residents.⁴²

Alvord served as a guiding force in the establishment of the Freedman's Bank and its commitment to instilling positive values in the black community. Such was the commitment that Norfolk's cashier was replaced by H.C. Percy in 1866 because the former cashier was not pledged to temperance. The appointment of men like H.C. Percy, a highly visible and familiar Freedmen's Bureau agent who also served as school superintendent of Norfolk's black schools, was a common and logical choice. Often, men appointed as cashiers were northern missionaries, teachers, principals, and school superintendents because of their high visibility in the black

through Friday, and 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturdays. The Southern Workman 1 (April 1872), p. 14.

⁴² Osthaus, pp. 26-27, 31.

community and the likelihood that they were honest men.⁴³

Even though men like Percy and Alvord were former abolitionists, they were not above engaging in racist employment policies in the operation of the Freedman's Bank. In Norfolk, a controversy emerged over the employment of blacks as bank clerks. Too often, the only employment blacks were given was that of janitor, assistant cashier, or messenger, although Joseph T. Wilson was Norfolk's branch secretary. In 1867 Isaac Mullin, a black who was secretary of the bank's advisory board, complained to General O.O. Howard that more bank clerks should be hired. Such a move, he felt, would increase deposits. Of course, Mullin's complaints were not completely altruistic, for he wanted to secure a position as a receiver in Norfolk's branch. Unsuccessful in his attempt, Mullin then uttered words that weighed heavy on the consciences of Norfolk's advisory board: if blacks could not be hired on the basis of equality in their own institutions, then where?⁴⁴

The racist policies notwithstanding, the Freedman's Bank prospered. H.C. Percy noted in The Southern Workman that by 1872, there were over 4,200 depositors on the bank ledgers who

⁴³ The cashier's position was the most important in each of the local branches because they were responsible for everything pertaining to their branch. Ibid., pp. 54, 58-59, 101.

⁴⁴ Osthaus, pp. 103-104; Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 46.

deposited a yearly average of \$135,434.58.⁴⁵ Among the depositors were people of all types, from lawyers, doctors, ministers, bankers, and legislators, to beggars, lunatics, and scoundrels. Also, almost three hundred of Norfolk's black societies and institutions--including the Children of the Heavenly King, the Oyster Association, the Wandering Pilgrims, the Union Stars, the Humble Sons of God, and the Wrestling Sons and Daughters of Jacob--deposited their funds at the Bank. Percy was impressed that the Bank enabled its customers to pay for hundreds of small town lots and farms within a few years by saving. He gave an example of a washerwoman who deposited almost six hundred dollars over a period of three years, from which she purchased a city lot and built a comfortable house.⁴⁶

The success of the Bank did not mean that all of Norfolk's blacks diligently saved their money and used it for constructive purposes. One account argued that too many wasted it on alcohol, tobacco, and the lottery, as verified by the police reports and the numerous liquor stores and taverns

⁴⁵ It is ironic that given the Freedman's Bank officers' commitment to temperance that Norfolk's largest depositors were those engaged in the trafficking of alcohol or liquor dealers. Osthaus, p. 129; The Southern Workman 1 (April 1872), p. 14.

⁴⁶ Percy also recounted an example of a man who brought a rusty box containing 1,100 silver dollars he had buried to be deposited in the Bank, and of a boot-black boy who saved over \$70. The Southern Workman 1 (April 1872), p. 14.

prospering in certain areas of the black community.⁴⁷

In 1874, amidst rumors that the Freedman's Bank was financially unstable, many depositors initiated runs on the Bank. These runs further depleted the assets already reduced by the criminal conduct of the national bank's officers. So although the Norfolk branch of the Freedmen's Bank had been successful, the embezzlements among officers of the national bank led to the local branch's collapse. On June 28, 1874, the Bank was forced to close its doors. The tragic irony of the Freedman's Bank was that as the white officials, led by the chairman of the bank's advisory committee Henry D. Cooke, concocted numerous irregular schemes to tap the assets of the Bank, more blacks were hired, trained, and promoted to higher positions on the board of directors. Blame for the Bank's failure did not rest solely with its unprincipled trustees. Alvord had unwisely incorporated the Bank without proper safeguards for its deposits or against abuses by a small number of its trustees.⁴⁸

Hundreds of Norfolk's black depositors lost most or all of their savings in the aftermath of the Bank's failure. It

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Arnette Lindsay, "The Negro in Banking," Journal of Negro History 14 (April 1929), pp. 166-168. Unaware that the real cause of the Bank's tenuous position was not the lack of depositors but the unsound financial practices of its officials, Frederick Douglass accepted the Presidency of the Freedman's Bank in the last three months of its operation in the hopes that his presence would stimulate confidence among its depositors. Mauris Lee Emeka, Black Banks, Past and Present (Kansas City, Missouri: By Author, 1971), pp. 14, 20.

took over a decade to restore many blacks' confidence in banks. In addition, unfair banking practices (e.g., unwillingness of white banks to extend credit to black businesses on the same basis on which white businesses could procure it) forced the development of these new banking institutions within the black community. Seeing the need for a black-operated financial institution to help make loans to develop the black community commercially and economically, several fraternal orders organized and formed banks during the 1888-1908 period.⁴⁹

Between 1866 and 1869, the black community continued to pool its political and financial resources to develop a closely knit unit which could withstand the attacks of the whites. With the anticipated removal of the Freedmen's Bureau, Virginia's blacks held a convention in Frederick

⁴⁹ Lindsay, p. 169, 172, 180. The Norfolk Home Building and Loan Association organized on October 12, 1905, became one of the most successful enterprises of its kind during the early twentieth century. In 1916, the Journal and Guide published an article praising the Home Building and Loan Association for its success in holding receipts amounting to \$180,000, in addition to \$45,000 in accumulated assets and \$6,000 in undivided profits. The Gideon Savings Bank, also founded in 1905, the Brown Savings and Banking Company which replaced the defunct Gideon Bank in 1910, and the Tidewater Bank and Trust Company were three other banking institutions operating in Norfolk in the early twentieth century. Although initially successful and quite helpful in providing the community with a friendly banking facility, each eventually ran into financial trouble either because it was not sufficiently capitalized as required by the Corporation Commission or its trustees operated with unsound financial principles. "Saving Plan of Rare Merit," Journal and Guide, January 8, 1916, p. 22; "Negro Banks," Clipping No. 86, Peabody Room, Hampton University Library, vol. 1 (2 vols., Hampton, Virginia), pp. 64, 76 and vol. 2, pp. 41, 44.

County, on October 9, 1869. During this convention, the delegates agreed to endorse the call for a Colored National Labor Union (CNLU) to meet in Washington, D.C. in December of that same year. On December 6, 1869, the CNLU met for the purpose of organizing black workers throughout the South.⁵⁰

The CNLU's 214 delegates from eighteen states resolved that better pay and equal employment opportunities could not be achieved except through an independent black organization. On April 18, 1870, the CNLU's representative in Virginia, Isaac Myers, held a meeting in Norfolk during which he declared that blacks must unite economically if they were to survive. Unfortunately, the political events hastening the demise of Radical Reconstruction also did the same to the CNLU because after the October 1871 meeting, no other meetings of the CNLU were held. Despite its demise, Norfolk's blacks took the admonishments of Myers seriously. A noticeable increase in the number of black property owners became apparent in Norfolk's Land Books between 1870 and 1876, a development that coincided with the politicizing of the community.⁵¹

⁵⁰ The CNLU organized as a counterpart to the white-dominated National Labor Union. Philip Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, The Black Worker: A Documentary History From Colonial Times to the Present, Vol. 2: The Black Worker During the Era of the National Labor Union (4 vols., Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), pp. 20, 36.

⁵¹ The NCLU was a black organization made up of men and women, industrial and agricultural workers, and common laborers and skilled craftsmen. The NCLU also formed the National Bureau of Labor to inform blacks of employment opportunities throughout the U.S., to lobby for equal opportunity legislation, and to negotiate with bankers and

Blacks were aware, as historian Milfred Fierce has argued, that failure to obtain land at a time when land was necessary to survival would lead to continued economic dependency on whites. Through a series of efforts, most of which went unrecorded, the black community began to grow economically. In 1860 there were thirteen free black real property owners listed in the city of Norfolk. Their presence helped the community develop because it provided an economic base, albeit small, from which Norfolk's blacks could begin to develop. Although ninety-eight percent of the free blacks owned no real or personal estate, of those who did own property, five free blacks owned real estate valued between \$500 and \$1800 while thirty-nine owned personal estate valued between \$20 and \$300 [see Appendix 5 for a listing of black property owners].⁵²

After the war in 1865, only eleven black property owners, whose total real estate value was recorded at \$5,700, were listed in the Norfolk Land Books. By 1870, however, this number had grown to thirty-two property owners. The difference was greater, however, in the recorded value of the land. Including the value of the building and lot, in 1870 the total value of black-owned real estate was listed at

capitalists for financial assistance in the establishment of black businesses. The Black Worker, vol. 2, pp. 36, 82, 110; The Negro in Virginia, p. 306.

⁵² Population 1860; Milfred Fierce, "Black Struggle for Land During Reconstruction," Black Scholar 5 (February 1974), pp. 13.

\$39,950. After the CNLU's organization, the 1875-76 Land Book registered 160 black property owners (with a few names duplicated because they were multiple property-holders) with real estate valued at \$140,990. This significant accomplishment waned only slightly in the 1881-82 period with a registered 200 black property owners with real estate totaling \$131,335. The increase in property owners and the decrease in the value of their property by 1881-82 may have been the result of an inconsistency in recording property ownership in the Land Books, the loss of savings resulting from the collapse of the Freedman's Bank, or simply a decrease in the rate of economic growth among blacks in Norfolk.⁵³

A primary example of this type of inconsistency is typified in a comparison between the Land Books and the Population Schedules from the 1870 Census, as well as between the Land Books of varying years. In the 1870 Census, sixty-six blacks were listed as owning real estate, the value of which ranged from \$100 to \$9,000 (total estimated at \$85,780). It also recorded twelve blacks who held real estate estimated to be worth \$2,000 or above. The Land Book, however, only

⁵³ The failure of land reform made the failure of Radical Reconstruction inevitable because eventually the southern white landowners regained control and reestablished the racist policies of their predecessors. During Radical Reconstruction, the problem for Norfolk's blacks was the reluctance of the Freedmen's Bureau to interfere in the functioning of the racist policies of local governments that hindered the progress of blacks. Fierce, p. 15; Norfolk, Virginia, Land Book, 1858-86, City of Norfolk, Assessor for the County of Norfolk for Norfolk Township.

recorded thirty-two people in 1870 who owned real estate ranging in value between \$50 and \$3,500 (total assessed at \$39,950). In the Land Book, only six people owned real estate valued at \$2,000 or above. Inconsistencies of this nature continued throughout the records, including variable listings of persons as black or white, and failures to record the property owned from year-to-year when ownership remained stable.⁵⁴

One particular incongruity that remains a puzzle was the recording of real estate owned by Jerome B. Capps.⁵⁵ The census records listed Capps at age forty as a brickmason who owned real estate valued at \$9,000 and had a personal estate worth \$300. The Land Book, however, listed Capps owning two lots and buildings on Chapel Street with a combined value of \$3,500. Certain other enigmas from the 1870 Census were clarified using the wills from the Corporation Court of Norfolk. The 1870 Census listed three children, ages eight through eleven, as owning property valued at \$4,150 while their mother owned only \$300 in personal property. It seems that the father, Robert Bowden, had died sometime in February 1867 leaving a considerable estate. To relieve his wife of

⁵⁴ Land Book, 1870; Population 1870.

⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that in Mr. Capps's will, he authorized his estate to go to the "Society for the Relief of the Preachers of the Virginia Conference M.E. Church, South and their Families, their widows and orphans," in case of his wife's and child's death. Norfolk, Virginia, Wills--Corporation Court, Book 10, pp. 455-56. Hereafter cited as Wills.

the burden of paying property taxes, Bowden shrewdly left the property to his underaged children while simultaneously making his wife executor of his estate.⁵⁶

By 1885-86, the Land Book had become extremely unreliable for use in estimating the value of property and land-ownership among Norfolk's blacks because of the extreme inconsistency in the designation of people according to race. For example, the 1885 Land Book listed 114 black land owners with a total assessed land value of \$88,240. Thomas F. Paige, a prominent black business leader, recorded in his book Twenty-two Years of Freedom that in 1885, blacks owned property worth \$100,000. Paige recounted that blacks also invested over \$150,000 in businesses and owned \$150,000 in personal property. Despite repeated incongruities, what is demonstrated is the continued financial growth and development of the black community [for a listing of the top black landowners in 1865-85, see Appendix 5].⁵⁷

In conjunction with the financial expansion of the black community came the development of recreational projects.

⁵⁶ Robert Bowden willed his daughter Laura a house and lot on Liberty Street worth \$2,550. To his sons, Robert Jr. and Rudolphus, Bowden left two houses and lots on Queen Street valued at \$800 each. His wife, Elizabeth, employed herself as a seamstress. Rudolphus later attended Hampton Normal Institute and worked as a teacher in the Norfolk Public School system. Wills, Book 8, p. 428.

⁵⁷ There was no record found which discussed a reason for the decline in the black community's total real estate value. It is possible that some may have left the area, sold the property, or lost the money when the Freedman's Bank closed. Land Book, 1885-86; Paige, p. 7.

Although the community loved its lectures, worship services, picnics, and weekend excursion, the most popular recreational activity during the postwar years was a parade. Military companies and benevolent and social societies accompanied by military bands always supported these parades in great numbers and with great fanfare. No occasion (e.g., funerals, opening of meeting halls, anniversaries of societies) was too insignificant to deprive the community of what it enjoyed most. On May 2, 1881, the Norfolk Landmark published a short article on the black veterans' parade in commemoration of the Yorktown Centennial celebration. The black-owned Petersburg Lancet published a similar article in September 1885 on a joint Norfolk-Petersburg parade of the black militia companies of Virginia.⁵⁸

Second only to the parades in popularity were the local outings to Portsmouth, Petersburg, and Hampton. Also, schools and churches regularly hosted lectures, dances, and fairs as a way of unifying the community and participating in what they were prevented from doing in this nation for three hundred years--gathering together as a group, free from the bondage of white supervision and scrutiny. It was not surprising then, when the Reverend William G. Hunton organized the first all-black Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) branch in Norfolk. The YMCA offered blacks a place of education,

⁵⁸ Rabinowitz, pp. 198-99; Norfolk Landmark, May 3, 1881, p. 2; Petersburg Lancet, September 5, 1885, p. 1.

evangelizing, and recreation. Throughout the 1890's, the Norfolk Landmark published notices of meetings and events at the all-black YMCA.⁵⁹

Black minstrel companies also toured the area, providing entertainment for both blacks and whites. In 1890, the forty-member company of White, Brown and Portlock provided a special treat for the citizens of Norfolk by having a daily street parade and free open-air concerts. The black community also had baseball teams. The Sinch Hall and the Norfolk Red Stockings baseball clubs became a popular attraction in Norfolk. Clothed in uniforms, these clubs had regularly scheduled games with black clubs from Washington, Petersburg, and Phoebus.⁶⁰

Since blacks were not welcome in white hotels and restaurants, many blacks opened restaurants and boarding houses which sought the patronage of area blacks and their visitors. The late 1870's and 1880's gave rise to Norfolk's first black-owned boarding house and hotel--Paige's Hotel. In the 1880's Norfolk was still primarily a walking city with residential and commercial areas situated in a compact area. The residential areas were basically limited to Church, Holt, Freemason, and Granby Streets, while the business areas

⁵⁹ Rabinowitz, pp. 228, 230; The Negro in Virginia, p. 344; Norfolk Landmark, June 1, 1890, March 20, 1890, and December 7, 1890.

⁶⁰ Norfolk Landmark, April 14, 1889, p. 1; Norfolk Landmark, March 23, 1890, p. 1; Norfolk Landmark, August 8, 1890, p. 2.

centered around Water, Main, Plume, Market and Church Streets. Located in the prime business districts, Thomas F. Paige's Hotel at 10 Marketsquare, Fitchett and Porter's Boarding House at 199 Church Street, and George Richardson's Boarding House at 47 Church Street were the only three places of public accommodation available to blacks. The eating houses of James Carter, William Emmerson, Johnson and Miller, and King, Moseley and Company were popular establishments located conveniently in the downtown district. Numerous black-owned groceries, fish shops, cigar and tobacco stores, and saloons filled the streets in the predominantly-black and downtown districts. There was even a black-owned furniture store, Warren and Carle at 331 Church Street, two doctor's offices (Philip Barber and Henry Jones on Queen and Bute Streets, respectively), and several butcher shops by 1885 [for a selected listing of black owned businesses, see Appendix 6].⁶¹

Norfolk's blacks were also active in gathering and disseminating information on local and national events. Between 1865 and 1905 fifty black newspapers were founded in Virginia, most of them in the post-Reconstruction era. Interestingly, most of these newspapers had one thing in common: they were often published by men involved in political organizations or ministers, and they were published by men who changed the name of the newspaper whenever they

⁶¹ "Church Street--Huntersville II--Wood Street," p. 85; Engs, p. 166; 1885 City Directory.

moved to a new location or championed a new cause.⁶² Norfolk's Joseph T. Wilson was one such example. Editor of the True Southerner, established in 1865 by a white Union officer, Wilson published the newspaper in Norfolk in 1866 but "was forced to flee to Petersburg after a Norfolk mob smashed the presses." He continued publication in Petersburg as the Union Republican.⁶³

Wilson returned to Norfolk in 1880 as a U.S. Customs Inspector and established the American Sentinel, which he published from 1880 to 1881, to assist in James Garfield's presidential election. By February 1885, as he abandoned the Republican Party which he saw as the betrayer of the black man, Wilson founded The Right Way, a militantly pro-Democratic newspaper. A weekly publication with an annual subscription rate of \$1.50, the Right Way printed a series of historical papers on the black soldiers and their participation in America's wars. Wilson later combined these articles in his 1890 book, The Black Phalanx, which recounted the history of America's black soldiers in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Civil War. In 1888, Wilson moved to Richmond and became editor of the Industrial Day from 1888 to 1890.⁶⁴

⁶² Henry Lewis Suggs, ed., The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 379.

⁶³ Suggs, p. 379.

⁶⁴ Other black publishers in the area were George W. Bragg, founder of the Petersburg's Lancet in July 1882 and Matt Lewis who established the Norfolk Recorder in 1893 (later changed to the Evening Recorder when it became a daily paper

So dynamic was the financial and social development of Norfolk's black community that its leaders felt nothing was beyond achievement--including political efficacy. Over a period of twenty years, Norfolk's free black and slave population could not have developed into a unified community without the help of its churches, war veterans, professionals, businessmen, teachers, and politically-conscious individuals. As this evolution occurred, Norfolk's black community became a serious threat to the white oligarchy and their maintenance of the pre-war status quo. As long as the blacks stayed in their community and did not demand a role in the political process or equal facilities, Norfolk was a city at peace. When blacks extended their voice beyond their community into the city at large, Norfolk erupted into an often violent and socially unhealthy environment for the blacks of the city.

The black community's rise from abject poverty to economic productivity in the 1870's and 1880's was a remarkable accomplishment, especially for a people recently emancipated from slavery. Certainly the peculiar character of urban slavery helped in preparing blacks for economic and social independence. The presence of a large and well established free black community also had a tremendous impact.

in 1897). Later newspapers published, albeit for short periods of time, by Norfolk's blacks were The Spectator (1887 to 1891), The Standard (1889 to 1891), The Speaker (1889 to 1893), The Rambler (1894 to 1898), American Ethiopian (1900 to 1907), the News and Advertiser (1900 to 1908), and The Lodge Journal and Guide (1900 to 1910). Suggs, pp. 380-382; Paige, p. 98.

The free blacks were especially important during and at the end of the Civil War when the efforts of an organized community to relieve the suffering of their neighbors was essential.

As a direct result of black political activities and efforts to combine financial resources, the 1870's and 1880's saw a notable rise in black property owners and middle class blacks. The rise in financial prosperity was accompanied by a rise in skilled, semi-professional, and professional occupations among those in Norfolk's black community. Ironically, the greatest single contributing factor to the development of Norfolk's black community was the infusion of former runaway slaves and the emancipation of independent urban slaves into the community. As men like Bayne, Brown, and Wilson fought to ensure legal protection for the rights of blacks; others such as Tucker, Paige, and Fuller fought to ensure that the community would be educated, informed, and cognizant of the need to look primarily to one another for assistance, independence, and success.

"What the Black Man Wants"

Everybody has asked the question, and they learned to ask it early of the Abolitionists, "What shall we do with the Negro?" I have had but one answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us!...All I ask is, give [the Negro] a chance to stand on his own legs! Let him alone! If you see him on his way to school, let him alone,--don't disturb him. If you see him going to the dinner table at a hotel, let him go! If you see him going to the ballot-box, let him alone,--don't disturb him! If you see him going into a workshop, just let him alone,--your interference is doing him a positive injury...If you will only untie his hands, and give him a chance, I think he will live.

Frederick Douglass¹

¹ Frederick Douglass was born a slave in Talbot County, Maryland in February 1817. Self-taught, Douglass became an extraordinary abolitionist, writer, publisher, orator, debater, and leader of blacks. He wrote numerous volumes concerning the condition of blacks and slavery. Taken from his speech, "What the Black Man Wants," a speech delivered at the Massachusetts Antislavery Society meeting in 1865 held in Boston, Benjamin Brawley, Early Negro American Writers, pp. 175-179, 214-215.

CHAPTER 7

"RADICAL RECONSTRUCTORS AND THE READJUSTERS"

In the first years after the Civil War--the period of Presidential and Congressional Reconstruction--many blacks in Norfolk fought segregation. Black leaders in Norfolk strove to build bridges between the black and white communities by inviting whites to black community and political functions and by doing everything short of giving up their political rights to conciliate the whites. Met with obstinate resistance to any form of integration, blacks reluctantly accepted segregation and turned to building a strong black community. Black leaders concentrated on building black pride through churches and schools, constructing a rudimentary economic infrastructure in the neighborhoods, encouraging a black middle class, and solidifying their political power.²

In the year following the surrender of the South, blacks in Norfolk faced violence and animosity from the returning rebels who resented blacks because they had helped tip the scales on the side of the Union. This hostility did much to

² Rabinowitz, p. xi.

hinder black productivity and advancement over the course of the year. To help ease the situation, the Norfolk branch of the Freedmen's Bureau called a meeting on Sunday afternoon April 22, 1866, a week after the famous April 16 riot. Addressing a packed hall, Captain A.S. Flagg told the assembled blacks that two Union generals were there to get ideas about what blacks needed from the Bureau, what the difficulties were between blacks and whites in the city, and how blacks could best adjust to freedom. The meeting selected a delegation of five blacks to represent their community in a private session with the generals. According to the records, the overall concern of the black community was the recognition and protection of their rights as citizens of this nation. Joseph T. Wilson's comments best illustrate the intentions and aspirations of the black community. After asking whether the federal government planned to recognize their rights as citizens, Wilson said that he believed if blacks had the right to vote and were educated, abolishing the Bureau would not place blacks in jeopardy. Until then, the presence of the Bureau served as a guarantor of citizenship and freedom for Norfolk's blacks.³

Despite the hopes of black leaders like Wilson, the years of Radical Reconstruction were not easy ones for Norfolk's

³ The black delegation consisted of William Keeling, Joseph Selden, Joseph T. Wilson, A.A. Portlock, and James Nickles. Foner and Lewis, The Black Worker, vol. 1: The Black Worker to 1869, pp. 347-48.

blacks. Frequently given empty promises by municipal white leaders, blacks found progress difficult. Even a few concessions, such as the acquisition of a school building for the city's black children, became a long, drawn-out process. The removal of the Freedmen's Bureau and the reconstruction of the state reinstated power firmly into the hands of the ex-rebels, some of whom wanted to make life as difficult for blacks as possible.⁴

The 1869 election of Gilbert C. Walker as Governor heralded the takeover of the Conservatives, an anti-black party composed of old-line Democrats, former Whigs, and Liberal Republicans. With the 1873 election, the racial line was clearly drawn, and the Conservatives called upon all whites to be true to their color and vote solidly for white candidates. As the months passed, the Conservatives became so sure of their position that they offered a "liberal platform" pledging education and justice for whites and blacks. This was not to say that the Conservatives dealt fairly with the blacks. On the contrary, between the years 1869 and 1878, the Conservatives worked diligently to destroy the Republican Party and remove blacks as an important political force by impeding, as much as they could, their ability to vote. Intimidation, violence, economic reprisals, and statutory methods were some of the techniques used to prevent blacks

⁴ **Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, 1865-69, BRFAL, M1048, roll 60, p. 683.**

from voting. Another tactic involved local newspaper propaganda designed to secure powerful white support at the polls. The Norfolk Landmark, for example, busily engaged itself as the mouthpiece for the Conservatives from the Radical Reconstruction through the Readjuster years. This Conservative dominance continued in Virginia until the state debt question caused a revolt among the more liberal-minded party members and resulted in the formation of the Readjuster Party.⁵

In 1871 controversy emerged in the House of Delegates over the state debt. The Funding Act of 1871 drew upon school and other funds to pay the state's debts. Those who wanted to pay the debts (resulting from the Civil War and the policies pursued during Reconstruction) in full became known as the Funders. Those who wanted to scale down payment of the debt became known as the Readjusters. This division usually reflected earlier political disputes over the policies and programs that created the debt. During Radical Reconstruction, Virginia began for the first time to provide public facilities for all its citizens including schools, sewage systems, and cemeteries. Consequently, the people of the state divided into two camps: the blacks, liberals, and

⁵ Virginia passed laws requiring a poll tax and disfranchisement if convicted of certain offenses, regardless of how petty the crime may have been. Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1961), pp.10-14; Robert E. Martin, Negro Disfranchisement in Virginia, vol. 1 (2 vols., N.Y.: AMS Press, 1938), p. 81.

small white farmers against the "Bourbon Aristocrats."⁶

With the Conservatives split between Readjusters and Funders, the black Republican vote sometimes served to tip the scales in municipal and state elections. To counteract this, supporters of the Funders made the "race question" the heart of their platform in the 1873 state elections. The Norfolk Landmark frequently called upon whites to stand by their history and "superiority." Unfortunately, Norfolk's black vote was not strong enough to fight the conservative tactics of the Funders.⁷

Throughout the 1870's and 1880's, the Conservatives worked to exclude blacks from participation in politics. For example, after the 1873 election, the Norfolk Landmark published "A Word to the Colored Folk" which was a patronizing expression of conciliation:

When we were in some peril we were too proud to conciliate the people of color, and left them to follow the black banner of Mr. Hughes without remonstrance; but now that we are victorious beyond even our most sanguine hopes, or their most exaggerated fears, we say to the colored folk that the white people have no hard feelings towards them. On the contrary,

⁶ Blacks stood on the side of the Readjusters because they had nothing to gain from the payment of debts which were incurred during the antebellum period. Blacks also felt that money allocated for education should not be diverted for other purposes, none of which would benefit them. The white farmers supported the Readjusters because they opposed the Funders who wanted to burden them with the payment of debts that would benefit the wealthy of the state. Wynes, pp. 16-17.

⁷ Wynes, pp. 21-22; Norfolk Landmark, November 4-5, 1873, p. 1.

we wish to see them grow in wealth, intelligence, and respectability; and this they will do with much greater certainty under our rule than under that of such fellows as we have just defeated.⁸

Undaunted by these patronizing attempts to control their minds and votes, the majority of blacks rebelled against this manipulation by strengthening their Republican stand in the ensuing years. The result was the election of two blacks, H.H. Portlock and T.H. Brooks, to seats on Norfolk's Common and Select Councils, respectively. The disruption of political affiliations during these years served as a curse and a blessing for the blacks whose political clubs and associations continued to hold numerous meetings to organize their strategies for coming municipal and state elections. Generally, however, their efforts in the years prior to the Readjuster coup met with limited success as some were disfranchised by the poll tax, the crime amendment, and gerrymandering of black districts.⁹

In 1879, the Readjusters formally split from the conservative element of the Democratic Party with an independent Readjuster ticket. It was then that the black

⁸ Norfolk Landmark, November 7, 1873, p. 2.

⁹ The Virginia Legislature of 1874-75 proposed the payment of a poll tax, prior to the election, as a prerequisite for voting. That same legislature also proposed a crime amendment which included petty larceny among the list of crimes disqualifying voters. Both proposals were adopted by the Virginia Legislature in 1876. Martin, pp. 83-85, 89; Norfolk Landmark, June 21, 1874, p. 2; Norfolk Landmark, July 2, 1874, p. 1.

vote became of prime importance because the Readjusters sought the middling white and the black votes with promises of greater equality and political offices. Prior to 1879, the Readjusters were fearful that the acceptance of blacks would be political suicide. They soon found that courting the black vote with promises of greater civil rights and political positions of influence was what they needed to become a political power in the state. Not to be outdone, the Funders seized at the Readjusters' weakness by using similar tactics of their own in 1883, thereby splitting the black vote in certain areas of Virginia.¹⁰

Despite the campaign promises, not all of Norfolk's blacks immediately accepted the Readjusters. Many blacks, especially those with property, feared retaliation from the native whites. Some continued to support the Democrats, in hopes of gaining economic concessions. The majority, however, voted for the Readjusters because of their promise of political rewards and black officeholding.¹¹

Throughout 1880, black and white Republicans who were Readjuster supporters held grand open-air meetings enthusiastically attended by large masses of blacks who were determined not to have the Conservatives succeed in their bid for continued political power. White Readjusters even began paying the delinquent taxes of numerous white and black voters

¹⁰ Wynes, pp. 18-20.

¹¹ Norfolk Landmark, September 5, 1880, p. 2.

with the hope that their votes would swing the May 27 election. Elected as mayor was the liberal candidate William Lamb, whose administration worked for equity and fairness for all Norfolk's citizens, black and white. Desperate and fearful of this rising power, Norfolk's Conservative whites began to warn of coming disaster and severe consequences for those whites who would support the Readjusters. The Norfolk Landmark said, "The black people have taken their stand on the extreme policy of their party, and disdain alliance with any set of white people, except on their own terms, in this contest; and the white man who fails to do his duty to his race, and its traditions . . . will lament [this election] in the end as the mistake of a lifetime."¹²

Inspired by Lamb's victory, the Readjusters of Norfolk began organizing for the upcoming state election in November. The Readjusters met at Mechanics Hall on August 25, 1880 to plan a local strategy, causing the city to come alive with politics. Although the Readjusters met with defeat on the state level on November 3-4, 1880, Norfolk's blacks continued to strengthen and organize their political aspirations by working with the Readjusters. So successful was the collaboration between the Republican blacks and the white Readjusters that 1881 and 1882 became the most fruitful period

¹² Norfolk Landmark, October 16, 1880, p. 2; "Diary of Colonel William Lamb," 1880, Lamb Typescripts Box 1, Courtesy of the Manuscripts Department, William and Mary Library (Swem).

for black lawmakers because it was then that the Readjusters had total control of Virginia's government. In his diary, Mayor Lamb recalled attending a meeting on February 22, 1881, at St. John A.M.E. Church where the pastor, George F. Watkins, gave a lecture on the "Future of the Colored American" in which he argued that the black man's future lay in supporting the Readjusters. Three weeks later, a delegation of Norfolk's blacks attended a convention in Petersburg at which Virginia's blacks fully endorsed the Readjusters and their gubernatorial candidate General William Mahone.¹³

On March 26, 1882, black businessman and politician Thomas Paige was sent by the local Readjuster party to a Readjuster meeting in Richmond where he advocated interracial schools as a means of equalizing facilities. The Norfolk Landmark, in obvious disregard of the state of affairs within the black public schools, argued that Paige's mission was unconscionable because the city provided magnificent schools for blacks who also had the privilege of separately established schools. Undaunted, the Colored Progressive Association of Norfolk met less than a month later and issued a political proclamation calling for civil equality and political rights. In an attempt to compromise the effects of this proclamation, the Norfolk Landmark asserted that Joseph T. Wilson, a member of the Association, proclaimed that their

¹³ "Diary of Colonel William Lamb," 1881; Norfolk Landmark, March 17, 1881, p. 2.

intent was social equality.¹⁴ A few days later, Wilson wrote a strongly-worded letter to the editors, informing them that he did not know if there was any such thing as social rights. He said:

My ideas of social rights are that they are distinct from those acquired under either a compact or government--that social rights are regulated by the individuals composing a social society which may exist without a political government like ours. But of civil rights--that they are regulated by law.¹⁵

Wilson went on to reaffirm the true meaning of the Association's resolution, which he felt had been garbled by the Norfolk Landmark reporters. Wilson stated that the intent of the Association was to galvanize the black voters to support those who would fulfill their promise of providing equal protection and equal facilities for all citizens. Attacks of this nature were not uncommon during the Readjuster years, nor were they successful.

Blacks gained political offices with the help of the Readjuster Party, which split the white vote and encouraged a coalition of black and white liberal forces. In Norfolk, the strength of the Readjuster Party was exhibited from 1880 to 1890 with the election of eight blacks to the city's councils. The first five councilmen were all from the Fourth Ward. The

¹⁴ Norfolk Landmark, March 26, 1882, p. 2; Norfolk Landmark, April 13, 1882, p. 2.

¹⁵ Norfolk Landmark, April 18, 1882, p. 1.

three elected to the Common Council included James N. Jones, a grocer and undertaker and one of the most highly respected citizens of Norfolk; Peter Wilson, a laborer; and Thomas Melton, an oysterman. The two elected to the Select Council included Charles Baselow, a laborer, and Lewis Dawley, a driver. Other blacks elected to the Common or Select Councils included James E. Fuller, David W. Jones, Luther C. Williams. As a result of the Readjuster victories, the white conservatives became desperate. Elected blacks were accused of being corrupt and ignorant. The Norfolk Landmark even pronounced doom on the city with the election of the "boys of the Fourth Ward," three of whom won seats on the Common Council during the May 26, 1882 elections. David W. Jones, James E. Fuller, and Peter Wilson became the three black Common Council members representing the Fourth Ward, while Jacob Riddick and John Gibson became the Fourth Ward's school commissioners.¹⁶

In July 1882, almost in direct reaction to the municipal election victories of the Readjusters, Mayor Lamb recorded in his diary that an attempt was being made by the Funders to eliminate James Fuller, a strong black advocate for the rights

¹⁶ Ibid. The Fourth Ward was populated largely by blacks who established numerous businesses and organizations within the Ward. Norfolk Landmark, Dec. 4, 1880, p. 1; Norfolk Landmark, May 30, 1882, p. 1; Norfolk Landmark, May 31, 1882, p. 1; Jackson, Negro Office-Holders in Virginia, p. 59; Mayor's Message of Barton Myers, 1886; 1885 City Directory, p. 23.

and equalities of his constituency, from the Council. Although the Funders were unsuccessful, reports of this kind foreshadowed the eventual takeover of the white conservatives in Norfolk.¹⁷

Unlike the Republicans, the Readjusters were supported by local whites because the party itself was controlled by native white Virginians. By 1882, as a result of this support, the Readjusters gained control of the General Assembly and the Governor's office. They then proceeded to fulfill their campaign promises by appointing blacks and whites to governmental offices, eliminating the whipping post and the poll tax, and reducing the state debt. Additionally, the Readjusters revised the tax code, lowered the tax rate "from fifty to forty cents per-thousand dollars of assessed value,"¹⁸ collected delinquent taxes from the wealthy, taxed the railroads, established a black state institution for higher learning, provided generous aid to the public schools, and opened a black asylum for the insane. All of these reforms served to rouse the ire of the white conservatives.¹⁹

As the conservatives amassed their forces in an effort to stem the tide of the Readjuster victories, the Norfolk Landmark newspaper continued its stream of editorials

¹⁷ "Diary of Colonel William Lamb," 1882.

¹⁸ Wynes, p. 22.

¹⁹ Martin, pp. 91-95; Jackson, Negro Office-Holders in Virginia, p. 78; Wynes, pp. 22-23.

reminding blacks that their "true friends" were the old-guard Democrats who only wanted to help guide them along the right paths of political activity, rather than use them as pawns in a political game. Fortunately for Norfolk's blacks, the political savvy of many of its leaders prevented them from being duped into believing this lie. In fact, the visible and active presence of black leaders may have been the primary factor preventing the immediate demise of black polity in Norfolk once the Readjusters lost power in the state capital.²⁰

By November 1883, the Readjuster period in Virginia was coming to an end. A situation in Danville, Virginia, provided a public example of how blacks were to be taught what their place was in a white-dominated society. On November 6, an altercation between a black and white man over who would give way on a sidewalk became a general scuffle. Several people, mostly black, were killed in the ensuing riot. A subsequent incident over the issue of teaching blacks "their place" occurred aboard a Baltimore company's ferryboat bound for Norfolk. The Reverends Harvey Johnson and P.H.A. Braxton purchased two first-class tickets from Baltimore to Norfolk. Upon boarding the ferryboat, they were ordered to confine themselves to the inferior "negro section." Refusing to comply, the ministers were made to stand among the freight and

²⁰ Norfolk Landmark, July 13, 1887, p. 2; Norfolk Landmark, November 23, 1883, p. 2.

horses for the trip's duration and upon arrival in Norfolk, were arrested and later acquitted. The two gentlemen filed a civil rights suit against the ferryboat company for violation of the Civil Rights Acts.²¹

The Danville riot in November 1883, however, provided the fuel needed by the Funders to regain their hold under the banner of "white supremacy." Racial hysteria soon spread to other areas in Virginia, including Norfolk, which experienced its own "racial riot" in May 1884 involving several policemen and a crowd of blacks gathered for a military company review. Reactionary whites were quick to take advantage of this incident, calling for the removal of black and liberal white officials whose policies created a chaotic atmosphere which allowed such an incident to occur. Throughout 1884, Mayor Lamb reported numerous incidences of Bourbon judges who obstructed the voting in Norfolk's Fourth Ward, cutting out as many as four to five hundred votes.²²

Despite the accomplishments of the Readjuster Party, its influence was eventually smashed by the Conservatives in the election of 1883 partly because they were the most heterogenous political group ever conceived in Virginia. Also, the Readjusters could not survive the Conservative

²¹ New York Times, November 6, 1883, p. 4 and November 24, 1885, p. 4.

²² Norfolk Landmark, May 6, 1884, pp. 1-2; James T. Moore, "Black Militancy in Readjuster Virginia, 1879-1883," Journal of Southern History 61 (May 1975), p. 185; "Diary of Colonel William Lamb," 1884.

charges of black political domination nor the high-handed practices of Governor Mahone and his cronies. The restoration of the Democratic Party to power in the state capital did not mean immediate disfranchisement of the blacks. It did, however, forewarn the black community that their days of suffrage were limited as the stage was set for the reactionary plans of the whites now in power. In the late 1880's, only a few black lawmakers endured. By 1890, the voting power of the black community had been destroyed and the remaining black lawmakers eliminated.²³

With the dissolution of the Readjuster Party, the black community in Norfolk felt disheartened. To make matters worse, local white Republican politicians exerted additional political pressure on the community with their attempts to control the Emancipation Day celebrations, the black vote, and church organizations for their own selfish purposes. These attempts created divisions among blacks. Increasingly large numbers of blacks opposed mixing the Emancipation Day celebrations with the personal ambitions of these white Republicans. So strong was the division that two separate parades took place, resulting in three to four years of widespread apathy and indifference among many black citizens who saw the reason for participation usurped by political and

²³ Wynes, pp. 23, 35, 39; Jackson, Negro Office Holders, p. 81.

selfish bickering.²⁴

The defeat of the Republican Presidential candidate, James G. Blaine, by the Democratic candidate, Grover Cleveland, in the election of 1884, aroused Norfolk's blacks from their apathy and disunity. With Blaine's defeat, many of Norfolk's black leaders and businessmen awakened to the realization that the rights gained from the Republican reign could be lost during Cleveland's tenure as President. Consequently, a well-attended meeting at Paige's Hotel in early December 1884, discussed ways in which "the latent fires of freedom" could be rekindled among the people.²⁵ The result of this meeting and others that followed was an Emancipation Day celebration in January 1885 that rivaled the memorable 1863 demonstration. Local newspapers covered these preliminary meetings and a few hundred dollars was quickly raised from blacks and white citizens, such as wealthy banker J.B. Whitehead.²⁶

The planning committee sent letters of invitation to famous former abolitionists and other black leaders requesting their presence at the celebration. Men such as T. Thomas Fortune, A.H. Grimke, Joseph G. Seldon, and George Downing had to decline because of previous commitments, but wished their

²⁴ Paige, pp. 10-11.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁶ Ibid.

Norfolk friends well on that momentous day of celebration.²⁷

On December 12, 1884, a preliminary planning meeting was held in the Armory of the Second Battalion, Virginia National Guards to select officers and to organize the celebration. On December 22 and 30, general meetings were held at the Bute Street and Bank Street Baptist Churches to hear the Finance Committee's report, collect donations, and to make further arrangements. At 10:00 a.m. on January 1, 1885, one hundred mounted men, countless militiamen, the Liberty Car with thirty-eight ladies inside representing the thirty-eight states of the Union, and participants from countless black societies gathered on Princess Anne Avenue for the Emancipation procession. The militia, under the command of Major W.H. Palmer, and the staff officers of the Second Battalion were all in full dress uniform. The Liberty Car, drawn by two regal black horses and decorated with banners, flags, and streamers, also contained Miss Sallie Stith, dressed in a handsome costume to represent the Goddess of Liberty who appeared in the original celebration. Although the parade was interrupted by a severe thunderstorm and the participants had to retire to the beautifully decorated St. John's A.M.E. Chapel, the celebration continued at 2:00 p.m. with much enthusiasm and hundreds of participants.²⁸

The procession then reorganized on Queen Street near the

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 37-39.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 12, 17-18, 21, 25-28.

Armory and proceeded down Norfolk's major streets until retiring at the Bute Street A.M.E. Church. The Reverend David King, pastor of the Bute Street Baptist Church, opened the celebration services with a prayer followed by the congregational singing of "America." Thomas Paige, President of the Day, made introductory remarks while Miss A.M. Poole read the Emancipation Proclamation. Afterwards, another selection, "Go Sound the Loud Timbrel over Egypt's Dark Sea," was sung by the congregation,²⁹ at which point the featured orator, Thomas Norris, Jr., took the platform to encourage the people to educate themselves or perish. In a rousing speech frequently interrupted by applause, Norris asserted that "the public free school is the fountain whose streams make glad all the lands of liberty . . . It is the duty of this race, in fullness of time, to wipe the last hateful stain from its brow, and crown itself with the dignity, lustre and honor of a perfect manhood."³⁰ Following the main address was a poem written especially for the occasion by Miss M.E. Chapman, whose stirring words expressed the heartfelt sentiments of the people:

Shout forth all ye people from mountain
to sea,
The fetters are burst, the captive is
free,
The taskmaster's whip is forever laid by,
No agonized voices to Heaven now cry,

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 24, 29.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

For Freedom is come.³¹

Joseph T. Wilson gave a review speech at the conclusion of Miss Chapman's poem, exhorting blacks to unite in an effort to overcome ignorance, prejudice, and poverty. "The negro is poor because he is not united; because they are not willing to build up and support one another in the various business pursuits and commercial industries. He walks by the door of his black brother to buy a pound of sugar or a pair of shoes of his oppressor--his white enemy--who has built his store and began business on the corner of every street and alley inhabited [sic] by the negroes."³²

Echoing the sentiment for which Booker T. Washington will later be known, Wilson continued, admonishing his listeners that economic development was more important to the survival of the black community than political suffrage. He too felt betrayed by the Republican Party which had sacrificed the black man in 1877 for a seat in the oval office. Wilson asserted that blacks were the property of preachers and politicians, a position he exhorted blacks to change. He believed that the former gave blacks a false idea of Heaven and the latter placed blacks at the mercy of the Democratic Party. The Reverend A.A. Burleigh, pastor of St. John's, concluded the meeting, at 6:00 p.m., with the Doxology. In defense of the church, Burleigh reminded the audience that it

³¹ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

³² Ibid., p. 58.

was to the Lord Jesus Christ that the black man looked and whence he was delivered from the deplorable state of bondage.³³ Such was the celebration and the last-ditch effort on the part of many black leaders to galvanize the black community to fight against the coming tide of Bourbonism. Thomas F. Paige immortalized these efforts in his book, Twenty-Two Years of Freedom. Dedicated to those Americans who love liberty, Paige proposed that the book be the black citizen's expression of gratitude "for his deliverance from human bondage and love of freedom, with his duty as he understands it as a citizen to perform."³⁴ In an effort to document the advancement of blacks made in just twenty-two years after the Emancipation Proclamation and to counter the accusations that blacks were shiftless spendthrifts, Paige wrote how prior to 1863, most blacks owned nothing and were menial servants and uneducated. Twenty-two years later, blacks owned churches and public halls worth more than \$100,000, invested in businesses valued at over \$150,000, had real and personal property assessed at \$250,000 (averaging to \$36.00 per person in Norfolk), paid \$3,000 annually to black ministers, had founded several churches, and had created numerous self-help and social organizations designed to

³³ Ibid., pp. 60-63.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

acculturate blacks into mainstream society.³⁵

Once the Readjusters lost control of the governor's mansion in 1885, the political influence of Virginia's blacks began quickly to wane. Although blacks in Norfolk held seats on the Select and Common Councils until 1889, disfranchisement and Jim Crowism were what lay ahead in the new century.³⁶

So it was in 1885 that blacks in Norfolk faced an even harder task than they had faced in 1865: starting over. In the twenty years since their legal emancipation, blacks in the city had strived diligently to work with, and in some cases conciliate, the white oligarchy. Their efforts, however, met with repeated resistance and defeat. The enormous task that awaited the community in 1885 was where to begin again. After years of working towards building a unified community with a strong financial and political base, disunity had crept in because of the political failures which disillusioned the black masses and snatched hope from the already weakened jaws of the victorious.

The story of the struggles and accomplishments of Norfolk's blacks is reminiscent of the conclusion of John Milton's Twelfth Book of Paradise Lost where blacks were left to fend for themselves among the wolves and lambs of the post-Reconstruction world. Although they survived, it would be

³⁵ See Appendix 5 for a listing of Norfolk's 1880's black churches, organizations, and businesses; Ibid., p. 7.

³⁶ McGuinn and Spraggins, pp. 380-81.

years before blacks would emerge from America's nadir in race relations to another period of hope and prosperity that began with the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 1954.

APPENDIX 1Hampton Normal Institute's Graduates
Teaching in Norfolk

Mary E. Melvin (class of 1874) - born in 1856 in Norfolk. Taught 16 years in Norfolk Public Schools, 2 years in Grafton and London Bridge, Virginia, and 4 years at Tuskegee Institute. Was the assistant matron for 2 years at Hampton Normal Institute and served for 12 years as principal of A & M College in Florida. Lived at 169 Cumberland Street when teaching in Norfolk. Died in 1914 and buried in Hampton.

Joseph Towe (class of 1875) - while at Hampton Institute, he was one of the Hampton Singers and proved to be gifted in business and accounting. Taught for 5 years in Norfolk, residing at 100 Smith Street. Commended for his inspirational and original teaching style by his principal and superintendent. Married Anna Taylor (his former pupil and assistant teacher) and died in 1880.

Georgie Gray (Mrs. Peterson) (class of 1876) - taught for 2 years in Norfolk. Died in 1880.

Sallie F. Poole (Mrs. Traynham) (class of 1876) - born in Norfolk in 1858. Taught in Norfolk for 2 years until married, whereupon she moved to Washington, D.C. where she taught night school for 2 years.

Whit T. Williams (class of 1876) - born in Danville, Virginia in 1857. Was one of the Hampton Singers and after graduation, taught in Drummondtown, Virginia. Since 1882, Williams has taught in Norfolk (taught about 600 students between 1882 and 1893).

Margaret Keeling (Mrs. Davenport) (class of 1877) - born in Norfolk in 1856. Was appointed 7th grade teacher in 1878 in Norfolk and taught for 4 years. Saw many of her students go on to attend Norfolk Mission College. Resigned after marrying.

Lavinia B. Lewis (Mrs. Bragg) (class of 1878) - born in Norfolk in 1860. Taught at Norfolk's North Street school soon after graduation. Moved to Burkeville, Virginia in 1887 soon after marrying.

Rudolphus L. Bowden (class of 1879) - born a free black in

(Appendix 1)

Norfolk. Became a mail carrier for 10 years after serving as a teacher in Norfolk Public Schools. For 5 of those 10 years, Bowden taught at Sewell's Point school and had a daily attendance of 80). While teaching, also worked in St. John's Church and tried to get blacks to develop a taste for good literature because most were too poor to afford subscriptions to good newspapers and magazines. Died in May 1925.

Anna M. Poole (class of 1880) - born on November 1, 1861 in Norfolk. Taught in the city for 45 years (had between 800-1000 students). Was heavily involved in Sunday school, mission, and temperance work, as well as being involved with the Y.M.C.A. Most of the money she saved was lost in the collapse of Norfolk's Home Savings Bank. Was a member of the Bank Street Baptist Church. Became Assistant Principal at Armstrong Elementary School (on Cumberland Street) prior to her retirement in June 1926. Died at age 73 on October 7, 1944.

Delia A. Burnham (class of 1881) - born in Norfolk and taught there where she administered 2 sessions composed of 86 students in the morning and 74 students in the afternoon. Has taught nearly 2,000 students over a 12-year period.

Sadie Mackie (Mrs. Williams) (class of 1881) - born in Norfolk in 1863. Taught for only 1 year in Norfolk and 4 years in Norfolk County. Died in 1889.

Georgiana Harris (class of 1882) - born in Norfolk and taught for 3 years (from 1882-85) in Norfolk Public Schools. Taught 138 pupils in the first year, 140 pupils in the second year, and 100 pupils in 1885. Died of tuberculosis on May 20, 1885.

Paul D. Menton (class of 1882) - born in Norfolk. Died while teaching in Norfolk soon after graduating.

Sarah Riddick (Mrs. Portlock) (class of 1886) - born in Norfolk in 1863. Taught in Norfolk's Public Schools, Sunday schools, and has done temperance work in the city. Owns a home and land. Has taught 205 scholars.

(taken from Samuel Armstrong, Twenty-Two Years' Work of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute of Hampton, Virginia (Hampton: Hampton Normal School Press, 1893), pp. 41, 55, 62-63, 75, 83, 102, 128, 145-46, 160, 162, 176, 184, 241; "Student Records: 1868-Present," Courtesy of Hampton University Library, Hampton University Archives (Hampton, Virginia).)

APPENDIX 2Selected Norfolk Mission College Graduates
Who Resided in NorfolkClass of 1888

Anna V. Bagnall - teacher in Norfolk Public schools
 Addie V. Billups - no occupation given
 Sallie F. Lane (Mrs. Bonney) - dressmaker
 Susie R. Dillard (Mrs. Paige) - no occupation given
 Florence A. Ganey - cooking teacher at Norfolk Mission College
 Joseph S. Hall - no occupation given
 Emma J. Lymus (Mrs. Harris) - no occupation given
 James E. James - theological student who attended Knoxville
 College in Tennessee
 William F. Keeling - clerk in Norfolk Post Office
 George W. Langley - porter aboard Norfolk steamer
 Adela F. Ruffin - principal at Slater Academy in N.C.
 Robert S. Stith - porter aboard N & W Railroad in Richmond
 Dellie Stith - teacher in Norfolk Public schools
 John Carter Minkins - journalist for newspapers in New York

Class of 1890

Gertrude Broughton - teacher at Norfolk Mission College
 Mary Boyd (Mrs. Stone) - no occupation given
 Robert H. Cross - steward aboard a Norfolk steamer
 Sallie Cotton - teacher in Norfolk Public schools
 Sudie Kemp (Mrs. Knight) - no occupation given
 Uthamia Davis (Mrs. Langley) - dressmaker
 Carrie Fuller - teacher in Norfolk Public schools
 Amanda Ganey (Mrs. Stith) - no occupation given
 Richard McPherson - no occupation given
 Solomon L. Moore - teacher in Richmond
 Lizzie Reed - dressmaker
 Lizzie Ruffin - teacher in Norfolk Public schools
 Willie E. Smith - piano and organ tuner
 Anna Tucker - teacher in Norfolk Public schools
 James F. R. Wilson - music teacher in Brooklyn, N.Y.
 William R. Williams - real estate agent
 Horace W. Melvin - teacher at Lamberts Point (Norfolk County)

(taken from "Norfolk Mission College--Catalogues
 and Bulletins, 1899-1914," Courtesy of Norfolk
 State University Archives (Norfolk, Virginia);
 "Norfolk Mission College--Custis, John R. Dr.;
 Griffin, James C. Rev.; Pittard, Pen-Lile Box,"
 Courtesy of Norfolk State University Archives,
 Norfolk, Virginia).

APPENDIX 3**BLACK CHURCHES IN NORFOLK, 1861-1884**

Bank Street Baptist Church, Rev. Thomas Henson (1860's); Rev. Richard Spiller (1870's); Rev. Mortimer Borland (1880's)

Calvary Baptist Church, Rev. G.H. Carle (1880's)

First Baptist Church on Bute Street, Pastor Lewis Tucker (1860's); Rev. Thomas Henson (1870's); Rev. David King (1880's)

Emanuel (M. E.) Temple, Rev. D.W. Bowe (1880's)

James Street M. E. Church, Rev. E.W.S. Peck (1860's-1870's); Rev. David Johnson (1880's)

P. E. Church of the Holy Innocents, Rev. J.H.M. Pollard (1880's)

Queen Street Baptist Church, Rev. Richard Spiller (1880's)

St. John's A. M. E. Chapel, Rev. John Brown and Rev. George T. Watkins (1860's); Rev. J.E. Cook (1870's); Rev. A.A. Burleigh (1880's)

St. Luke's M. P. Church, Rev. William Lewis (1860's-1870's); Rev. W.T. Warden (1880's)

Zion Methodist Episcopal, Rev. Nathaniel Davis (1880's)

(See Norfolk City Directory for 1870, compiled by James F. Milligan, 1870; Norfolk and Portsmouth Directory, 1875-76, compiled by B.R. Sheriff, 1876; Directory of Norfolk and Portsmouth, 1885, compiled by J.H. Chataigne, 1885.)

APPENDIX 4**BLACK ORGANIZATIONS IN NORFOLK, 1861-1884**Church Benevolent Organizations

The majority of these church organizations were founded in 1865 to help the sick and needy.

Bible Stars**Pilgrims****Daughters of Saint Luke****Sons of Adam****Good Samaritans****Zion's Sons****Humble Sons of God**Social Organizations

The Norfolk Lyceum -- founded to encourage literary talents, the organization held weekly meetings, conducted exercises involving music, recitations, the reading of original essays, debates, and dramatic performances to which the public was invited, and had a library containing over two hundred books.

Glee Club - a choir founded to provide entertainment for the community

Sons of Liberty - a benevolent society organized by Portsmouth black men in 1865. Its purpose was to combine fellowship with mutual financial, political, and social assistance.

Secret Fraternal Organizations

Grand United Order of Tents - a secret antebellum Underground Railroad organization which formally incorporated in 1867. It was Virginia's first women's lodge and offered benefits for the sick and aged.

Hebrew Union**Independent Club**

(Appendix 4)**Mechanics Bible Club****Odd Fellows****Political Organizations**

Colored Monitor Club - founded at Mechanics Hall on April 4, 1865. Designed to further the election of Republican candidates, promote union and harmony among black citizens in the community, and to coordinate the statewide efforts favoring universal suffrage.

Sons of Honor - a political organization founded after the war

Union Monitor Club - a political organization founded in 1865

Union Veteran Hall Association -- incorporated in 1884 with James E. Fuller as President

Zion's Sons**Halls**

Armory
I.O.O.F.
Masonic Temple
St. Luke's
Samaritan

(See Thomas F. Paige, Twenty-Two Years of Freedom, pp. 67-71, Advertisements section; Norfolk Post, Jan. 2, 1866, p. 3; Norfolk Virginian, Jan. 2, 1866, p. 3; Norfolk and Portsmouth Directory, 1875-76, compiled by James F. Milligan, 1877; Philip Foner and George Walker, eds., Proceedings of the Black National and State Conventions, 1865-1900, p. 80; Directory of Norfolk and Portsmouth, 1885, compiled by J.H. Chataigne.)

APPENDIX 5FREE BLACK PROPERTY OWNERS, 1860

A total of 5 free blacks owned both real and personal estate:

Jack Riddick (a 29 year old illiterate black barber) owned \$1800 in real estate and \$50 in personal estate.

Keziah Green (a 57 year old literate black laborer) owned \$1100 in real estate.

George Washington (a 48 year old literate black huckster) owned \$500 in real estate and \$300 in personal estate.

Ned Miller (a 53 year old literate black ship caulker) owned \$500 in real estate and \$200 in personal estate.

M. White (a 50 year old literate mulatto female with no occupation) owned \$500 in real estate and \$100 in personal estate.

A total of 44 free blacks owned real and/or personal estate:

25 males (20 black, 5 mulatto) and 19 females (9 black, 10 mulatto) owned real or personal estate.

Of the dominant occupations, 10 were washerwomen, 4 were laborers, 4 were draymen, and 8 were listed with no occupation.

15 were literate (10 black, 5 mulatto) and 29 were illiterate (19 black, 10 mulatto).

(see U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Population Schedules, Microfilm, Roll 328, Virginia.)

APPENDIX 6**SELECTED BLACK BUSINESSES IN NORFOLK
IN THE 1870'S AND 1880'S**

P.L. Barber, M.D., 206 Queen street
 James P. Carter Eating House, No. 28 Market Square
 W.A. Coleman Shaving & Hair Cutting, Tonsorial Saloon, No. 53
 Church street
 J.H. Cross Wines, Liquors and Cigars, 129 Water street
 Samuel Hines Ices and Ice Cream, 241 East End Main street
 Johnson & Miller Eating House, 242 Queen street
 Robert Johnson Carriages, No. 98 James street
 Henri Jones, M.D., No. 308 Bute street
 James N. Jones and Co. Undertakers, 180 Cumberland street near
 Queen
 Daniel Langley Oysters, Ice Creams, and Confectioneries, 159
 Charlotte street
 Nelson Nicholas Tonsorial Artist, 43 Church street
 Thomas Norris Groceries, Provisions, Wood & Coal, 83 Hawk
 street
 Paige's Baggage Express and Passenger Transfer, 324 Bute
 street and 10 Market Square West side
 Mrs. T.F. Paige Choice Fruits and Confectioneries, 324 Bute
 street
 Paige's Hotel, West Side Market Square
 Peter Ruffin and Son National Pavilion Restaurant and Lunch
 Counter, Virginia Beach
 James Thompson Boot and Shoe Work, 64 Chapel street
 William Thompson & Sons Butchers, Stall No. 23 City Market
 Arthur Turner Poultry, Eggs, Fruit, Produce Vegetables, East
 side Market street
 Jesse Waites Wholesale and Retail Dealer, Stalls No. 34 City
 Market
 C.E. Weeden Hacks and Carriages, No. 62 Princess Anne Avenue
 Williams & Walters Wines, Liquors, Cigars, Tobacco, Etc., 250
 Queen and 42 Smith Streets
 Cyrus Wright Vegetables and Poultry, Cellar 27 W. side Market
 Square

(Appendix 6)

Black Owned Businesses

Business	In the 1870's		In the 1880's	
	Black Owned	Total	Black Owned	Total
Barbers	14	19	23	34
Blacksmiths	1	12	3	21
Boarding House	---	---	2	26
Butchers	2	21	5	24
Cabinet Maker	---	---	1	2
Cigars & Tobacco	1	21	3	26
Coal & Wood	---	---	4	13
Coopers	2	7	---	---
Confectioners	1	28	5	30
Furniture	---	---	1	14
Grocers	12	146	28	224
Hotels	---	---	1	10
Restaurants	6	44	12	13
Undertakers	1	4	2	7

(See Thomas F. Paige, Twenty-Two Years of Freedom, pp. 67-71, Advertisements section; Norfolk and Portsmouth Directory for 1875-76; Directory of Norfolk and Portsmouth, 1885, compiled by J.H. Chatainge.)

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