

## Wade Hampton III, Surviving in the “Prostrate State” – Part 6

General Wade Hampton and his Legion fought valiantly and Hampton, although suffering multiple wounds, survived the protracted war. The homeland, however had been subjected to the scorched-earth policy of President Lincoln carried out by General Sherman and his army of “foragers,” who took with them or destroyed everything they could find that was meaningful to the Hampton family and their neighbors. Although all of the eyewitnesses are now dead, they left a recorded history of the terror they experienced during the period from 1864 – 1876. In fact, some of the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of those eyewitnesses are alive today and recall the harrowing stories passed on to them by their ancestors.

In his Memoirs, Gen. Sherman described in his own words the deplorable tactics of his army during the march through Georgia and South Carolina.

“The skill and success of the men in collecting forage was one of the features of this march. Each brigade commander had authority to detail a company of foragers, usually about fifty men, with one or two commissioned officers selected for their boldness and enterprise.

“This party would be dispatched before daylight with a knowledge of the intended day’s march and camp, would proceed on foot five or six miles from the route traveled by their brigade, and then visit every plantation and farm within range. They would usually procure a wagon or family carriage, load it with bacon, cornmeal, turkeys, chickens, ducks, and everything that could be used as food or forage, and would then regain the main road, usually in advance of their train.

“Often would I pass these foraging-parties at the roadside, waiting for their wagons to come up, and was amused at their strange collections - mules, horses, even cattle, packed with old saddles and loaded with hams, bacon, bags of cornmeal, and poultry of every character and description.

“We found abundance of corn, molasses, meal, bacon, and sweet potatoes. We also took a good many cows and oxen, and a large number of mules. In all these the country was quite rich, never before having been visited by a hostile army; the recent crop had been excellent, had been just gathered and laid by for the winter.

“Although this foraging was attended with great danger and hard work, there seemed to be a charm about it that attracted the soldiers, and it was a privilege to be detailed on such a party. No doubt, many acts of pillage, robbery and violence were committed by these parties of foragers, usually called ‘bummers; for I have since heard of jewelry taken from women, and the plunder of articles that never reached the commissary.”

Sherman’s march was launched from Chattanooga, Tennessee with a force of 100,000. They cut a path 60 miles wide through Atlanta to Savannah and then north through Columbia, South Carolina, leaving the state capital in shambles after promising to leave it intact if Confederate troops withdrew.

Lincoln and the Yankee Congress loathed South Carolina because the Palmetto State was the first

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published from the union the 2020 helped to create. Sherman had a personal hatred for Hampton because he had been outsmarted on the battlefield by Hampton and his Legion.  
By Bob Dill - Publisher of The Times Examiner

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Hampton was one of the last commanders to give up the fight, even after Lee had surrendered. Finally, he joined Mary and the children and returned to Columbia along with hundreds of other veterans of the war to survey what remained of his home and property.

He found Milwood’s once-majestic buildings reduced to charred rubble. The Mississippi grown cotton had been confiscated, and Sherman’s troops had stolen the family’s jewels and other valuables.

Wade Hampton III had no source of income and no hope for the future.

In a letter to his family, Sherman had opined that Hampton and other “ranking Rebels” would never resign themselves to working for a living. Once again, General Sherman had underestimated Wade Hampton.

Hampton settled his family into a damaged but not destroyed overseer’s residence on the Camden Road on the outskirts of Columbia. With the assistance of a few slaves who had refused to flee, Hampton began to build a modest home neighbors dubbed “The Southern Cross,” because of its shape. For a few years, Wade and his family divided their time between Columbia and the unmolested family hunting lodge in Cashiers Valley, North Carolina.

He shaved off his beard, put his uniform in a closet, and began wearing the clothing of a working man. With a large extended family depending upon him, including his four surviving sisters, Hampton grew vegetables and fruit rather than the cotton and tobacco cash crops of the pre-war days. Most of what was produced was consumed by the family and the rest went to pay the former slaves who remained to assist him.

It was surprising to some that Hampton, the ultimate Southerner, recommended that all “who can do should take the oath of allegiance to the United States Government, so that they may participate in the restoration of Civil Government to our State.” Factual history shows that his leadership was crucial to bringing an end to occupation by armed troops and rule by the most corrupt state government in the history of the republic.

Following 4 years of occupation by federal troops, South Carolina was ruled by a radical Republican government composed of what author Henry T. Thompson described as “a horde of adventurers from the North, white and colored,” that had “swarmed like locusts into South Carolina, and the other Southern States. Men utterly without character as a rule, they were contemptuously termed ‘carpetbaggers,’ implying that what each owned when he entered the state could have been contained in a carpetbag, or portable traveling bag.

“Many of them were ‘hold-overs’ from the worst elements of Sherman’s army. As a class, they

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was not nearly the equals of the Negroes of the South. These strangers were joined by a few native white renegades, who became known as ‘scalawags’; and this combination furnished the leaders for the Republican party in South Carolina. While a few native Negroes rose to office, the mass of them constituted the rank and file of the Republican party in the state.”

The Democratic party headed by Wade Hampton III in South Carolina, as well as the National Democratic Party considered the Reconstruction Act passed by Congress to be “illegal, unconstitutional and ruinous.” and maintained that it would be better to be under military rule than under the rule of a “Carpetbag-Negro Government.”

Thompson points out the fact that, “Hampton counseled friendliness and fair-dealing toward the Negro, for the Negro was in no way responsible for the condition which existed in the state.”

Former Governor Chamberlain in 1901 wrote that “Hampton in 1868, publicly advised co-operation with the Negro in elections, but his advice passed unheeded.”

Addressing some of his old soldiers in Pickens District in 1866, Gen. Hampton described the freed slaves this way: “As a slave, he was faithful to us; as a freedman, let us treat him as a friend.”

Waddy Thompson, in *A History of the People of the United States*, writes: “With the Southern soldiers at the front, the slave worked the crop by day, and guarded the women and children by night; or he followed his master into the army... rejoiced in his victories, and with sorrowing heart brought back to the old homestead the warrior’s lifeless body. The slave’s faithfulness to his master and to his master’s family causes still the admiration of the world.”

Henry T. Thompson, in *Ousting the Carpetbagger From South Carolina*, concludes: “The two races in the South understood each other, and it is safe to say that, if they had been left alone to work out their own salvation under the Congressional plan of Reconstruction, with such leaders as Wade Hampton to guide them, and without any interference from wicked and designing men from abroad, the outcome would have been vastly different. As has been seen, however, such a result would not have suited the radical Republican leaders of the North, who had other plans for the Negro vote.”

The first governor to rule over the Reconstruction of South Carolina was Governor Robert K. Scott, (1869-1872), a Carpetbagger from Ohio.

In 1872, the notorious F. J. Moses, Jr, “The Robber Governor” followed Gov. Scott as Governor.

Gov. Moses was a Scalawag South Carolinian, who chose not to reside in the Governor’s Mansion, but instead rented it out. He chose to live in the Preston Mansion, the finest residence in Columbia at the time and before the war had been the property of the First Wade Hampton, the Grandfather of Wade Hampton III.

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The Scott-Moses administration organized and maintained a black army numbering 96,000 strong to impose their rule at the point of a bayonet.  
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South Carolina’s third Governor under her second reconstruction was D. H. Chamberlain, “a cultivated New Englander.

The abuses of the Radical Republican Government during “Reconstruction” led to the creation of the “Red Shirts” and the “Second American Revolution” led by Wade Hampton III and his election as Governor of South Carolina.

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*Next week: Part 7: Wade Hampton and the “Red Shirts” by Bill Johnson.*